



2023 General Chapter
Preparatory Commission

**« The Kingdom of God is at hand » (Mk 1:15).
Live and proclaim the hope of the Gospel**

Dear brothers and sisters in the Assumption,

The preparatory commission of the 34th general chapter received some sixty replies to the questionnaire which was sent out to you at the beginning of 2022. We would like to thank all the communities and lay groups that took the time to respond. We greatly appreciate these contributions. They show the interest of the body that we form in joining in a process of synodal discernment. They help us to grasp the requests that our communities and our works are making and call us to invent new paths, while remaining faithful to our charism. The contributions we received express « the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties » (cf. *Gaudium et spes*) experienced or shared by the entire Assumption. They speak of the solidarity of religious and lay-people in the successes and trials of the men and women of our time. Without ignoring the difficulties and obstacles along the way, they also express a confidence in the resources that God gives us to pursue our mission at the service of the coming Kingdom. The preparatory commission met for three days at the end of May to analyze the content of this material and to come up with a preliminary synthesis. It is the result of this work that we are sending to you now. But the work of discernment must move on. That is why we are inviting every community, every committee/commission, every lay group to become familiar with this document and to send us anew their reactions, concrete courses of action or animation that might be submitted to the general chapter.

A discernment to be pursued

This synthesis of your responses to the first questionnaire doesn't put an end to our discernment. To the contrary, it is an invitation to build on it, to fine tune it and especially to come up with concrete proposals. Therefore, the preparatory commission proposes that each community, committee/commission, each group or work:

- React overall to the tenor of this synthesis: interest, surprises, lacunae, blind spots....
- Share all the initiatives or concrete practices, even the most modest, that respond to this or that request or that might fire up the imagination of other groups or communities elsewhere in the world;
- Pinpoint in this synthesis two or three challenges or issues that caught your attention and to propose concrete courses of action or animation for the six upcoming years;
- Send the fruit of your reflections to the preparatory commission before October 31, 2022 (email : cpcaa2023@gmail.com).

The synthesis that we are proposing consists of 4 points

- I. *Signs from God...*
- II. *Graces from God...*
- III. *Summons from God...*
- IV. *Proposals from communities and groups...*

I. Signs from God ...

In their responses, the communities, the commissions/committees, and lay groups showed a sensitivity to the different « signs of the times » which call for discernment in the light of the Gospel in order to understand what God wants of the Assumption:

1. The health crisis: this crisis has revealed and often accentuated the inequalities with regard to access to health among countries. It has forced us to live in a collective state of uncertainty. It has also provided an opportunity for international solidarity (e.g. vaccines). Communities and works have been put to the test. We have lost brothers, members of our families, and collaborators. The lockdowns forced communities and provinces to invent new forms of communication between themselves (updates, words of encouragement, support in prayer, etc). We have become aware of the importance of caring for one another. This health crisis has also led us to rediscover the importance of intercessory prayer, which is at the heart of our consecrated life.

2. Wars, security threats, terrorism: Whether it be in Africa or in Europe (Ukraine), the Assumption is affected by issues of peace. Some of our brothers are at risk in certain regions of the world. Through these communities and these works, the Assumption is already demonstrating solidarity with victims, accompanying them, and proposing paths of healing. Echoing *Fratelli tutti*, it has heard the summons to pursue the effort of working for peace through the formation of young people (e.g. a school dedicated to peace, etc.).

3. The social and environmental crisis: groups and communities are acting on *Laudato si'* and say that they are questioning their style of living and consuming in order to show more respect for the planet and greater solidarity with the poor (e.g. agro-ecology, etc.). These initiatives already demonstrate that the Assumption is in solidarity with migrants, the displaced, the unemployed, those who live on the street and that they feel called to pursue their efforts to go to the peripheries.

4. The crisis of transmission: especially in the West, the institutions of transmission have broken down (family, school, Church, etc.). The digitalization of cultures and the general acceleration of the digital are changing our societies without us yet mastering them. All of this is having an impact on the faith, on the quality of youth involvement, and on vocations. The Assumption sees here a summons to pursue its commitment by offering a holistic education, with a quality setting and accompaniment of the young in order to form consciences.

6. The crisis of abuse within the Church: sexual abuse and abuses of power and conscience are not a matter of indifference at the Assumption. Brothers share a concern with the reforms necessary to roll back all forms of clericalism. They also sees what's at stake in the initial formation to religious life (vows, spiritual life and prayer, accompaniment, etc.) and the

need of capable and available brothers to serve in formation and in positions of leadership in the Congregation.

6. The rise in populist and nationalist movements: they go hand in hand with a rise in racism, of religious intolerance, acts of violence, especially by means of social networks. In the face of all this, the Assumption can point to its experience of international communities and to inter-community and interreligious dialogue, notably with Islam. It also has available expertise in the area of the media that it could place at the service of authentic communication and communion.

7. The search for meaning and for the spiritual: Our communities have experienced a humanity that is searching for God and for the meaning of life in various spiritual, religious, and esoteric experiences (sects, revival churches, different movements, etc.). This brings into question the quality of our pastoral offerings and the fervor of those we serve.

In the face of these many challenges which reveal the fragilities of human existence and upset our ways of doing and thinking, groups and communities of the Assumption have not succumbed to resignation. They approach the future with confidence, counting first of all on the resources which God provides, beginning with the promise of the coming Kingdom.

II. Graces from God ...

Communities and lay groups pointed out any number of gifts which God has given to our religious family that would let it, in alliance with lay collaborators, respond to the challenges of proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

1. The grace of a founder, a charism, and a spirituality...

- A founder, Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon, with a spiritual and apostolic heritage, to be renewed over the years and according to the context
- A charism oriented toward the love of the Kingdom of God and consisting of three major axes: unity, truth, and charity
- A spirituality centered on Christ, the Church and the Virgin Mary
- A belonging to the great Augustinian family.

2. The grace of a religious family...

- That is expanding as a result of the Lay-Religious Alliance and flourishing within the greater Assumption Family as a result of its apostolic dynamism
- The gift of vocations, both of religious and lay-people, with diverse talents, many of whom, yesterday as today, are involved in the work of understanding the faith, the proclamation of the Kingdom, and the service of the least among us
- The gift of international, intercultural, and fraternal communities permanently in search of God
- The gift of simplicity, of hospitality, of welcome and sharing in our communities (a sharing of celebrations and other events and of human, spiritual and intellectual resources)
- The gift of trust in God, mutual trust among brothers and sisters

- The gift of the Holy Spirit who continues to choose men and women who are passionate, zealous, bold, and selfless in the service of the Kingdom of God
- The gift of courage, of faith, of charity and hope shared with their brothers and sisters. Some have even given their lives to the point of martyrdom: Blesseds Pavel, Josaphat, Kamen and Paul Hélène...

3. Apostolates and various missions...

- Parishes, educational establishments, universities, youth residences, chaplaincies, media work, etc. where our charism is put into action at the service of the Kingdom of God
- The gift of openness and of the capacity for dialogue : dialogue between men, between religions, between peoples, between cultures...
- The gift of a spirit of creativity and inventiveness so as to respond to the challenges of our time, especially those connected to ecology, to the displaced, to refugees and migrants (e.g. *Je sers, El Paso*, the Athens community, the Bucharest community, the Ouagadougou community, etc.)
- Human, spiritual, material, and financial means placed at the service of the mission.

III. The summons of God...

Signs, gifts, but also summons for our religious family...always in alliance with lay partners

1. For our consecrated life...

- To take care, in our communities, of our religious life by prayer, fraternal life, and authentic living out of the evangelical counsels
- To deepen our understanding of religious vows and working toward « a new impetus to inculturation, one that would combine creativity, missionary boldness, sensitivity and the strength typical of community life » (Pope Francis, *Querida Amazonia*, #95)

2. For our communities...

- To maintain, together with lay people who are close to us, a spirit of simplicity, humility, welcome, and hospitality
- To care for fraternity as a priority and a necessity
- To build religious communities that are « incarnated », « involved », « concerned », « engaged » and not « resigned ».
- To avoid counter-witness by developing a simple life-style
- To counteract individualism.

3. For our Congregation...

- To put in place not overly large structures that strengthen subsidiarity and decentralisation and favor the circulation of religious
- To know how to take advantage of personal charisms capable of engendering apostolic undertakings for the entire Congregation
- To support spaces of dialogue, of communication, and of coresponsibility
- To greater openness, unity, communion, and initiatives in our apostolates
- To greater inter-province collaboration, particularly in the areas of formation and foundations

- To overcome mutual biases, to combat clericalism, to accept diversity, to care for wounds with historical roots and to address relationships of domination that characterize the world
- To promote synodality within the Congregation and the Assumption Family
- To forge links between different worlds. To reactivate the cultural and social resources and values of our peoples in view of deeper efforts on interculturality.

4. For our apostolic mission.

- To identify, along with our collaborators and lay partners, the missionary challenges of our times and to address them generously and effectively
- To work toward the formation of consciences in order to take on crises without euphoria or without despair
- To be attentive to the signs of the times and to cultivate hope for the world, without forgetting to return to the heart of the Gospel: humble service of the weakest and least among us
- To explore new apostolic fields, to be prophets for our world, by getting involved with the new issues of our day: immigration, protection of the environment, sexual equality, etc.
- To support, with discernment, the digital transformation of our societies which are changing our ways of thinking, communicating, working, consuming, educating, and catechizing...
- To build a world of unity, peace, and reconciliation, in overcoming the obstacles of discrimination and of ethnic, national, tribal, regionalist, religious, and cultural boundaries
- To address the search for interiority and meaning among our contemporaries by responding to their expectations (the 104 project in Paris, the St. Augustine Cultural Center in Sokodé, Montmartre in Québec, etc.)
- To get more involved in family ministry
- To invent new forms of presence in the Near Eastern mission.

5. For formation...

- To continue to work, together with lay partners, for a true appropriation of the spiritual and apostolic patrimony of the Assumption. To awaken, especially among the young, a desire to know the founder and the history of the Congregation better
- To ensure the quality of formation (both initial and ongoing) of all the members of the Congregation
- To train brothers in conflict resolution, in leadership, and in the animation of groups, and to prepare some to assume positions of animation and governance
- To foster the vocations of theologian and formator within the Congregation.

6. For youth ministry and vocation ministry...

- To continue to reflect on and to oversee, together with lay partners, youth ministry and vocation ministry
- To make of the education of the young an apostolic priority of the Congregation

7. For the Lay-Religious Alliance...

- Strengthen the formation of lay-people in the charism and in dalzonian spirituality, so that they might discover their place and their role in the Church and in the Assumption.
- To work toward a better understanding of the Alliance. That the Alliance be understood such as it is: « in tandem with » and not subordinated to or dependent on

- To foster trust between religious and laypeople and to welcome more laypeople into the structures of animation of the Congregation.
- To endeavor to work transversally and to overcome clericalism.

IV. Proposals from communities and groups....

Among the proposals and suggestions of communities and groups, we have retained ten of them in different areas. They are open to discussion and may stir the imagination in order to enable the emergence of new projects.

1. « That the Assumption organize a training center to help villages and small towns to improve waste management » (*Scholasticate, Saigon*).
2. « Form brothers in environmental management, conflict management, ecumenism, and social work » (*Community of Lomé, Togo*)
3. « Christians must be on the front lines in working on integral ecology of which Pope Francis speaks. The model of religious life could serve as an example of successful simplicity ... » (*Laypeople and religious, Europe*)
4. « Give priority to ecology, take seriously what Bruno Chenu called the « green theology » and re-explore, in a new perspective, the meaning of animism in Africa. » (*Community of Abidjan, Ivory Coast*)
5. « Welcome immigrants in our country. It means knowing them, listening to them, and accompanying them but without a paternalism that would settle for giving them material means alone. » (*Andean Province*)
6. « It is necessary that we create new lay ministries, for example, in the areas of solidarity, the welcoming of migrants, adult education. » (*Andean Province*)
7. « Launch practical activities in the area of conflict resolution and the promotion of justice and peace in the world ». (*Province of Brazil*)
8. « Create multi-purpose centers that would serve simultaneously as counseling centers, spiritual retreat centers, formation sessions, days of recollection and any activity of a similar nature » (*Paris, Denfert-Rochereau*).
9. « That competent laypeople fully participate in the different levels of decision-making of the Congregation, that they might serve as voices for new proposals, partners confidently sharing and getting involved in various activities, world-wide and local missions such as formation, future apostolates or those already underway, fraternal life, parish life, the re-reading of major events in the life of the Province, etc. » (*Laypeople and religious, Europe*)
10. « Organize regional, national, even provincial meetings in order to bring together the Assumption Family and their works on the peripheries into « partnerships » that could be baptized « Assomptionnades ». Hopefully we could get the four women's congregations of the Assumption involved, as well as their various networks during this synodal reflection on the place of women in the Church. » (*Laypeople and religious, Europe*)

Rome, May 25, 2022

Fathers Chi Ai Nguyen, Dominique Greiner, Jean Paul Sagadou, João Gomez, Roger Syayipuma, Thierry Kahongya.