

A News of the Assumption



EDITORIAL

“Take a Step Further”

Our Church is going through troubled times. The instability of the world affects all layers of our societies. And we live in a perpetual uncertainty of tomorrow. Our congregation is not spared. “Take one step further”, it will have to pass through a sieve which will require of us a conversion.

Agenda

Ordinary General Council

n° 2 : **July 13-14, 2023.**

n° 3 : **September 25-October 6, 2023.**

Fr. Ngoa

- **During August:** arrive from the Philippines to Rome.

Fr. Benoît

- **July-August:** France.
- **September 5 :** arrive in Rome.

Fr. João

- **July-August:** Brazil.
- **September 15 :** arrive in Rome.

Fr. Thierry

- **July 5-30:** 16th General Chapter of the Orantes of the Assumption (Thibe).
- **August:** DR-Congo.
- **September 15:** return to Rome.

Fr. Étienne

- **July-August:** Madagascar.
- **September 15:** arrive in Rome.

On the cover

On Thursday, June 23, 2023, at 10:30, Pope Francis received the 34th General Chapter of our congregation, in a private audience, in the Consistory Hall on the second floor of the Apostolic Palace of the Vatican. This was less than a week after his release from the hospital. He appeared tired but greeted us warmly. We were also joined by our brother religious from the Rome community. His message (which can be read on page. . .) was interspersed with several improvisations, notably to personally greet the former and newly elected Superior General. He also mentioned our sanctuary of Lourdes in Argentina!

150 years of Bayard, quite a story!



On March 28 and 29, a seminar was held in Aubervilliers (a region of Paris) to celebrate the 150th anniversary of La Bonne Presse, which became Bayard Press in 1969. This was a highly regarded event, which honored not only the “work” but also our congregation, which is still in charge. It would be impossible to look back on nearly 40 contributions, most of them fascinating, for the history of both the press and the Church in France and Rome: we will have to wait for the proceedings, which will be published at the end of this year.

Let us look at the focus of the participants (many of whom were young historians) on the project of the founding fathers in terms of a “moral crusade”, also the place of the religious and the Oblates of the Assumption at the heart of this work. Let us also examine the prior work of Bayard as it relates to youth and, also, to adults.

The Assumption will not be forgotten by the speakers, many of whom once again praised the welcome they received in the congregation’s Parisian and Roman archives. We asked if this was “an act of divine intervention”; we looked at the ambivalence of the salaries of the religious in Bayard; we unraveled the particular governance of the work. . .without forgetting the underlying theological factors, for example toward the editorial project of a Fr. Emile Gabel at La Croix.

Finally, regarding Bayard, these two days were about a modern religious congregation trying to find new ways of communicating in a modern world, extremely passionate from start to finish: of Pèlerin, founded in 1873 to maintain a connection among the Catholics of France who felt threatened, to the Internet sites of today threatening young people throughout the world. It is the concern of effective media today that struggles between the Gospel and society. It is a true charisma that many would envy!

Fr. Michel KUBLER

“Take a Step Further”



Fr Ngoa Ya Tshihemba
Superior General of
the Augustinians of the
Assumption

It was like an obsession at the level of the coordination team of the General Chapter, where I was first as one of the moderators then, after my election, as president of the Chapter. I can't remember a day that went by that I didn't hear that phrase: "take one step further". It was our desire. Each time we approached a theme (formation, lay-religious alliance, missionary character of our congregation, etc.), we were always asking the question: how do we take it one step further? Let this desire be our prayer, a prayer that we will make together.

The 34th General Chapter of our congregation did not have the ambition of creating new. This would be to ignore what has been done so far. The Spirit continues his mission. But the question makes sense, especially since the socio-politico-religious situation does not seem to work in our favor when we want to "live and announce the hope of the Gospel", we who believe that "the Kingdom is at hand".

How to take it one step further? To this question, I happened to think of the three ways suggested by Saint Augustine to Dioscorus: the first is humility, the second humility and the third is humility (cf. St. Augustine, Letter 118). Maybe that's what my predecessor wanted to remind us in his editorial in the last issue of AA info (#24):

"We can dream of a strong, great and beautiful Assumption, but we are only workers sent to the vineyard by the Lord. It is he, and he alone, who makes it grow and gives harvest. It is humility that must guide us in all our actions, whatever the responsibility that falls to us. Our strength lies in God alone, and it is the passion that we have for his Kingdom inaugurated by Jesus who animates us." Yes, God alone is our rampart.

The reports from the Provincials had clearly revealed our riches, but also

and above all our limitations and our weaknesses. Hence the other word that came up often: interdependence. What brings us back to Scripture: *"None of them was needy, for everyone who owned estates or houses sold them, and they brought the proceeds of the sale to lay at the feet of the Apostles; then we distributed according to individual needs."* (Acts 4:34-35). They put everything in common. Yes, it is Augustinian.

I do not know the origin of the proverb "Unity is strength", which we have all used or at least heard. Although there are always exceptions, the veracity of this expression resists its opponents. On the day of my election as Superior General, I had asked for a few minutes of meditation and contemplation before answering "Yes, I accept" to the question posed to me. I was sitting in the chapel, and it was as if I was in front of a giant screen on which paraded the challenges of our societies, our Church and of our Congregation. I was scared. And suddenly the experiments that prove that "unity is strength" came to mind. I have experienced it and I believe it. This is the reason for which, that day, I ended the address to my brothers by saying this: "Unity will be our strength." Who is unaware of it, who does not see it or see it coming? Our Church is going through troubled times. The instability of the world affects all layers of our societies. And we live in a perpetual uncertainty of tomorrow. Our congregation is not spared. Yes, "take one step further" which is our desire, which should also become our prayer ("Your desire is your prayer", said Saint Augustine - commentary on Psalm 37), it will have to pass through a sieve which will require of us a conversion. This God who calls us and sends us, in covenant with our lay brothers and sisters, to be signs of hope, tells us: **"Do not be afraid, I am with you."** (Jer 42, 11) ■

Calls, nominations, agreements...

Fr. Benoît Grière, Superior General, with the approval of his Council, has called:

■ TO PERPETUAL PROFESSION

- 1) **KAKULE TEGHEKA Grace**
(Africa) (04/17/2023)
- 2) **KAMBALE MBOGHA Georges**
(Africa) (04/17/2023)
- 3) **KAMBALE MUVAKULI Jean-Baptiste**
(Africa) (04/17/2023)
- 4) **KAMBALE NDAMBUKO Gervais**
(Africa) (04/17/2023)
- 5) **MALIDRALE MOKILI Crispin**
(Africa) (04/17/2023)
- 6) **MUHINDO ISUNGU Vianney**
(Afrique) (17/04/2023)
- 7) **MUHINDO LUTSUMBI Paulin**
(Africa) (04/17/2023)
- 8) **PALUKU KIHEMBO Dieu-Merci**
(Africa) (04/17/2023)
- 9) **WOMBARAGUEMA Bédgida Maurice**
(Africa) (04/17/2023)
- 10) **Christian Kossi Anani AZIAMALE**
(Madagascar) (04/17/2023)
- 11) **Paul TRINH NGOC Lâm**
(Europe) (04/18/2023)
- 12) **Br. PALUKU KATHALIKO Eugène**
(Africa) (04/18/2023)

■ TO THE DIACONATE

- 13) **Elmer VERGARA**
(North Am) (04/18/2023)
- 14) **Jovie KOUÉPOU KOUÉPOU**
(Ea Africa) (04/18/2023)
- 15) **Claude Orlando RAVELONIRINA**
(Ea Africa) (04/18/2023)
- 16) **Boniface ANDABWA MAKOMBE**
(Ea Africa) (04/18/2023)
- 17) **Gregory KIMANI KURIA**
(Ea Africa) (04/18/2023)
- 18) **Dominic MBAZE**
(Ea Africa) (18/04/2023)
- 19) **KABAMBA MUKENDI Marcel**
(Africa) (04/18/2023)

- 20) **KAHUNGU TWABATWA Ephrem**
(Africa) (04/18/2023)
- 21) **KATEMBO MASIMENGO Frédéric**
(Africa) (04/18/2023)
- 22) **LUKALA BURU Freddy**
(Africa) (04/19/2023)
- 23) **MUSAFIRI MUHITSYA Jean Christian**
(Africa) (04/19/2023)
- 24) **Rodrigue OUEDRAOGO**
(Africa) (04/19/2023)
- 25) **Joseph Denis RAHARISONINA**
(Africa) (04/19/2023)
- 26) **Tojo Jean Pierrot RAKATOARISOA**
(Africa) (04/19/2023)
- 27) **Nathanaël TOKINOMENJANAHARY**
(Africa) (04/19/2023)
- 28) **Augustin YAMBA**
(Africa) (04/19/2023)
- 29) **Joachim NGUYỄN MẠNH Hùng**
(Europe) (04/19/2023)
- 30) **Armel YONI**
(Europe) (04/19/2023)
- 31) **Dominique NGUYEN VAN Tho**
(Europe) (05/09/2023)

■ TO THE PRIESTHOOD

- 32) **Augustine BYAMUKAMA**
(Ea Africa) (04/19/2023)
- 33) **Kizito SSEMBAJWE**
(Ea Africa) (04/19/2023)
- 34) **MUHINDO SAASITA Faustin**
(Ea Africa) (04/20/2023)
- 35) **Dominic MUENDO MUTINDA**
(Ea Africa) (04/20/2023)
- 36) **NSENGE MPIA Stanislas**
(Ea Africa) (04/20/2023)
- 37) **KAMATE KITSAKULENDE Gaston**
(Africa) (04/20/2023)
- 38) **KIBALA TARIKO Ferdinand**
(Africa) (04/20/2023)
- 39) **MUMBERE SEKERAVITI Justin**
(Africa) (04/29/2023)
- 40) **PALUKU KAHUMULA Jacques**
(Africa) (04/20/2023)

- 41) **TIENE NGANGA Fabrice**
(Africa) (04/20/2023)
- 42) **Jean-Baptiste TRẦN KHẮC TrúC**
(Europe) (04/20/2023)
- 43) **Jonathan Esteban RUIZ RIVERA**
(Andean Prov) (04/20/2023)

EXTENSION OF TEMPORARY VOWS

Fr. Benoît Grière, Superior General, with the approval of his Ordinary General Council, has agreed to an extension of temporary vows to **Br. Noël Rekougne TOMFÊÏ**, Province of Europe, for the duration of one year.

DEPARTURES FROM THE INSTITUTE

Fr. Benoît Grière, Superior General, with the approval of his Ordinary General Council, has granted an indult for departure from the congregation to **Br. Joseph NGUYEN VAN Ha**, a temporarily professed of the Province of Europe.

The Holy See, documented on May 12, 2023, an indult of secularization to **Br. TRANH KHAC Tram**, deacon from the Province of Europe, with a dispensation of vows and the loss of clerical status.

The Holy See granted an indult to leave the congregation, on June 23, 2023, to **Br. Pierre PHAN THANH Xuân**, a perpetually professed from the Province of Europe.

«Fraternity, an experience of the nearness of God's Reign»

Held from June 1 to 25, 2023 in Rome, at the Passionist Generalate House, the 34th General Chapter of our congregation addressed a «final message» to the entire Assumption family. Here is the full text (*)



To all the brothers,
To our sisters,
To the laity of the Alliance.

Our General Chapter is drawing to a close. It has been a spiritual adventure. We have come away happy, despite our fatigue. Our assembly has experienced the nearness of the Kingdom of God.

Over these three weeks together, we have sought to listen to God's calls to the Assumption to live and proclaim the hope of the Gospel in today's world. During this time, we knew we could count on the support of your prayers and friendship. Thank you for this.

The Chapter has given the Congregation a new government. The brothers who have

accepted their election will have as their mission to foster an increasingly intercultural Assumption and to reap the benefits of it, for the good of the whole missionary body that we form.

Lay people took part in the first week of our work. Their testimony enabled us to deepen our charism and discover how they enrich it. This is cause for thanksgiving, but also a call to nourish the Alliance with time, activities and joint initiatives. We also realized that the Lay-Religious Alliance is a place to experience a more synodal Church.

Outside speakers helped us to deepen our reflection. Fr. Alberto Toutin Cataldo, Superior General of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (Picpus), took part in all our work and brought his theologi-

>>34th General Chapter



cal expertise and experience of interculturality to help the promoter and moderators lead the discussions. Andrea Riccardi, founder of the Sant'Egidio community, reminded us of the urgent need to work for peace and fraternity, without being afraid that we are called to build a future with feeble means in a context where violence reigns. Msgr. Philippe Bordeyne, President of the John Paul II Pontifical Theological Institute for Marriage and Family Sciences, underlined the importance of interculturality - even in the way we do theology - in a globalized Church. Cardinal Jean-Marc Aveline, Archbishop of Marseille, encouraged us to embrace the catholicity - as a vocation, not a label - bequeathed to us by Fr. d'Alzon: catholicity of thought, catholicity of indignation, catholicity of hope. Pope Francis, who received us in audience despite his fatigue, invited us not to be afraid of the newness of the Kingdom of God.

These interventions and our exchanges led us to deepen the missionary dimension of our apostolic body. We realized that

fraternity, lived out in increasingly international and intercultural communities, makes us the missionary disciples the Church needs to bear witness that the Kingdom is near. Fraternal life, experienced on a daily basis, spurs us on to extending this fraternity to everyone and to all creatures, working in the service of peace and justice in a perspective of integral ecology.

We also discovered that our fraternity is a path to holiness. That's why the chapter wanted us to mobilize for the cause of beatification of Fr. d'Alzon. It is both a goal and a path to help us love holiness, to help our own holiness grow and that of our brothers and sisters, as well as that of all those whom the Lord puts on our path.

There are many other things that we have discovered in the course of our discussions, and that are expressed in the texts produced by the Chapter. There is nothing revolutionary about them, apart from the renewed expression of our desire to work with you, brothers, sisters and

laypeople, pooling our riches and our poverties, on the apostolic project of the Assumption as expressed in the first article of our Rule of Life: «Faithful to the will of our Founder, we propose above all to work, for the love of Christ, for the coming of the Kingdom of God in us and around us». (RL #1).

In the coming weeks, the work will continue. Provincial Chapters, but also local communities, will have to make the decisions of the General Chapter their own. For this reason, we invite you to continue praying the words of the prayer for this 34th General Chapter, which we have been reciting in the Congregation for several months: «Mary, Our Lady of Hope and Mother of the Church, intercede for us so that the Holy Spirit may accompany us at all times in our mission to extend the Kingdom of your Son in fraternity and unity.»

Rome, June 24, 2023.

() Text not definitive, pending publication of the official Acts of the 34th Chapter.*

Fr. Ngoa Ya Tshihemba, new Superior General



This Congolese religious, on mission in the Philippines after living in Mexico, becomes the 10th successor to Father Emmanuel d’Alzon.

Elected on June 12, 2023, Father Ngoa Ya Tshihemba, Congolese religious (DR Congo), aged 52, succeeds Father Benoît Grière (France), who has just completed two six-year terms at the head of this Congregation.

The Assumptionists today number 915 religious and 45 novices, spread across 128 communities in 33 countries across all continents.

Father Ngoa Ya Tshihemba was born on October 16, 1970 in

Mbau (North Kivu), DR Congo. Born into a family of farmers and the eldest of 8 children, he attended primary and secondary school in Mbau. He did his postulancy at Collège Kambali and his novitiate (1995-1996) at Maison Charles Lwanga in Butembo (North Kivu). He made his first vows on August 28, 1996. He was then appointed to Kinshasa (1996-2001), where he obtained a degree in philosophy.

From 2003 to 2007, he studied theology at the Institut de Formation Inter-Congrégations in Mexico City, where he obtained a canonical bachelor’s degree in theology. He was ordained a priest in Butembo (North Kivu) on January 24, 2008. He returned to Mexico for four years of pedagogical

studies (2009-2013), graduating with a degree in Pedagogy. He took on the responsibility of formator, replacing the parish priest of the «Maria, Maria, Emperatriz de América» parish for a year.

In 2013, he was appointed to Manila (Philippines), where he was until now novice master as well as responsible for formation in the Philippines and superior of a formation house.

A polyglot (in addition to Kinande, his mother tongue, he speaks Swahili, Lingala, French, Spanish and English), he is well acquainted with Africa, Central America and Asia.

He enjoys reading, listening to music and walking in nature. ■

The four members of the new Ordinary General Council

The 34th General Chapter elected four General Assistants, three of whom are new.

Fr. Benoît Bigard, elected Vicar General



Father Benoît Bigard was born on November 30, 1966 in Chaumont, Haute-Marne, in the Champagne region, into a farming family. He has two brothers and a sister. He attended primary and secondary school in Haute-Marne.

Between 1986 and 1987, he studied at the École normale supérieure d'ingénierie civile (ENSET Cachan), where he graduated as a construction engineer.

In 1988 and 1989, he joined the Assumptionist community in Cachan as a student. He began studying theology at the Institut Catholique de Paris. From 1989 to 1999, he worked for two years in Côte d'Ivoire. As a postulant, he taught mathematics, physics and music at the minor seminary-college in Aboisso (Cooperante).

He made his novitiate in Sceaux and took his first vows on September 19, 1992. He was assigned to the community in Strasbourg, where he continued his theological studies at the Catholic Faculty of Theology (1992-1996). He obtained a licentiate and a master's degree. He then joined the community in Lille, where he made his perpetual profession on September 15, 1996. He is assistant student chaplain at the Catholic University of Lille. In 1998, he was assigned to Strasbourg, where he was ordained a priest on November 12, 2000. He works in the parish. From 2001 to 2010, he directed the "Centre Culture et Foi" and the shrine of the Canadian Montmartre in Quebec.

In 2010, he returned to France to train as a religious educator (FFR) in Lyon and Paris, while living at the Sceaux novitiate. In 2011, he was appointed novice master in Sokodé, Togo. He will hold this position until 2017. During these years (2013-2017), he was delegate of the Provincial of France for the communities of West Africa.

In 2017, he was appointed Provincial of Europe.

A musician and choirmaster, he enjoys floral art, architecture, mountain hiking, science fiction, fantasy literature and comic books.

Fr. João Gomes da Silva, elected Assistant General



Father Joao Gomes da Silva was born on July 9, 1981 in Eugénopolis, Brazil, in the Queirozes district, into a farming family. He has 4 brothers and 3 sisters.

He attended school and college in Eugénopolis.

In 1999, he joined the Assumptionist community in Eugénopolis as an aspirant. He did his postulancy in Campinas. He then studied philosophy. He made his novitiate in Pomaire, Chile. He took his first vows on January 4, 2004.

From 2004 to 2008, he studied theology at the Sao Paulo Institute of Theology (ITESP), graduating with a licentiate in theology. He was ordained priest on August 1, 2009 at the former Notre Dame de Lourdes Seminary in Eugénópolis. He was then appointed to the formation house in Campinas, where he remained for 4 years, responsible for postulants and also curate of the São Judas Tadeu parish, entrusted to the Assumptionists since its foundation in 1982. He is responsible for vocation promotion and youth ministry at provincial level.

In 2013, he was sent to Rome for a licentiate in spiritual theology with a specialization in vocational accompaniment at the Gregorian University's Favre Center. During his studies, he stayed at the general house community.

On completion of his studies in Rome, he was appointed to the Pinhal novitiate, where he remains novice master to this day. The novitiate welcomes novices from Colombia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador and Mexico. He was administrator at Sao Joao Batista parish (2018-2021/2023) in the same city where the beatification process of Father Matheus, a former Dutch Assumptionist missionary who died in 1973, is underway.

In 2020, he was appointed first Assistant Provincial. Joao speaks Portuguese, Spanish, French and Italian. He enjoys reading, dancing and country walks.

Fr. Thierry Kambale Kahongya, re-elected Assistant General

Father Thierry Kambale Kahongya was born on February 25, 1970 in Butuhe in the diocese of Butembo-Beni (DR Congo) into a farming family. He has 4 brothers and 5 sisters.



After completing his secondary education (veterinary option), he entered the novitiate of Saint Charles Lwanga in Butembo in September 1990, and took his first vows on September 10, 1991. He then studied philosophy in Bulengera (1991-1994) before moving to Kinshasa to study theology (1995-1999). It was in Kinshasa that he made his perpetual profession on March 29, 1998. He was ordained deacon on May 18, 2000 and priest on April 5, 2001 in Butembo. He was then bursar of the Bulengera scholasticate (1999-2001).

He then joined the Kambali community as Provincial Treasurer (2001-2005). During these years, he was chaplain to youth and adult movements.

After his term as Provincial Treasurer, he returned to Bulengera (2005-2007), then was appointed to the Kindugu community (2007-2012), becoming its superior from 2010 to 2012.

During these years, he studied Law at the “Université Catholique du Graben” (Butembo) and taught Law and Civil Education at the “Université Assomptionniste du Congo” (UAC) in Butembo (2011-2017). He was superior of the Provincial House (2012-2014). On the appointment of Fr. Protais Kabila as Provincial in March 2012, he was chosen as the first Provincial Assistant.

The 2017 General Chapter elected him Assistant General. In particular, he is in charge the North American Province, the Oriental Mission, the Lay-Religious Alliance and the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Persons. He is the coordinator of the Preparatory Commission for the current General Chapter.

Fr. Joseph Étienne Ratalata Rafanambinantsoa, elected Assistant General



Father Etienne Ratalata Rafanambinantsoa was born on October 18, 1970 in Fandrandava near Fianarantsoa, Madagascar, into a family of nine children (five sisters and four brothers). His father was a primary school teacher. From 1978 to 1983, he attended primary school at the Catholic school in Besihara, 60 km from Fianarantsoa, and secondary school at the Jesuits’ Collège Saint François Xavier in Fianarantsoa. In 1987, he joined the “Notre Dame” diocesan minor seminar in Kianjasoa.

In 1993, he made his novitiate from Belemboka to Toliara. He took his first vows on September 29, 1994. He then went to the Saint John the Baptist of Vohitsoa inter-diocesan major seminary in Fianarantsoa. He took his final vows on September 29, 1999 and he was ordained priest on August 15, 2001 at the “Notre Dame de l’Assomption” parish of Sanfily in Toliara. From 2001 to 2004, he studied Theology at the “Institut Catholique de Lyon” (France), graduating with a master’s degree in theology and a canonical license.

Back in Madagascar, for six years he taught Christology at the major seminary of Saint John the Baptist in Vohitsoa. He also is superior of the Manirsoa scholasticate in Fianarantsoa. From 2010 to 2013, he was chaplain at the “Aumônerie Catholique Universitaire” in Toliara.

In 2013, he was appointed Vice-Provincial Superior and then Provincial of the Augustinians of the Assumption in Madagascar. He served a three-year term. He then accepted responsibility for pastoral animation in a rural sector in Andranohinaly in the diocese of Toliara.

He is currently enjoying a sabbatical year in our community of Saint Peter in Gallicantu in Jerusalem. He enjoys Malagasy music, gardening and looking after the farmyard.

>>34th General Chapter

To complete the new General Curia ...
... the General Chapter has elected two General Officers who are not Assistants:

Fr. Alex Castro, elected General Treasurer



Father Alex Castro was born in Manila (Philippines) on August 26, 1971. He was a student of the Religious of the Assumption at the San Simon Technical School in Pampanga. He went on to study languages, history and religious education at Ateneo de Manila University.

He made his novitiate at Saint Anne and Saint Patrick parish in Sturbridge (USA) and took his first vows on August 28, 2004.

Alex was one of the founders of the first Assumptionist community in the Philippines in January 2006. In 2009, he completed his theology studies at the University of Saint Thomas (UST) in Manila. Following his ordination, on November 12, 2011 by Bishop Luis Antonio Tagle, he was appointed to the United States.

From 2012 to 2014, he was assistant novice master at Augustine House in Worcester.

In 2014, he transferred to the Assumptionist Center in Brighton. There, he held various positions as Bursar of the US Delegation and Director of the Resident Program, as well as Chaplain of the Filipino Apostolate of the Archdiocese of Boston.

In 2017, he was appointed Provincial Treasurer and, in 2018, pastor and director of the Shrine of Saint Anne and Saint Patrick Parish in Fiskdale.

Fr. Michel Kubler, re-elected Secretary and Procurator General



Father Michel Kubler was born on January 21, 1955 in Villé (Bas-Rhin, France). He completed his secondary education at the Alumnat Sainte-Odile in Scherwiller and the Collège épiscopal Saint-Étienne in Strasbourg (Bas-Rhin). After completing an undergraduate degree in Mathematics-Physics at the Université Louis-Pasteur, he entered the Assumptionist novitiate in Strasbourg (1975). At the same time, he began studying theology, first in Strasbourg and then in Lyon, culminating in a doctoral thesis on the theme of «Christology and communication». He was ordained priest on June 3, 1989 in Écully (Rhône) by Cardinal Albert Decourtray.

As his religious training progressed, Michel Kubler took on a variety of ministries: social work with Turkish families in Strasbourg, teaching mathematics at the Sibut (Central African Republic, 1977-1979), and leading the national youth pilgrimage to Lourdes. From 1985 to 1988, he directed the Valpré welcome center in Écully.

In September 1989, he was appointed to Bayard Presse. He joined the daily «La Croix» in November 1989, as a journalist in the Religion Department. From July 1997 to December 2009, he was the newspaper's religious editor-in-chief, succeeding Father Bruno Chenu.

In September 2010, he was appointed to Bucharest, where he directed the Saint Peter - Saint Andrew Ecumenical Center, until his election as Secretary General and Procurator General by the 33rd General Chapter in 2017. Since 2010, he has been a member of the Groupe de Dombes.

Four calls for the coming of the Kingdom

At the end of its work, the General Chapter adopted an orientation text summarizing the options taken. Entitled “Living the fraternity of the Kingdom as a path to holiness”, it will open the Acts to be published in a few months’ time. Here are some excerpts.

Fraternity

We are brothers in the Assumption, first and foremost because we recognize that the grace received at our baptism makes us brothers of Jesus Christ and members of his Body. This fraternity unfolds in our commitment to follow together the path initiated by Fr. d’Alzon, in the service of the Kingdom. (...)

But this fraternity is not limited to our communities. It radiates outwards. First, in our structures, which enable the Provinces of the Congregation to support each other in solidarity and interdependence. (...) This means fostering participation and co-responsibility in governance. Fraternity is an antidote to clericalism: we are first and foremost brothers, even when we are priests! Within the Alliance, fraternity is an area where religious and lay people are on an equal footing. It is a sign of the synodality to which we are called.

Mission

Fraternity also resonates as a call to mission. As part of the Assumptionist way of being in the Church, it invites us to accompany and walk with the people of God. It urges us to proclaim a God who makes

of us brothers and sisters. It extends to ecumenical dialogue, where we desire unity among the Churches. Recognizing each other as brothers and sisters is already a first step towards unity. Interreligious dialogue, crucial to peace, is a way of recognizing the believer of another religion as a brother in humanity. Fraternity also urges us to promote peace, justice and reconciliation. (...) Fraternity even appears as a form of response to secularization (...).

Formation

The formation of Assumptionist religious who are authentic missionary-disciples requires human and financial resources for formation, accompaniment and study. But the primary means must come from the religious themselves, “first and foremost responsible for their own formation” (Ratio Institutionis, #24). (...)

It will be enriched if we open up to others and experience it as a “formation turned outward”. This is the case, for example, in pastoral formation, where young people themselves have much to teach us through their dynamism and creativity (cf. *Christus Vivit*, #203), and where the lay members of the Alliance lead us along new paths. In addi-

tion, international and intercultural experience opens up new horizons for religious in formation. We also need an intellectual and pedagogical strategy at the Assumption. (...) As for formation in our spiritual heritage, (...) this formation needs is a pedagogy that will enable us to better appropriate our charism.

Holiness

The Chapter has asked us to promote the cause for the beatification of Fr. d’Alzon. Recognition of his holiness is not an end in itself but a path to help us love holiness, to help us grow in holiness personally and along with our brothers and sisters. (...)

Since its foundation, the Assumption has known many figures of holiness: the blessed Bulgarian martyrs Kamen, Pavel and Josaphat; the venerable Frs. Étienne Pernet and Marie-Clément Staub, and Fr. Matheus van Herkhuyzen, a Dutch religious missionary in Brazil. Nor do we forget those who shed their blood or were kidnapped in Congo, Argentina or Colombia, for having made known the cry of the earth and the poor. (...) Our fraternity and our mission are the paths by which the Reign of God comes and makes saints of us. ■



“The Church trusts you”

Here is the full text of Pope Francis' address to the participants of our 34th General Chapter, Thursday, June 22, 2023 in the Consistory Hall of the Apostolic Palace, Vatican.

Dear brothers, hello and welcome!

I am happy to receive you as the end of your 34th General Chapter approaches. I greet the new Superior General – thanking the outgoing Superior for his work – and I offer my best wishes to you and to the Council you have elected.

The concrete proximity of the Kingdom

I would like to share with you some thoughts around the theme that guides your work as chapter members: The Kingdom of God is at hand (Mk 1:15). Live and announce hope of the Gospel. This is a good way to update

the motto, in the spirit of Saint Augustine, given to you by your founder, the Venerable Emmanuel d'Alzon: *Adveniat Regnum tuum!* In fact, one of the major missions of apostolic religious life is to manifest very concretely, daily, this closeness to the Kingdom, and therefore this hope for each person and for the whole world. Wherever you are, you are signs of the Kingdom by being as close as possible to the humanity towards which you are sent.

Of course, this closeness passes through works, whether they are specific to your Congregation or whether they are the missions of the Church to which you contribute. But be-

yond your actions, it is the very fact of bringing yourselves close to people, starting with those who most need a supportive and fraternal presence, which will show them that the Kingdom of God is drawing near, that there is a horizon, that there is hope, that life is not closed: this, make it felt through your evangelical witness. Testimony has this strength: to open the windows to see the hope of a Kingdom that is near.

Significant apostolates

I am happy, on this subject, to salute in particular two accomplishments already old - and still very much alive - of your Congregation: the apostolate of

pilgrimages, beginning with the National Pilgrimage of Lourdes, the fervor of which you spread in distant countries, to Latin America. I remember, when I was a child, that there were the Assumptionist Sisters in Buenos Aires, and from there they organized pilgrimages to Lourdes. As a child... It was like a star to reach for... I remember that well. And then the involvement in the media, which you are developing today on all continents, for various audiences, even those far from the Church.

Allow me to also recall one of your historically most significant apostolates and still active, even modestly: your Mission to the East. THANKS ! I encourage you to continue this mission, in the Middle East where the situation of Christians is threatened, and in Eastern Europe where the war in Ukraine is jeopardizing the civil and religious balance of the region. I also want to express to you the gratitude of the Holy See for the fidelity of your commitment to the small Catholic Church of the Byzantine rite in Bulgaria, which is counting on you. Your long experience of dialogue with Orthodoxy, as with Islam and Judaism, is precious for the Church; may it make you, today more than ever, artisans of unity and communion, in the service of peace.

A challenge: transmitting the charism

The purpose of your General Chapter was to define the main lines of your action for the next six years. [addressed to the Superior] And it is up to you to direct this. I assure you of my prayers and my confidence, certain that you will invest your vital forces in it, in particular



those of the countries of the South which, in your institute as in many others, come to take over from the forces which are today declining up North. I have been told that one out of three members of your institute is in formation. It's huge ! At this time of shortage of vocations, zero birth rate, "occasional", let's put it this way, it is a grace. This considerable proportion offers you prospects for the future, but at the same time constitutes a great challenge for the transmission of your charism. Please let those in formation receive the charism well. I give thanks with you for this renewed vitality that the Lord grants you. And I invite you to welcome this novelty without fear, as a sign of the times, even if it can sometimes be scary: we are all a little afraid of novelty, but we must be courageous. Is not the Kingdom of God itself a radical

irruption of novelty for our humanity? That's it. Brave.

To take up this challenge, do not be afraid to cultivate in you and around you the "triple love" that Father d'Alzon shared with you: to love Christ, to love the Virgin Mary and to love the Church. Thus you will be faithful to your charism, and you will find faithful and innovative ways to actualize it.

On all these things, these paths – old and new, dear brothers, you can count on my prayers and my trust. The Church trusts you. I wish you a good end of Chapter and a good mission to all, wherever the Lord sends you. I bless you all. And please don't forget to pray for me.

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(title and intertitles of our editorial staff)

“We need each other”

On Sunday June 25, the new Superior General closed the 34th Chapter. Here are some excerpts from his speech.

Dear brothers,

It is a tradition that at the end of the chapter, there is a speech by Father General. Please don't think I'm just following a tradition: I'm talking to you because I want to tell you something. Receive these words more as the expression of my thoughts, my desires and my feelings after these 25 days of living, working and praying together.

My dear predecessor, in his letter of indiction to this chapter, invited us not to come to Rome as representatives of our Provinces, Regions or Vicariates; but as members of one body, committed to listening to the Spirit and discerning the paths we need to take as a body.

Thank you for respecting this instruction. I witness it. I think you did also. Our communion is manifested in:

1. The fraternal climate which enabled us to undertake our work in confidence and serenity.

2. I have heard lay people say that they feel like they are in a family. The presence of lay people made us discover their impressive commitment to the mission of the Kingdom, especially in difficult contexts: I am thinking of the groups of lay people in Goma, Madagascar and elsewhere; there is a lot to learn from them.

3. The determined and active participation of the new capitulants, who did not seem intimi-

dated by the event, but were ready to speak, respectfully but honestly.

4. I saw this confidence in sharing about our strengths and weaknesses. But above all, we have discovered that alone we cannot fulfill the mission that the Spirit entrusts to us. We need each other. I felt that interdependence, solidarity, collaboration, alliance, interculturality, were not just words, but the expression of a desire: to go one step further. (...)

The first mission that I entrust to you, my brothers, is to go and share this joy, the discoveries, so that the brothers and the laity who walk with you in alliance can realize it, even before the reception of the Acts.

How can we ensure that the chapter we have just experienced is known, applied and lived by the brothers who were not at the chapter, if we - who have shared our dreams, our convictions and our hopes for the Kingdom - are not able to take them? If we can't do it, others won't believe in a text, no matter how beautiful. (...)

And after ? How to start a new beginning?

1. You already know: you won't work miracles. But a good start would be what some call the “small fidelities” to the



fundamentals of religious life: regularity in prayer and meditation, fidelity to vows, the pooling of goods, small fidelities to the quality of our community life and our work, etc.

2. A good start is to live and bear witness to the hope of the Gospel through a renewed reading of the charism that the Lord has entrusted to our little religious family, for the good of the Church and the world.

3. A good start also means taking the 2nd part of the Provincial Chapters seriously. It's very important now to imagine initiatives at local level throughout the body, so that the decisions and orientations taken in the chapter are really lived out.

(...) I declare the proceedings of our 34th General Chapter closed. Thank you all.

P. NGOA Ya Tshihemba
General Superior

The Vicariate of Kinshasa is born!

The Province of Africa proceeded to the canonical erection of the Vicariate of Kinshasa, on May 15, 2023: the culmination of a long process since the previous General Chapter.

It was during Sunday Vespers the day before, May 14, in the courtyard of the Emmanuel d'Alzon Community of Ngaliema in Kinshasa, that the new Vicariate was erected, which now replaces with new prerogatives the former region of the same name. The actual ceremony began with speeches and the handing over and collection of the symbols of the government of the Vicariate in the presence of Fr. Roger Syayipuma, Assistant Provincial of Africa delegated for the occasion.

The culmination of a long process

This celebration marked the culmination of a long process, since the creation of this new authority had been decided by the 33rd General Chapter, in 2017, but had subsequently suffered from various vicissitudes. It was finally in the Plenary General Council (GPC), during its December 2022 session, that Fr. Benoît Grière, Superior General, made the decision, asking that it be "implemented before the 34th General Chapter": so it's done!

In the meantime, Fr. Yves Nzuva Kaghoma, Provincial of Africa, after having consulted the religious of the former Region, had appointed on March 31 Fr. Vincent Kambere Kaghaniryo, back from Togo, as the first Vicar

of Kinshasa. , for a term of three years renewable once. The latter then set up his Vicarial Council (1).

A mission with several dimensions

Fr. Kambere's letter of appointment includes several details regarding his mission. The Provincial asks him in fact to *"reinforce in each community and/or in each religious the life of prayer and interiority, the sharing of resources (the pooling of goods), the feeling of belonging to the Assumption, the development of vocation ministry and the accompaniment of postulants, the self-financing of the Vicariate"*. He is also asked to study with his Council *"the possibilities of extending the Assumptionist presence to other dioceses in the West of the DR Congo"*.

A significant moment of the celebration of May 14 was the handing over of the symbols (seal and bunch of keys) to Fr. Vincent by Fr. Tshiamala Katalayi François, hitherto Superior of the Region. After recalling with emotion the delicacy of his new mission, the brand new Vicar launched an appeal to all the religious of Kinshasa: *"My most ardent wish is that we can make our Vicariate our concern to all*



of us. This assumes that each of its members considers it first and foremost as its own business". And to add: *"Its future will depend on how we have launched its foundation. »*

The assembly gave the Vicar and his Council a standing ovation. This was followed by the singing of the Magnificat, the prayer of intercession and the final blessing by the Vicar. A small refreshment was then shared in a family spirit and an atmosphere of joy, in the courtyard of the Scholasticate Emmanuel d'Alzon de Ngaliema.

PP. Aristide KAMBALE KATALIKO (in Kinshasa) and Michel KUBLER

(1) Fr. Musangania Kombi Jean-Paul, 1st Councillor; Fr. Ndambu Zole Eddy-Giresse, 2nd Councillor; Fr. Alain Thomasset, 3rd Counselor and Formator; Fr. Kambale Kahasa Achille, Bursar. The secretariat will be provided by Fr. Kakule Vyakuno Paulin.

For more details:: https://www.assomption-kin.org/post/lancement-du-vicariat-assomptionniste-de-kinshasa?fbclid=IwAR3feYcfwyRPhRIImZNa0-z_Z5AEQsviyIcR1r194CIJps2NJKJVRMRckXMo

A new formation house in Mexico

It is almost a year since we started the Dufault House project; I still remember that June 2022 when we used to come here to pack books, repair and paint walls with the dream of having a house ready to receive new young people in discernment about possibly a religious vocation. The repairing and remodeling work is not over yet: a “never-ending story” I’d say. However, in August 2022 it was time to open our doors and begin the formation process with new candidates.

Roberto, who was to be the first formator of our new young men, had moved in a few weeks before the official opening, in order to keep overseeing the remodeling work. A few days later I learnt that I too was assigned to Dufault House; I came on August 12, and the candidates arrived on that day also.

Finally, the opening of the house and the beginning of the formation project became official through a Eucharist presided over by Father Miguel Díaz, who was visiting our region of Mexico. In his homily, Fr. Miguel mentioned some prominent features of Fr. Willfrid Dufault’s and urged us to get better acquainted with his life and follow his example in fraternal life.

The oratory was not quite ready yet, the candles were lit for the first time and the flowers in makeshift vases, but the important thing was to thank God because we were starting a work



After a year of preparation, our Dufault House can now welcome young people in search of their vocation.

that is a token of hope for the Assumption in Mexico.

Time flew by, as we say, and it was December already!, the time for vacations and for beginning new projects. The small Dufault house was coming to life, and to this day it goes about its activities with no lack of dynamism: for us, it is pastoral work in our parishes *St. Andrew Totoltepec* and *Empress of America*; for the youngsters, their studies whether at home or at INTER (Interreligious Institute of Formation).

Later on, in February 2023, some changes took place in our region including the naming of new pastors and new formators; among these, a new formator at Dufault House: Father Sébastien Bangandu. To date, we keep working enthusiastically for Assumptionist vocations in Mexico and to consolidate a community at the service of the Kingdom.

I like the idea that more than two of us are involved in making possible the reopening of a formation house, for it is an effort not to be carried out by someone alone, but by several together, as a community.

While meditating on this event, I was reminded of a question Fr. d’Alzon asks in the Directory: Is Jesus Christ everything to me? This question helps me to keep our goal well in mind: to be at the service of formation and flourishing of this house, but, above all, to strive to advance the Kingdom of God in us and around us.

Br. Rafael HUERTA RAMOS

<https://www.asuremex.org/post/una-nueva-casa-de-formacion?fbclid=IwAR1UsfV6TKRlwcXWYlFxtRvnZjuwSeuRPVcXlmW7FkR0nSmplRQ0rayY8Uw>

African Integration Journeys go to Rwanda

The 8th edition of the “VIA” will allow young West Africans to discover the complex realities of this Central African country



Logo of the 8th edition of the African youth integration journeys - Rwanda - August 2023

It is in Rwanda that the 8th edition of the “African Integration Journeys for Youth” will take place in August 2023. The purpose of these “VIA”, initiated in 2008 by Burkinabe Father Jean-Paul Sagadou, of the Augustinians of the Assumption, is to raise awareness and encourage encounters between young Africans of different origins, cultures and religions with a view to a greater great pan-African integration. This initiative started in Togo, Burkina-Faso, Benin, etc., with young people aged 18 to 25 of different faiths, ethnicities and nationalities.

Places of reunion and sharing

“Africa has undergone many divisions following colonization, which created arbitrary borders”, says Fr. Sagadou: even at the political level, a “desire for African integration” is born. This is why he wanted to “engage African youth in this dynamic of working together to unblock the spirit, reach out to others, get to know each other and better meet the challenge of integration”. The goal? Stimulate in everyone the desire to “contribute to the construction of the African continent”.

In this sense, these meetings are opportunities to better “know the history of Africa, its geography”, but also, through the meetings, to “create the conditions

and the possibilities so that the young people of the African continent can to know “. Thus, by knowing each other, they will be able to understand each other and together will have the taste of “working together, becoming aware of the challenges of the African continent today, while remaining open to the world”.

The VIA recruitment policy

The Assumptionist Father had first created the “Youth Network for African Integration”, recognized in West Africa for “the fact that we have already been to six or seven countries”, but also social networks. Also, there are age-related entry requirements. This is to see “if those who register understand the spirit of the trip”, not to mention the financial contribution for participation. For this 8th edition, “the number of participants is limited, we cannot, at present, dream of bringing together 200 or 300 young people”, specifies Fr. Sagadou.

A mobilizing theme

The theme chosen for this edition, “Youth of the African worlds”, explains its orientation. According to the official, the ambition will be to bring together young people from all over the continent as well as from the diaspora. It will be a question of reflecting on the concept of Ubuntu, which explains the African being, the “I am because we

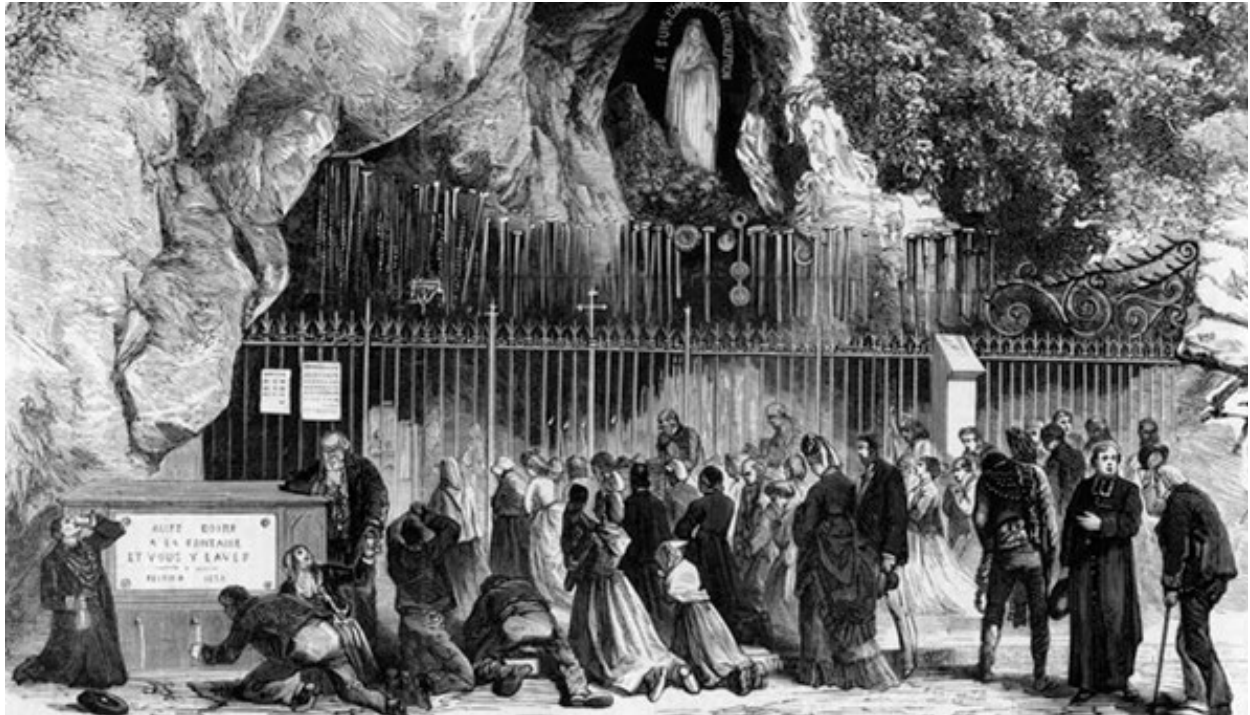
are”. This could make it possible to reflect on the question of integration, “living together and, in connection with this concept, also addressing the ecological problem from Rwanda”.

It will also be a question of tackling the subject of migration, because so many young people are mobilizing to leave the continent, tackling all the risks in crossing the Sahara to countries on other continents, even without an idea of what they search. For Jean-Paul Sagadou, a “form of education and support is needed to make them aware that to build Africa, and even to participate in the construction of our world, you have to have a vision, open your mind and not to remain closed in on oneself, to open horizons, to have a broad vision of things”. And this form of education, consisting in transmitting values and knowledge, “can help to move towards more peace and development of our countries, in Africa”.

(from a Vatican News article, March 28, 2023)

Father d'Alzon and Lourdes

As the National Pilgrimage celebrates its 150th anniversary this summer, a look back at our Founder's attachment to the apparitions of Massabielle.



Following official recognition of the apparitions in 1862, the faithful flocked to the Marian city. By October 1872, the national pilgrimage had already attracted thousands of faithful from all over France to gather at the Massabielle grotto.

The spirituality of Fr. d'Alzon rests on a few well-known bases: the advent of the reign of God in society and in souls, the love of Our Lord, of the Virgin Mary, of the Church and of the Pope. There is nothing special there. The originality of our Founder is to pursue this goal with his own means. The National Pilgrimage to Lourdes is an example of this. For 150 years now, the Assumptionist family has faithfully pursued its initiative.

The virtues sought by D'Alzon

Fr. d'Alzon was attentive to the education of young people. For them, he insists on the feeling of duty, loyalty, frankness, self-sacrifice to the point of disinterestedness. And he willingly sums it all up by calling it a “supernatural spirit”: a way of being and living in the presence of God. Our life in Christ must manifest the impulse of faith, the strength of

hope and testify to charity, “which is felt at every moment without being able to specify it in a mathematical way, as we know the features of a figure without having been measured with a compass” (1).

Nobility of his origins and his personality

The founder of the Augustins and the Oblates of the Assumption belonged to the French aristocracy. He had assimilated the codes but also the values. All his life, he was able to combine the nobility of his origins and that of his character and the greatness of his feelings. He repeated to his religious: “Let us be distinguished, for the Church is the fatherland of great souls and noble hearts. » (2)

He thus attracted men and women who were generous, frank, ready to give of themselves without counting the cost. For him, this gift of self was not only a moral duty

but a principle of faith. Our life choices are not deduced from the gaze of others, they are not determined solely by the duties dictated by conscience: everything must be decided before God, our only master. D’Alzon wants free men and women, free from everything except the Lord.

The example of an integral faith

D’Alzon was passionate about God. Also, it can seem to us excessive and sometimes even intransigent: “What loves a lot, tolerates little”, he writes. Because adopting the supernatural spirit amounts to opposing everything that undermines faith: lukewarmness in religious convictions, ignorance of the Word of God, lack of prayer or attention to the most fragile. D’Alzon was born just after the French Revolution. Very young, he noticed that the world had to be rebuilt. Also, “to raise the Christian spirit, to rebuild the edifice on these ruins, to work for the renovation of European society, tolerance is no longer appropriate” (3).

But he takes care to specify this: “I am not talking about hating persons but principles; [however] on the theory, it is not appropriate to compromise. When he shows himself intransigent, he never forgets the charity which alone allows unity. However, love sometimes asks us to close our eyes to the always imperfect condition of people and things, or even to avoid certain discussions out of kindness.

In this perspective, the launch of the National Pilgrimage to Lourdes has a militant side. For Fr. d’Alzon, it is a question of celebrating the fervor of faith, of living the Gospel and of hoping in Christ who walks alongside man. No one should live without God, let alone deprived of God.

Transforming the world through study and prayer

Emmanuel d’Alzon also had a great love of work, especially intellectual. At 20, he resolved never to waste a minute in order to focus on his program of study, reading and preserving writing and correspondence. In fact, he only rested when he was sick. It was his way of living the vow of poverty in his religious consecration and his ministry as a priest. Indeed, how to evangelize the world by ignoring it? How to announce the faith without deepening it? How to spread the truth without learning to spot the error and untruths of the moment?

In addition to study, D’Alzon had a taste for liturgy and public prayer. Thus, he insisted that the religious recite the office in common. His prayer was as wide as his heart. He asked for her own conversion but also the fidelity of the Congregations of the Assumption, popular fervor and the return to God of society and institutions.

Le National, legacy of Fr. d’Alzon

We find these few traits of Fr. d’Alzon’s personality in our own way of organizing, animating and living the National Pilgrimage today. For the pilgrims of the Marian city, Lourdes is made up of great liturgies lived together but also of moments of more intimate prayer in front of the grotto of Massabielle. There, everyone is carried by the presence of an ephemeral community, this unique and diverse Church that we form each year between August 11 and 16.

Heirs of Fr. d’Alzon, we are through fervor and prayer but also through teaching or study. Each year in Lourdes are offered testimonies, conferences,

press reviews on the news of the Church and the world, their questions, challenges and opportunities. The goal is to share what we know and learn from each other what we still don’t know, without wasting a minute of these four days spent together.

For a new congregation, modernity and new means

For our Founder, it was a question of reconquering a France which was gradually losing its roots in the faith. In his time, pilgrimages had almost disappeared. Yet they were a way to reach the masses. The rise of the railways and the press – Le Pèlerin was born in 1873 – accompanied his intuition. “Respectful of the religious forms of his time, Fr. d’Alzon intends to pull out all the stops to erect a ministry for the new times. This is what is modern! », commented in 2019 Fr. Benoit Grière, Superior General (4).

Father d’Alzon used these two media: newspapers to communicate, and the train to take the crowds to Lourdes. The bet was risky because neither was appreciated by the Catholics of the time.

- 1) Siméon Vailhé, Emmanuel d’Alzon, vol. 2, p. 301.
- 2) Idem
- 3) idem p. 302.
- 4) Interview with Le Pèlerin, January 31, 2019.
<https://www.lepelerin.com/dans-l-hebdo/rencontre/pere-benoit-griere-assomptionniste-a-lourdes-avec-le-pelerinage-national-4829>



The train's arrival in Lourdes

Many publications disseminated a thought opposed to the Church or even to God. And the train, by its speed and the fire which fed the horsepower of the iron from which it was made, readily passed for an invention of the devil, its beginnings having led to catastrophes and deadly accidents (5). Contrary to common opinion, D'Alzon understood that these two inventions of his time (like the Internet for us) could also do a lot of good and lead many pilgrims to the Virgin of Lourdes.

Our Lady of Salvation Association

After the train and the press, D'Alzon and his first companions had a third intuition: to count on the laity, especially the women. A group of women had just formed around the house in rue François 1er in Paris, to "contribute to the salvation of France through public prayer and the moralization of the working classes" (6). The association, named Notre-Dame de Salut, was officially founded on January 24, 1872. Soon, diocesan committees were formed throughout France. Thanks to the

relations of Fr. d'Alzon, the association was approved by Pope Pius IX on May 17, 1872, with the aim of restoring God's place in French society.

For D'Alzon, through the (good) press, commitment to the poor, service to the sick, education of young people or pilgrimages, the goal is always the same: to evangelize a society that is moving away from God. . Regarding the Association Notre Dame de Salut, he himself established the committees of Nîmes, Montpellier, Vigan and Alès. He visits them regularly and presides over the pilgrimages they organize. On October 6, 1872, he was found at Notre-Dame du Bonheur in the Cévennes, at an altitude of 1,400 meters, where he celebrated mass for 3,000 people. On August 17, he took 5,000 people, mostly men, to Notre-Dame de Rochefort, of whom 4,830 took communion. On June 23, 1874, he was in Paray-le Monial.

His first pilgrimage to Lourdes

In January 1862, just four years after the apparitions, Mgr Bertrand-Sévère Mascarou-Laurence, bishop of Tarbes, officially authorized pilgrimages to Lourdes. According to his correspondence, Fr. d'Alzon went there five times, in very different contexts.

His first stay dates from August 15, 1868, ten years after the apparitions. He took advantage of a spa treatment in Bagnères-de-Bigorre to discover the place "as a solitary pilgrim" and gave a sermon there on the Immaculate Conception. The next day, he wrote to Fr. Picard: "I have a small stone in store for you, which I took just at the place where the source of the grotto of Lourdes sprang up. » (7) He also entrusted

to the Virgin all his intentions and those of the religious families of the Assumption.

In a letter to Mother Marie-Eugénie of Jesus, D'Alzon specifies what he asked of the Virgin Mary and offers a more detailed description of his first visit to Lourdes. He says he is sensitive to the message of the Virgin relayed by Bernadette Soubirous. And he is enthusiastic for this place of "peace, trust and hope" leading to conversion: "If I could, I would promote this devotion", he wrote to her:

"I have just come from Lourdes where I prayed for you for a very long time. I asked for true holiness, humility, the spirit of faith, zeal. I also prayed for all your daughters and I gave myself the pleasure of being locked up behind the grating that protects the grotto against the public, for almost four hours. You see I have time to pray for my friends. I send you the photograph of Bernadette, today Sister Marie-Bernard in Nevers; I add a small plant picked immediately below the place where the apparition took place. If I could, I would foster this devotion. Instead of La Salette (8) leaving me, I don't know why, incredulous or at least hard and dry, Lourdes brought me I don't know what perfume of peace, confidence and hope that I will convert one day. At the mass said by me in a chapel inside the Grotto, I put your name first after that of my Assumption of men. » (9)

2nd pilgrimage to the Marian city

His second trip to Lourdes dates from October 6-9, 1873, as part of the diocesan pilgrimage of Nîmes. On the 7th, he preached at the grotto in front of 1,100 pilgrims on the theme "Ipse dixit

et facta sunt, mandavit et creata sunt. (10) The next morning, he celebrated mass at 7 am and noted that the communions were very numerous. On his return on the 9th, the flag of the College of the Assumption floats at the head of the procession responsible for welcoming the pilgrims to the train station of Nîmes.

Fr. d'Alzon therefore did not participate in the very first National Pilgrimage of Our Lady of Salvation in Lourdes, which took place from July 21 to 25, 1873 under the aegis of Fr. Picard, nor in the diocesan pilgrimage of Nîmes. (2,500 pilgrims). His correspondence indicates that he had to give it up because of a headache. (11)

His first "National"

In June 1874, Fr. d'Alzon accompanied the diocesan pilgrimage from Montpellier to Parayle-Monial. He then took a time of retirement in Betharram (August 7-20, 1874) from where he left on Tuesday August 18 to join 3,000 compatriots from the Gard who had come to swell the diocesan delegations of the National Pilgrimage. Its main purpose is to thank the Lord for restoring health to his bishop. Siméon Vailhé comments as follows:

"In May 1874, the health of the bishop [Editor's note: Mgr Henri Plantier] was so compromised that only a miracle could restore it. It happens, to everyone's astonishment, thanks to the dedication of a young girl who offers her life for him and suddenly finds herself granted. For his part, Fr. d'Alzon had made a public vow to lead a diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes, if the intercession of Mary obtained the healing of the pastor. The improvement was great enough to recover some, if not all, of his strength; but he im-

mediately abused it, going about like a fit man in what he considered his duty. » (12)

This is Fr. d'Alzon's third pilgrimage to Lourdes, but his very first participation in the National Pilgrimage. On this occasion, 450 pilgrims came from Paris. On the 19th, he addresses the pilgrims during the mass. He returned to Nîmes on August 20 before the end of the pilgrimage.

5) For example, on May 8, 1842, year of birth of Marie Correnson in Paris, the Paris-Versailles railway line was bereaved by a terrible accident, causing the death of 50 people.

6) S. Vailhé, Emmanuel d'Alzon, T. 2, p. 257.

7) Letter to François Picard, Bagnères de Bigorre, August 16, 1868 (Letters 1867-1868, p. 663).

8) Father d'Alzon only went to La Salette once: it was in July 1858, during a trip from Paris to Nîmes with stops in Geneva and Grenoble,

9) Letter of August 16, 1868 to Mother Marie-Eugénie of Jesus, t. VII (1994), p. 134.

10) Ps 32.9: "He spoke, what he said existed; he commanded, and what he said happened. »

11) Letter to Vincent from Paul Bailly, Le Vigan, around July 13, 1873: "There you go! Nîmes is going to leave for Lourdes. My head is extremely (heavy)...", Letter to Marie-Eugénie of Jesus on July 11: "For eight days that I have been in Vigan, I have done nothing... this absolute rest does me a certain good... I intend to stay here for a fortnight, not to go to Lourdes, which would lead to a relapse. »

12) S. Vailhé, Emmanuel d'Alzon, T. 2, p. 270.

Despite his intentions, Fr. d'Alzon could not fulfill his desire in 1875 to join the "National" (13). His summer program was turned upside down by the death of Bishop Plantier on May 25 and the difficult negotiations that followed to obtain the appointment of Bishop Besson. Grateful, he renewed him in his office as Vicar General.

"The miracles have returned"

In 1877, Fr. d'Alzon made a 4th visit to Lourdes as part of the National Pilgrimage (August 16-24). Leaving Paris on August 17, he arrived in Lourdes on the 19th where he found the diocesan delegation of Nîmes. Very enthusiastic, he wrote to Mother Marie-Eugénie of Jesus:

"In Lourdes since yesterday morning, from noon to 5 a.m., we have had seven miracles. Mgr Peyramale and M. Lasserre had told me, each on their own: "The pilgrimages and the miracles are going away." They've come back... The miracles have awakened enthusiasm. Bishop Peyramale finds that yesterday was one of the most beautiful days in the history of Lourdes. » (14)

Back in Nîmes, he learned of the brutal death of his friend Abbé Peyramale, who had died



on September 8, the very day of the funeral of President Adolphe Thiers, who had dared to declare from the rostrum of the Chamber of Deputies that "pilgrimages are not any more in our traditions". In memory, the baton of the parish priest of Lourdes must be given to Fr. d'Alzon by a novice. But Bro. Norbert Matthieu, too distracted, forgot him on the train.

During this National Pilgrimage of 1877, Fr. d'Alzon asked for a sign from heaven. To confirm this in his mission project in Russia, he asks for the healing of an Oblate. On September 3, 1877, he wrote to Fr. Picard:

"I will confess to you that, if I remained in Lourdes twenty-four hours after the pilgrimage that you led, it was because I wanted to ask the Blessed Virgin for a

sign that she approved of our efforts to work for the conversion of Eastern Schismatics. Would not the healing of my Oblate, consecrated especially to this work, be the sign granted? » (15)

Regarding the National Pilgrimage launched by his religious, we see Fr. d'Alzon in Lourdes for the last time in August 1879, but also on a pilgrimage to Rome in May 1877 and February 1878.

Our foundations under the protection of the Virgin of Lourdes

The simplicity of Mary's message at Lourdes immediately pleased our Founder: prayer, conversion, penance. The life and faith of the Virgin reached what he held most dear. Through the mystery of the Incarnation, Mary gave birth to the Saviour. And he, for his part, never ceases to ask the Lord for the grace to give birth to generous and apostolic souls in the service of his Kingdom. The popular fervor, the devotion of the Association Notre-Dame de Salut and of the Hospitalité Notre-Dame de Salut, as well as our elders in the Assumption, brothers and sisters, wrote the rest of the history of this pilgrimage and concretized the wish of Fr. d'Alzon. Let us conclude with these words of Fr. Jean-Paul Périer-Muzet:

"A veritable fever of pilgrimage and a great thirst for miracles took hold of him when it seemed to him urgent to re-Christianize these masses whose direction the social elites were losing day by day. Only an impulse of faith that is not afraid to assert itself on the public highway can rebuild the fabric of a united people: Lourdes, a prayer stop, to resume walking together. » (16)

Fr. Vincent LECLERCQ
General Postulator

13) In 1875, the 3rd National took 54 patients to Lourdes. A subscription made it possible to cover their costs. The number of patients increased and gradually reached an average of 1,000 patients per National. Quickly, a problem arises: who will take care of it? In 1876, three Little Sisters of the Assumption worked there. They are 25 in 1879 but no longer sufficient for the task. Thus was born the Hospitality of Our Lady of Salvation. Hospitallers began to serve in Lourdes from the National of 1881.

14) Letter of August 20, 1877 to Mother Marie-Eugénie of Jesus, Letters 1877-1878, p. 297.

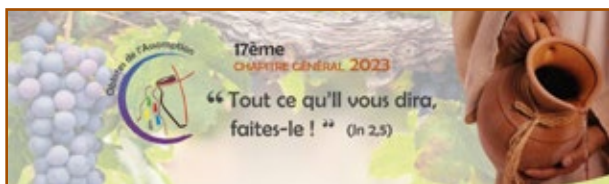
15) Highlights of Emmanuel d'Alzon's path to holiness, Cahiers du Bicentenaire d'Alzon n° 12, p. 58.

16) -Fr. Jean Paul Périer-Muzet, Father Emmanuel d'Alzon by himself, Anthologie Alzonienne, Vol 1, p. 200.

Our Sisters also « capitulate »!

Two of our sister congregations of the Assumption are also holding their General Chapters following ours.

Oblates of the Assumption



The 17th General Chapter of the Oblates of the Assumption was held from June 23 to July 19, 2023 at Izvoare-Bacă (Romania), on the theme “All that he tells you, do it!” (Jn 2, 5). The 32 capitulants (14 members by right and 18 delegates) were from ten different nationalities---15 of which were from the DR-Congo. The facilitation of the Chapter was assigned to two animators of the Esdac (Exercices spirituels pour un discernement apostolique en commun).

The most meaningful moments of the chapter were:

- the opening of the Chapter on Saturday, June 24th with the Eucharist celebrated by Fr. Florentin Halandut (of the community of Mărgineni, next to Bacău), and one address given by Sr. Felicia Ghiorghies, Superior General;
- two days of retreat at the beginning of the Chapter, Saturday June 24 and Sunday, the 25th, animated by the members of the Esdac;
- the election of the Superior General, planned for the afternoon of July 11, followed by a Mass of the Holy Spirit;
- the closing Mass of the Chapter on Wednesday, July 19.

It should be noted that the first week of the Chapter included the participation of six lay members---four from Latin America and two from the Congo. A special time for a Forum by viséo-conference (Zoom), enabled other friends of the Oblates to participate in the Chapter.

The Chapter participants also had the time to discover the spiritual treasures of the region, in particular, the famous Orthodox monasteries of Bucovine (North-east of Romania) during an excursion in July.

To discover the special moments of the 17th General Chapter of the Oblates:

<https://oachapitregeneral2023.wordpress.com/>



Orantes of the Assumption



The Orantes celebrated their 16th General Chapter from July 5 to 30, based on the theme: “Have the root of love deep in your heart. Your vocation has called each of you to one single hope---one single Body and one single Spirit (Eph 4, 4)” It was held at the Monastery of the Augustinians of Mercy (Seine-Maritime, France), the capitulants represented eight Regions, Districts, and distinctive communities.

A pilgrimage in the steps of Mother Isabelle de Clermont-Tonnerre took place in Belgium prior to the Chapter. This was presided by the Superior General, Sr. Anne Huyghebaert, and accompanied by Fr. Thierry Kambale Kahongya, Assumptionist Assistant General, as a delegate of the bishop of Evry-Corbeil-Essonnes, the diocese to which the Congregation belongs.

To learn more about the 16th General Chapter of the Orantes:

<https://oranteschapitregeneral.wordpress.com/>

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Our Deceased Brothers



† **Father Marcel GUIVARC'H**, of the São Paulo community (Province of Brazil), died on May 10, 2023, in São Paolo (Brazil). His funeral was conducted on May 12 in Eugenopolos, where he was buried in the vaults of the Assumptionists. He was 96.

† **Fr. Eduard GELDTMEIJER**, in the community of the Netherlands (European Province), died on June 16, 2023, at Breda, Netherlands. His services were celebrated on June 23rd in the chapel of Wereldhuis in Boxtel, followed by interment in the Assumptionist Cemetery of Stapelen, in Boxtel. He was 90.

† **Fr. Yvonnek GUILHE LA COMBE DE VILLERS**, of the community of Layrac (European Province), died on June 26, 2023, in Layrac (France). His funeral was celebrated on June 28 in the Chapel of Prieuré. He was 88.

† **Fr. KAMBALE KAGHUSA Roger**, of the community of Butembo-Kindugu (African Province), died on June 30, 2023, in Goma (DR-Congo). His funeral was conducted on July 4th in the church of Kitatumba in Butembo, followed by a burial in the cemetery of Mahamba. He was 52.