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# JOURNAL OF THE CHAPTER

The Kingdom of God is at hand.

Living and proclaiming the hope of the Gospel.

34TH GENERAL CHAPTER OF THE ASSUMPTIONISTS - JUNE 01-25, 2023

## Hard chapter work

On Thursday June 15, the capitulants worked hard on three areas considered to be priorities, namely the Congregation's "Structures and Community Organization", the evaluation of "Mobilizing Works" and Formation. We'll have to come back to pursue this work.

The day ended with the election of two General Assistants.

## Presentation of the Structures and Community Organization Commission

Father Benoît Bigard (Provincial of Europe) presented the work of the Commission.

He began by stressing the values that underpinned this work: solidarity, interdependence and fraternity; co-responsibility, subsidiarity, cross-cutting, and missionary availability.

### 2 schemes are proposed for discussion:

- a **more traditional scheme**, resizing structures, taking care to support and train leaders, and securing financial resources;

- a **more innovative scheme**, with new entities articulated around mobilizing works, foundations and common apostolic axes, reinforcing the animation role of the Plenary General Council (CGP), the General Secretariat for Formation and the Economic Council of the Congregation (CEC).

At this stage, the capitulants seemed to prefer the first option. They insisted on the values put forward by the



Commission, on accompaniment, on the training of leaders, on the need for founders and missionaries.

«We have made progress in mobilizing for mission. The structures must take care of what has been sown. They need to be flexible in the event of an earthquake: there will be no collapse! I'm also sensitive to «names»: today,

an Angolan belongs to the Province of Brazil, a Filipino to the Province of Europe. We'd have to choose other names...». Father Marcelo Marciel, Assistant General

## Presentation of the text of the «Mobilizing Works» Commission

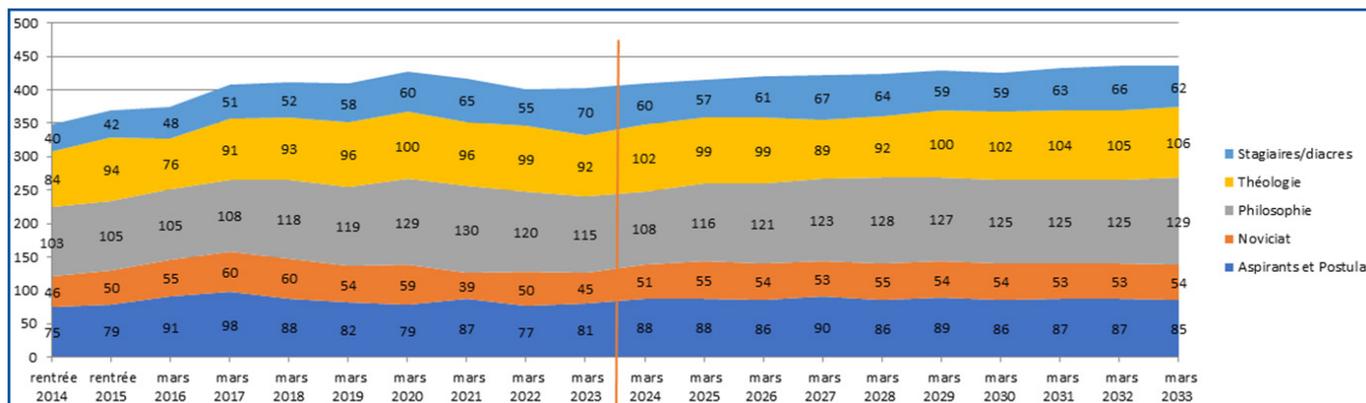
Father Benoît Bigard also presented this text to the assembly.

The Commission noted that mobilization for mobilizing works has not lived up to expectations, and that support and evaluation structures need to be improved.

These works are to be identified without competition or hierarchy in relation to other works.

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The capitulants wish to clarify the criteria for receiving the label of «mobilizing work». How can it be an

expression of the charism, a place of formation and responsibility for young people, a stimulus for other works? Here again, the values of cross-cutting and co-responsibility were highlighted.



(Chart by Didier Remiot)

## Presentation of the Formation Commission's text

Father François Katalayi (former Kinshasa Regional) presented a first draft of the Formation Commission's proposals. His presentation was organized under 5 headings:

1. Findings
2. Emergencies
3. Priorities (proximity and signs of the Kingdom)
4. Assets
5. Concrete proposals and means (bringing about the Kingdom)

The discussions in the assembly touched on many diverse and important subjects, such as the knowledge and love of the Founder and of Saint Augustine; the CIFA (International Assumptionist Formation Communities), the formation of formators, the spiritual and psychological accompaniment of brothers in formation, specialized formation, the internationalization of novitiates, the task and responsibilities of the Secretary General for Formation, selection criteria, economic formation, language learning, reports and evaluation of brothers at different stages of formation, the first apostolic appointment, non-priestly brothers...

## Three comments among others

«Our first observation is the lack of trainers. We need to identify potential religious and train them. Too often, our trainers are not available. Some trainers aren't where they should be. Secondly, we need to insist on quality accompaniment for the brothers.» Father Ephrem Kasereka, First Assistant of the Province of Africa.

«We need to integrate the means of communication to achieve the goals of formation. Language learning, for example, can be done online. Why not create a virtual place for young people to speak a language and exchange on the realities of the mission?» - Father João Gomes, novice master at Pinhal (Brazil)

«How do we talk about being a «missionary disciple», about the relationship with Jesus and formation for mission. We also need to address

the question of formation in a situation of crisis in the Church and the question of perseverance and fidelity: there are many brothers who leave the Congregation after the novitiate and even after ordination.» - Father Miguel Diaz, Assistant General.

The Superior General concluded this great moment of work with these words: «We all agree on the importance of formation. It's not just a question of numbers, but of the type of Assumptionist we want to form. Let's keep up our courage. The Kingdom is on the march. Let us also be in thanksgiving.

Indeed, the members of the Commission would need courage and energy to write good news for the brothers in formation and for their formators.

# Election of two General Assistants

In the afternoon, the capitulants elected two General Assistants.  
Little by little, the general team started taking shape.

## Father Benoît Bigard



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 student host 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 student 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 is a member of the welcoming student community and also works in the parish.

From 2001 to 2010, he directed the "Centre Culture et Foi" and the shrine of the Canadian Montmartre in Quebec, and lived in a student host community.

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.

## Father João Gomes da Silva



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 Paolo 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.

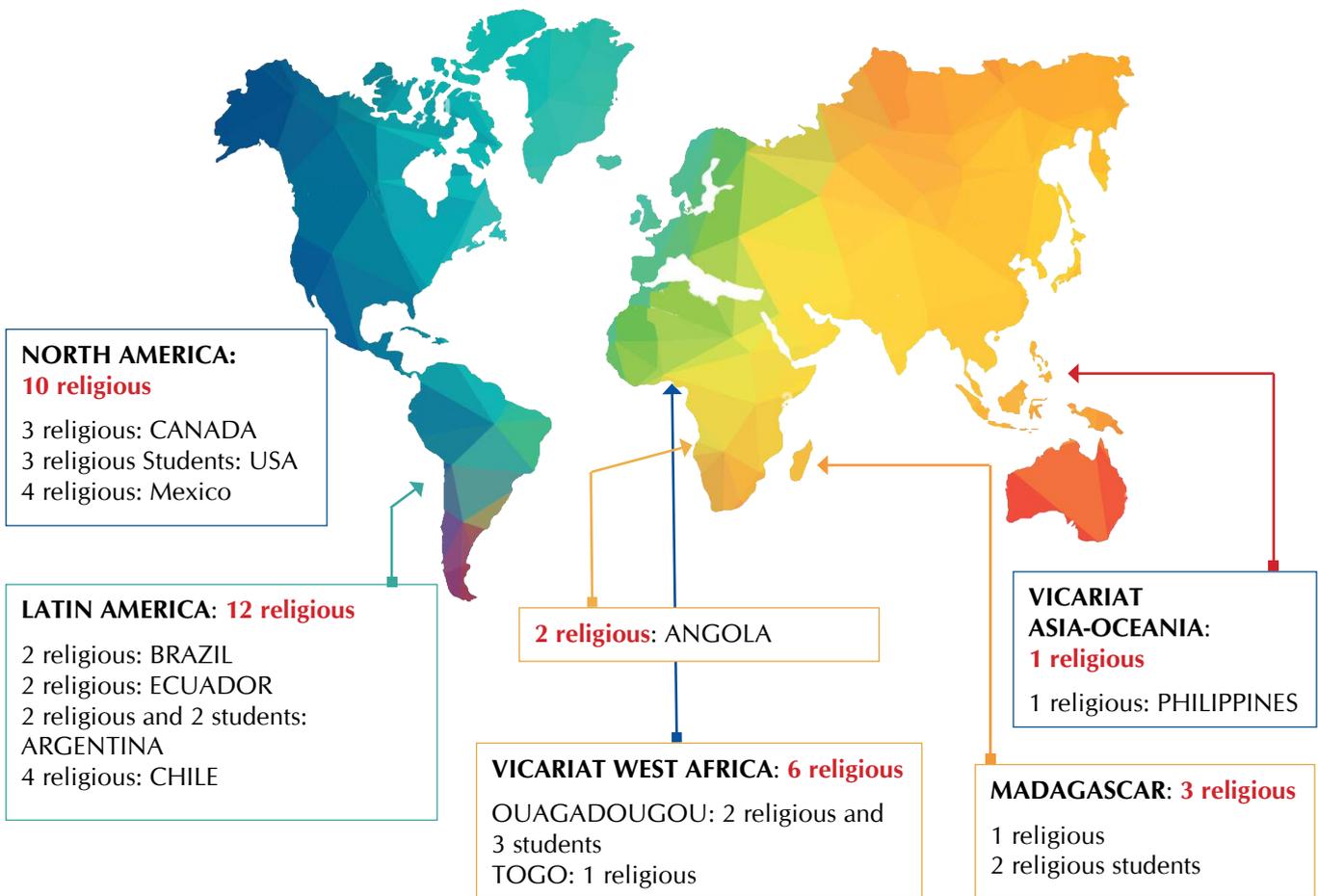
# Did you know?

The number of brothers of the Province of Africa and the Vice-Province of East Africa outside their Province and Vice-Province.

Today, 53 brothers of the Province of Africa and the Vice-Province of East Africa live in Assumptionist communities outside the Province and Vice-Province of East Africa... not including the Superior General, Father Ngoa Ya Tshihemba,

elected by the Chapter (who spent 10 years in Mexico and 9 years in the Philippines). 41 are involved in pastoral work, often with government responsibilities, and 12 are students.

<b>PROVINCE OF EUROPE: 19 religious</b>		
2 religious: ENGLAND	3 religious: FRANCE	1 religious: ITALY -FLORENCE
4 religious: BELGIUM	1 Student: FRANCE	1 religious: TURKEY
4 religious: SPAIN	2 religious: GREECE	1 Student: JERUSALEM



**TO FOLLOW THE WORK OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER**

- Congregation website [www.assumptio.org](http://www.assumptio.org) updated by Father Marcelo Marciel: <marcelomarcie1@gmail.com>
- Facebook pages: Assumption General Chapter
- Youtube: Augustiniani ab Assumptione
- Take part in the «Readers' Mail» in this «Chapter Diary» by asking questions, reacting to the work of the capitulants ([bernardholzeraa@gmail.com](mailto:bernardholzeraa@gmail.com)) or on Facebook.



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