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is at hand »
(Mk 1:15)***

***Live and proclaim
the hope of the Gospel***



**Acts of the 34th General Chapter
of the Augustinians of the Assumption
Rome, 1 - 25 June 2023**

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Preface

If a preface could have a title, this is the one I would use to open the proceedings of the 34th General Chapter of our Congregation: "I continue to believe." Yes, we have to say it. We mustn't forget that our times are marked by questions, challenges and concerns that can make us believe that "the Church is worn out" and that there's nothing more to be done. But my surprise was positive. I saw motivated capitulants. Through their participation, even if many of them were first-time capitulants, I saw brothers who were simply saying by their attitude: "We continue to believe."

The theme chosen for this General Chapter already expressed the faith and hope that dwells within us: "The Kingdom of God is at hand. (Mk 1:15) Live and proclaim the hope of the Gospel." It is true, the signs of this Kingdom of God that is already among us are there, but in the meantime, signs of resistance can be seen here and there, through the violence done to human beings and to nature. This invites us to work even harder.

Years ago, we were already expressing the need for substantial change in the Congregation. A change that helps us to face up to external and internal problems. For example, the changing demographic curve, the significant number of brothers in formation, the desire for a new missionary thrust, the need for a new organizational structure for the Congregation, and so on.

The Chapter did not go very far in its search for a new way of organizing itself, nor did it propose any substantial changes. But it became clear to us that, if we don't insist enough on certain fundamental aspects of religious life in general and

Assumptionist religious life in particular, a new structure or new strategies won't have much success.

This is why fraternity as a gift, as a mission and as a challenge emerged as a topic of reflection for our Chapter from the outset. Our charism already gives us elements of the experience of communion and fraternity. Living our charism to the full, particularly in international and intercultural communities, is already a framework that will enable us to be prophetic signs of God's plan. Our fraternity must also lead us to propose a simple and sober life, and to commit ourselves to the defense of our "common home".

The summons of the Spirit and our own reality have convinced us of the need to reaffirm our missionary identity. We need to form missionary disciples and promote mission as a path in the Congregation rooted in the charism itself. Without this missionary commitment, the Assumption runs the risk of distorting its very nature and losing the essence of its charism, by reducing itself to a collection of purely local entities. If we believe that our presence in Europe or America remains essential in offering the charism of the Assumption to the Church and the world, the path of mission is inevitable.

A theme that had not emerged very clearly for several General Chapters took pride of place in the discussions and chapter work of this 34th Chapter. Now enriched by the experience of the defense of Creation and the proposals of *Laudato si'*, the reflections of the present Chapter were marked by this fundamental and transversal option: justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

Another theme, which seems more inclusive than new, is that of accompanying God's people. A reflection that led us to discern anew our work in parishes, shrines, pilgrimages and so on. Other themes will undoubtedly give rise to further

reflection at the local level: communication and the digital continent, youth and vocations. Work on education and on the lay-religious alliance remains fundamental, even if it has already been dealt with at length at other chapters. New developments will push us to go "a step further" in these areas.

How can we awaken the interest and provide the tools for young Assumptionists in formation, so that they can exercise leadership and other services necessary to our life and mission? How can we establish a policy of specialized formation and a formation that develops our Congregation's capacity for theological reflection? All of this will only be possible if we develop the necessary economic co-responsibility, which must begin in each community, through transparency, moderation, simplicity, solidarity and good management.

A call to holiness has reappeared, strongly emphasized by the figure of Fr. d'Alzon. We need to work together to talk about our Founder, to pray and promote his holiness, and to ask for his recognition by the Church. This will also be a way of stimulating us for our own sanctification.

My dear brothers and sisters, as you know, the life of men, the history of peoples and, in our case, the life of our Congregation offer moments which, by virtue of their symbolic weight, become exceptionally special. This 34th General Chapter will evoke personal or collective memories, consisting of surprises and real events. We have to credit all this to God's grace, which is always at work. And in this sense, it will be the source of great hope. This is a chapter that calls for commitment. It has challenged us to make a new gesture.

I continue to believe that the path towards real fraternity and holiness is possible. Even if this requires a certain conversion at many levels, there are reasons for hope. My dear brothers and sisters, religious and lay, I invite you to read and

meditate in faith on these Acts of the 34th General Chapter. They are an immense source of hope for our Congregation and for the world.

P. NGOA Ya Tshihemba, a.a
Superior General

**Promulgated November 1, 2023,
the Solemnity of All Saints**

**« *The Kingdom of God
is at hand* »**

Orientation text

Living the fraternity of the Kingdom as a path to holiness

*« Faithful to our founder, Fr. d'Alzon, we choose
before all else to work, out of love for Jesus
Christ, for the coming of the Reign of God in
ourselves and around us (RL #1)*

1. At the end of our work, we, the participants of the 34th General Chapter of the Augustinians of the Assumption, meeting in Rome from June 1 to 25, 2023, wish to share with you the fruits of our discernment as we listened to the Spirit. The theme of our General Chapter was "The Kingdom of God is at hand. Living and proclaiming the hope of the Gospel". Drawing on the contributions of the preparatory work, we listened to God's calls to the Assumption in our world today. The Kingdom of God is drawing near. Its coming invites us to be attentive to the calls of the world and spurs us on to many conversions in order to bring about the Reign of God. This is the experience we share with you here.

A - THE KINGDOM OF GOD DRAWS NEAR

The Kingdom of God is already among us

2. So we began by contemplating the signs of the Kingdom of God already among us. The transforming power of the Gospel is at work in our world today. Men and women are still discovering the joy of the Gospel and

proclaiming it to those around them. In recent years we have seen a growing awareness of the need to respect creation and protect our common home. Deeply rooted in the human heart, fraternity has led us to welcome migrants, to strive for peace and build a just society, to care for the most vulnerable in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. Christians from all walks of life are driven by a strong desire for holiness. The Church has become increasingly aware of the need to protect minors and those who are vulnerable. It has also embarked on a synodal process to reflect on its own functioning. Major texts of Pope Francis, who invites us to a conversion to integral ecology, have given Christians a breath of fresh air to face up to these challenges.

The urgent needs of the Kingdom

3. The Kingdom of God is already here, but it is not yet fully manifest. Creation is groaning in labor pains even until now (cf. Rom 8:22). Six years ago, the 2017 General Chapter set unity as a priority for the Congregation. This effort is still relevant today. Our divided world is still riven by conflict, from the region of North Kivu (D.R. Congo) devastated by armed gangs, to West Africa destabilized by terrorism, not forgetting the war between Russia and Ukraine and many other places. The number of displaced people continues to rise. The polarization of our societies is already having repercussions within the Church itself, shaken by the abuse scandal. As for ecological changes, these challenge our contemporaries, who have become aware that humanity can no longer continue to live as it does.

Since 2015 and the encyclical *Laudato si'*, we've become accustomed to talking about the "cries of the earth and the poor". How do we respond? Secularization and new forms of spiritual searching remain challenges. They are bringing about a reconfiguration of the religious and spiritual landscape, marked by the rise of evangelical Protestantism, the encounter with Islam and, in some Western countries, the search for personal well-being without reference to God.

Treasures of the Kingdom

4. To be faithful to its mission, the Assumption has a solid foundation and a number of assets that are grounds for giving thanks. A founder, whose holiness it hopes the Church will recognize; a charism, that invites its members to be "men of faith, men of communion, in solidarity with the poor", as General Chapters since 2005 have recalled; a "Patriarch", Saint Augustine, who inspired a spirit of unity and charity through his Rule; a spirituality centered on the love of Christ, the Virgin Mary and the Church; a foundation designed to respond to a society undergoing increasing secularization, while some have manipulated religion for their own ends; our belonging to a larger Assumption Family; international and intercultural communities; an apostolic impetus instilled by the founder and which has led it to many apostolic fields. Nor do we forget the young people who are joining our congregation, and our elders who persevere in their fidelity.

B. THE EXPERIENCE at the CHAPTER

The capitular process

5. For more than three weeks, the Chapter participants underwent a spiritual and fraternal experience of discernment. For almost half of the capitulants, this was a new experience. The first week, spent with the laity, brought home the importance of the Lay-Religious Alliance for the Assumptionist body and the role it plays in mission. Together, we took the time to listen to how the Holy Spirit is working in our world in our respective places. We set aside a day for a retreat, to enter into God's time, rather than trying to gain control of "space" (as Pope Francis puts it in *Evangelii Gaudium*, #222-225), by jumping to solutions. Daily communal prayer enabled us to let God speak to us and to place our decisions in his benevolent hands. Invited speakers helped us to deepen our reflection. Andrea Riccardi, founder of the Sant'Egidio community, reminded us of the urgent need to work for peace and fraternity. Msgr. Philippe Bordeyne, President of the John Paul II Pontifical Institute for the Science of Marriage and the Family, underlined the importance of theological research. On the very day that the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the forthcoming synod on synodality was published, Cardinal Jean-Marc Aveline, Archbishop of Marseille, encouraged us in the vocation to catholicity bequeathed to us by Fr. d'Alzon: catholicity of thought, catholicity of indignation, catholicity of hope. In an audience he granted us, Pope Francis encouraged us in our missions, calling us not to be afraid of the newness of the Kingdom

of God. We've made our way as best we could through uncertainty, like pilgrims moving forward, not knowing exactly where they might end up, recognizing that their hearts are restless unless they rest in him (cf. St. Augustine, *Confessions* 1,1,1). We have been those travelers whom Augustine exhorted: "Do not be content with what you are if you want to become what you are not yet; ... Always add some more, always keep on walking, always forge ahead; don't wander off the road... The lame man on the road goes better than the sprinter off the road." (*Sermon* 169,18)

Going a step further

6. During the first few days of the Chapter, one expression came up again and again: the *tipping point*. It awakened enthusiasm in some and stirred up fears in others. It gradually disappeared from the language of the Chapter, to be replaced by others: interdependence, solidarity, fraternity, transversality, subsidiarity, etc. Another sign was that the capitular elections gave the General Curia a new, almost prophetic face, by entrusting responsibilities to brothers from different cultures, most of whom had lived on two or three different continents. These elections were one of the first "steps forward" in our capitular itinerary. We also decided to change the traditional way of presenting the Chapter texts. The traditional structure of "Observations - Convictions - Propositions" gave way to "Signs of the Kingdom - Urgent needs of the Kingdom - Bringing the Kingdom about", thus forcing us to convert

our gaze by discerning the presence of the Kingdom in us and around us.

Living other conversions

7. "The Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel." (Mk 1:15) Welcoming the Kingdom requires conversion. For some, the word conversion might evoke the pain of repentance or even an unpleasant penance. But this is to forget that conversion is above all coming to a new awareness. First and foremost, this kind of conversion brings about an inner transformation, prompting us to risk taking the next step. This is the real "tipping point". Together, we enter into a process of a Church being changed, making it more synodal, as well as a pastoral conversion, enabling us to proclaim even more the nearness of the Kingdom. The conversion to be lived out unfolds through four calls, which cut across everything the Chapter did. These calls are mutually illuminating.

C - FOUR CALLS FOR THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM

Brotherhood

8. 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. Fraternity is lived out daily

in our communities, guided by the Rule of Saint Augustine, which calls us "to live with one mind and one heart" and "in each other to honor God whose temples [we have] become." (Rule 1,8) If we truly place our goods in common, whether these be material, spiritual or intellectual, thus sharing our resources in joyful sobriety, if we welcome our brothers from other countries and live interculturality in mutual enrichment, we will be witnesses to the brotherhood of the Kingdom.

9. But this fraternity is not limited to the confines of our communities. It radiates outwards. First, in our structures, which enable the Provinces of the Congregation to support each other in solidarity and interdependence. We feel a call to grow in responsible administration and in sharing our goods in solidarity, in the service of mission. 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.

The mission

10. 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.

11. Fraternity also urges us to promote peace, justice and reconciliation. This is particularly important where division and violence reign or in societies that are increasingly polarized and plagued by mistrust of others (cf. the encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis). Many are the men and women who hunger and thirst for justice. “In solidarity with their aspirations and struggles, we participate in building a world which is more just and fraternal”. (*Rule of Life*, #14). The fraternity of the Kingdom knows no borders, because the Kingdom knows no borders! It is intended to help break down the walls that are constantly being erected and to build bridges across the fractures of our societies. The prophetic dimension of our religious life urges us to be the voice of the voiceless, of those who suffer without anyone paying attention to their cries of distress.
12. Fraternity even appears as a form of response to secularization. How many Christians have left the Church because they were wounded by behaviors contrary to fraternity or felt unwelcomed by Christian communities? From fraternal welcome and respect comes apostolic fruitfulness.

Formation

13. 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). Without the active cooperation of each individual in his or her own formation, progress will be difficult. Augustine already raised the question of the effectiveness of the preacher's words. "How many of you will leave here without ever having learned anything?" (*Homilies on the 1st epistle of Saint John 3:13*). Only those who let Christ, the Inner Master, teach them in their hearts and form them benefit from what they hear and learn. Every religious is invited to experience this inner conversion.

14. Formation requires us to step outside of ourselves. 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. apostolic exhortation, Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, #203), and where the lay members of the Alliance lead us along new paths. In addition, international and intercultural experience opens up new horizons for religious in formation.

15. We also need an intellectual and pedagogical strategy at the Assumption. To be faithful to Fr. d'Alzon's desire for

us to be a doctrinal congregation, we need to form religious in specialized fields, like the study of St. Augustine, the history of the Church and of the congregation, and spiritual theology, as well as formation in particular professions required by our works. As for formation in our spiritual heritage, there is no shortage of resources. Above all, what this formation needs is a pedagogy that will enable us to better appropriate our charism.

Holiness

16. The Chapter has asked us to actively 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 both us personally and our brothers and sisters grow in holiness. In his first draft of the Constitutions, d'Alzon wrote: "Our small Association seeks to sanctify itself by spreading the reign of Jesus Christ in souls." (*Spiritual Writings*, p. 567). A call to faith in a God who justifies his children and answers their prayers, this desire for holiness impels us to work for the coming of the Kingdom: "You cannot grow in holiness without committing yourself, body and soul, to giving your best to this endeavor." (apostolic exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, Pope Francis, #25). He also reminds us of the primacy of the spiritual life, to make accessible the treasures of our Christian spiritual traditions, while our world too often seeks meaning elsewhere.

17. 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 can we forget those who shed their blood or were kidnapped, in Congo (Vincent Machozi, Jean-Pierre Ndulani, Anselme Wasukundi and Edmond Kisughu), Argentina (Carlos Antonio Di Pietro and Raul Rodriguez) or Colombia (Daniel Gillard), for having made known the cry of the earth and the poor. They inspire us to love holiness more and to discover the grace that God gives to weak human beings, and which can do great things for the good of all. Our fraternity and our mission are the paths by which the Reign of God comes and makes saints of us.
18. These four calls are addressed to us in a special way for the next six years. They will color the way we live and proclaim the hope of the Kingdom. On this road, Mary, the "first on the way", preceded us with her "yes". As we come to the end of the Chapter, we continue to recite the prayer that has accompanied 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."

Called to Fraternity

The Lay-Religious Alliance

« Inspired by the charism and spirit of Father d'Alzon, Lay Assumptionists commit themselves by alliance with religious for the coming of the Kingdom. » (RL 57bis)

19. Lay and Religious, we are members of a Church, "Family of God," that is synodal in nature. We live this out in practice, and particularly at the Assumption, through the Lay-Religious Alliance. We appreciate this reality of the Alliance by which we announce together not only that the Kingdom is near, but also that we are called to live and proclaim the hope of the Gospel to the men and women of our time.

Nearness and signs of the Kingdom

20. The Lay-Religious Alliance grows day by day, helping us to discover the richness of the Assumption's charism and mission in following Christ. We appreciate this mutual enrichment, which is evident in our daily lives. It is a sign of the Kingdom.
21. We strive to imitate the Venerable Fr. d'Alzon in his life, his intuitions, his missionary drive in order to strengthen our closeness to one another in view of living out evangelical fraternity.
22. We are witnesses to the incarnation of the Assumption charism in our mutual relationships.

23. In some missions, lay people have preceded religious. They have been the occasion and the driving force for the development of the Assumption.
24. The Lay-Religious Alliance fosters in lay people a renewed sense of commitment and availability to the life of local Churches.

The urgent needs of the Kingdom

25. We are all called to welcome the coming of the Kingdom, which invites us to become saints in the footsteps of Fr. d'Alzon and his heirs.
26. A charism is a gift from God for the transformation of the world. The more the charism is received by those who live it out, the more it grows.
27. Today, this charism is received, lived out and enriched by the lay people who walk with us in a synodal approach, the foundation of the Dalzonian fraternity.
28. The charism of the Assumption is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church-Family of God (cf. John Paul II's apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*). We live it particularly in Alliance with the various categories of Assumption laity. The Chapter invites religious and lay people to explore in greater depth the different ways in which we can journey together in the Assumption family, in accordance with the text of the 2017 Chapter:

« With the laity we experience the Kingdom of God in us and around us. The Kingdom is vast, such that no one would be able to claim it for himself alone. We can identify different groups of such laity: those laypeople formally engaged on the « Way of Life », those who participate in the activities of the Alliance; and those who, more broadly, work alongside of us in our works and in our communities. Let us reiterate how much we appreciate their presence and just how grateful we are for all that they undertake with us. With each one of them we want to move forward so that Jesus Christ may be proclaimed to the men and women of our day. » (Acts of the 2017 General Chapter, #113).

For the coming of the Kingdom

29. The Chapter encourages the strengthening of the formation of lay people and religious in the charism and mission of the Assumption. This constitutes a privileged means of stimulating each other in our passion for the Kingdom. Common periods of formation are to be developed.
30. The Chapter encourages the Provinces to better promote and organize the sharing of our skills: spiritual accompaniment, management, language learning, participation in the formation of young people, and so on. This is an asset for Assumption's mission, at a time when the Congregation is placing particular emphasis on internationality, interculturality and interdependence.

31. The Chapter gives thanks for the contribution of lay people to the deepening and enrichment of the Assumption charism. It suggests that the various meetings between lay people and religious (during local, provincial or general chapters, common times of formation, etc.) be privileged moments for sharing these discoveries about the charism, discerning and implementing what God is inviting us to do together.

32. While General and Provincial Chapters are already inviting lay people, the Chapter urges local communities who are able to do so to implement this invitation to lay people at their local Chapters. This will encourage the realization of joint projects: family ministry, youth and vocations, volunteer work, pilgrimages... By taking part in key moments of the Church and the Assumption, and by our welcoming them to the local chapter, we will be even more witnesses to the closeness of the Kingdom.

The Near Eastern Mission

33. The Near Eastern Mission is our oldest Assumptionist mission. While it has successfully traversed more than a century and a half of history, it finds itself confronted today with new challenges that require us to redefine its presence and relevance in this region of the world. In the context of the transformation of our Congregation, new questions are emerging: how can we ensure the faithful transmission of our charism? how can we live out our community and missionary fragility? how can we keep alive our passion for unity? Faced with these questions, it is essential to reflect and act so that the Near Eastern Mission continues to flourish and respond to the needs of our time.

The nearness and the signs of the Kingdom

34. Several capitular statements have emphasized the importance of making the Near Eastern Mission a priority for the Congregation and of preserving its identity: « *We want to make this mission a priority for the entire Congregation. If we do not, we will lose an important component of our identity.* » (Acts of the 2005 General Chapter, #50).
35. We need to rethink the way we undertake the mission: Eastern Christians represent 1% to 2% of the population in Israel and Turkey, while Catholics in countries with an Orthodox majority (Greece, Bulgaria,

Romania, Russia) account for only 1% to 5%. For us, this requires pastoral, ecclesial and liturgical inculturation.

36. However humble and silent, the Catholic presence of our Near Eastern Mission is crucial for the universal Church. It helps Christians of other faiths not to close in on themselves, but to open up to otherness and difference.
37. Several communities of the Near Eastern Mission are located in cities of historical and symbolic importance: Moscow, Istanbul, Jerusalem, Athens... These cities are strategic locations where the world's geopolitical balance will be played out in the coming years.
38. The communities of the Near Eastern Mission have become important centers of internationality and interculturality. In the East, they welcome Assumptionist religious from Africa and Asia as well as from Europe. This new situation is a sign of vitality and a source of hope for the future.

The urgent needs of the Kingdom

39. The Near Eastern Mission is an important mission for the Catholic Church. As such, it must be preserved and strengthened. Pope Francis reminded us of this importance in his audience with our General Chapter: "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." In Bulgaria as in the other countries of the Near Eastern Mission, all Christians in the East count on the Assumption, including the Orthodox: to the Assumptionists who in 2002 asked Patriarch Bartholomeos of Constantinople "What should we do here?", the primate of world Orthodoxy replied imploringly: "Stay!" Ensuring that the Congregation's patrimony is maintained in this part of the world, as an essential element of the Assumptionist charism, is a test of our selflessness.

40. It is necessary to promote co-responsibility and collaboration between the various communities of the Near Eastern Mission, including collaboration with the Oblate Sisters of the Assumption, as well as the contribution of lay volunteers.
41. Ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, pastoral care for migrants, welcoming pilgrims - these are just some of the current realities of the Church, however modest, to which our Near Eastern Mission contributes. They are missionary outposts for today's Church.
42. We want to be peacemakers in a fractured world. The war in Ukraine has called into question certainties and convictions that seemed unshakeable. War in Europe, previously considered unthinkable, is a shock that has left its mark on the minds of the men and women of our time. This "absurd and cruel" war (Pope Francis,

general audience of February 22, 2023) takes place in a profoundly Christian culture, where the values of peace, dialogue and mutual understanding should be the foundations of all human relationships. We would like to reaffirm the closeness of our entire Congregation to the communities affected by the consequences of this war, particularly in Moscow. We would also like to express our closeness and solidarity with the many refugees arriving in Europe: their fate is of great concern to us.

In view of the coming of the Kingdom

43. For a congregation like ours, animated by an ecumenical spirit, it is essential to maintain a knowledge of Eastern rites in order to foster plurality within the Church and preserve the diversity of the liturgical, spiritual and ecclesial heritage of the Assumption. In particular, it is desirable that religious be initiated into the celebration of these rites.

44. Before seeking unity with others, we must learn to live in unity and fraternal care. To strengthen the sense of belonging to the Near Eastern Mission, the Chapter therefore proposes that the communities that form it choose an apostolic action common to all, and that each community of the Mission visit one other at least once a year. In the same vein, it encourages the brothers of the Near Eastern Mission to organize periodic meetings for exchange, formation, fraternity and prayer.

45. It is necessary to ensure adequate formation for religious destined for the Near Eastern Mission, emphasizing the learning of international and local languages, as well as knowledge of the cultural and ecclesial realities of the countries to which they are sent on mission.
46. We must continue and consolidate our practices of dialogue, for they are essential to our religious family, as Pope Francis reminded our General Chapter: *"Your long experience of dialogue with Orthodoxy, as with Islam and Judaism, is precious for the Church."* (Audience of June 22, 2023) Moreover, the current context of the world and the Church calls for the development of new forms of dialogue: the dialogue of life, which includes dialogue with minorities (refugees, displaced persons, migrants), institutional and ecclesial dialogue, diplomatic dialogue, academic dialogue. This implies the training of genuine actors of dialogue and the possession of proven skills.
47. The Chapter encourages the Province of Europe to reflect on the conditions for a refoundation in Ukraine.
48. The Chapter calls for an authentic ecumenism of charity, whether through service to the poor, the sick, the lonely or migrants, or through a common concern for the integrity of creation. This ecumenism goes beyond ecclesial and institutional ecumenism, for it transcends what separates the various confessions and brings them together in a cause that unites them.

49. The Chapter wishes to promote a spiritual ecumenism within our communities. In particular, our prayer and liturgy will benefit from being more nourished by elements from Eastern Christian spirituality, which will deepen our spiritual experience and foster a better understanding of Eastern Christianity.

Justice, peace, and the integrity of creation

50. Our time takes stock of the fragility of the world in which we live. The indifference and individualism prevailing in a large part of the planet, the wars and the suffering of the persecuted and discriminated forced to migrate to lands that are not their own, make fraternity seem like a distant dream, a failed utopia. The world is weakened by new forms of violence (climate change, loss of biodiversity, depletion of ecosystems, pollution of land and ocean, deforestation, etc.) that threaten the survival of species and humanity.

The nearness and the signs of the Kingdom

51. In this world, marked by sin, we gratefully acknowledge the action of the Spirit in our charism, this gift of God that calls us, demanding of us presence and commitment in the fight to bring about the Kingdom of God and its justice.
52. We recognize the committed action of lay Assumptionists who accompany us, and sometimes precede us, in our commitment to safeguarding peace, promoting justice and defending our Earth.
53. The Church's recent Magisterium (*Laudato si'*, *Querida Amazonia*, *Fratelli tutti*) invites us to continue our efforts for justice, peace and the integrity of creation

(JPIC), showing us just how interconnected these issues are.

These texts by Pope Francis awaken our sleeping, indifferent or resigned consciences to the situation of our world, and provoke our committed and prophetic response. The Spirit makes us hear his cry in "the cry of the earth and of the poor".

54. We are grateful that God remains close to us even in the most difficult moments of our history, such as the tragedy of the Covid-19 pandemic, and never ceases to get our attention, sharing our fragility and encouraging our hope. Gratitude kindles the flame of Hope and from it the mission is born.
55. The Kingdom of God is near, and is manifested in our Congregation's commitment to a more fraternal and just world. These are true prophetic signs of the Gospel.
56. The intercultural character of our Provinces, adopted by our communities, bears witness to the fact that fraternity is possible between people of different origins. Dialogue and peaceful coexistence are our commitment to peace.
57. All over the world, the Congregation is involved with migrants, refugees and displaced persons: in Kivu, in El Paso, in Conflans-Sainte Honorine (the barge *Je sers*), in Athens, in Korea, in "Mi Hogar" in Bogota, in Campanhas da Fraternidade in Brazil, accompanying groups of young people of different faiths in Nairobi (YOUNIB) and in West Africa, where the Réseau de Jeunes pour

l'Intégration Africaine (RJA) organizes, under the responsibility of Assumptionists, Voyages d'Intégration Africaine (VIA).

58. Finally, we recognize the prophetic nature of the blood that our brothers have shed for the cause of the Kingdom in Eastern Europe, South America and the DRC. The witness of those who have gone before us, offering their lives for the cause of the Kingdom, should be a reminder that inspires our commitment today.

The urgent needs of the Kingdom

59. Violence permeates our lives, those of our peoples and the whole of creation. In this reality of ours, the urgent need of the Kingdom is peace. Only peace, which is built by bringing justice and defending the dignity of all, leads to harmony and brotherhood.
60. We are confronted with the violence of poverty, the violence against those who have to leave their land and seek refuge in other lands, the violence against indigenous peoples and against women, the violence exercised under religious pretexts, the violence of all kinds of discrimination and abuse, the violence caused by the "blood trade": arms, drugs, clandestine mines and human trafficking, and finally, the violence against the planet.

61. Without forgetting many other situations of violence and injustice, the Chapter wishes to identify a few significant places that make us more aware and encourage us to commit ourselves to peace, justice and fraternity, demands of the Kingdom of God:
- Kivu, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the blood of massacred people and the suffering of the innocent who lose everything and are forced to flee their homeland cry out to heaven.
 - The desert frontiers of El Paso (Texas) and the maritime frontiers along the coasts of Greece, Italy and Spain, places of suffering and death for thousands of migrants.
 - The Amazon, which in its tragedy represents all the violence exercised against Mother Earth and against the peoples most closely linked to Nature.

In view of the coming of the Kingdom

62. Despite the difficulties, the Chapter encourages us to keep moving forward. The JPIC secretariat of the Assumption family (<https://jpic-assumpta.org/>) provides us with elements of formation, offers us concrete experiences and testimonies, and proposes that we celebrate God's action in our mission. It invites us to give priority to three areas of attention:
- migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons;
 - the defense of peace, education for peace and commitment to a culture of peace;
 - the protection of creation, through our commitment to the platform of Laudato si'.

63. We need to do more than respond to urgent needs. We need to take the time to identify the causes of the ills we suffer, and to denounce them. Our initial and ongoing training should give us the tools to do so.
64. The Congregation wants to take a stand against injustice and fight against all discrimination, abuse and violence. To do this, it must learn to network with the Assumption family and other organizations in civil society.
65. The road to peace also involves a conversion of our way of life. We must continue on the path towards a simpler way of life. This also implies education, training and concrete solidarity. We must always ensure fair working relations with all our employees.
66. In our communities and our works, we must promote a culture of environmental protection, because we all abuse it.
67. In all our apostolic works, especially our parishes and educational institutions, concern for justice, peace and the integrity of creation must have its place through ad hoc committees: by offering the necessary formation and spiritual and pastoral animation, they will lead to concrete actions and commitments.

68. The Chapter requests:

- *To the Superior General and his Ordinary Council*, to designate one of the Assistants General to follow the JPIC work of the Congregation, networking with the Provincial leaders, the JPIC Secretariat of the Assumption family and other ecclesial and civil institutions sharing the mission of JPIC defense and promotion.
Provincial JPIC leaders, under the coordination of the assigned Assistant General, will build a roadmap that will help communities live a process of integral ecological conversion committed to peace, the promotion of justice and the integrity of creation.
- *To the Provinces*, to appoint a religious or lay Assumptionist to promote justice, peace and the integrity of creation; he or she will help define the Province's JPIC project, encourage JPIC involvement in local communities and in all apostolic works, and network with the JPIC animators of the Assumption family and the JPIC animators of other Provinces and the General Council.
- *To Provincial formation commissions* to ensure that their formation plans include JPIC reflection and concrete experiences of commitment to peace, justice and the integrity of creation. They will also encourage the specialized formation of certain religious to lead and promote this commitment.

- *To the mobilizing and major works* of our Provinces, to identify in their mission a concrete commitment to the JPIC themes and to share their reflections and actions.
- *To local communities*, to identify in their concrete situations the challenges relating to justice, peace and the integrity of our "common home", and to spell out in their local chapter the commitments by which they will respond to these challenges.

Structures and community organization

*« Let us always have for each other the affection of true religious, based upon respect and our need to remain strongly united. May we form but one body in the sincerity of our hearts and in the steadfast honesty of our relations. May our indissoluble bond be Jesus Christ »
(Emmanuel d'Alzon, SW p. 114).*

The nearness and the signs of the Kingdom

69. As we seek to bear witness to a fraternity that transcends all borders, the interculturality of our communities, the co-responsibility of our governing bodies, the interdependence of our structures at the service of mission, and the concrete forms of solidarity that we share, all bear witness to the coming of the Kingdom and the hope of the Gospel for our time.
70. In recent years, we have grown in the development of the unity of our body, in co-responsibility, in subsidiarity and solidarity within our Congregation. We owe this to the Plenary General Council (PGC), the Congregational Economic Council (CEC), the International Assumptionist Formation Communities (CIFA), and the General Secretariat for Formation (SGF). These bodies are to be encouraged and developed.

71. We are also fortunate to have some significant human resources in our former Provinces, with religious capable of passing on our heritage and accompanying our young territories. This obliges us to think more carefully and organize, without delay, the change in our Congregation's center of gravity.
72. If we consider the Congregation as a whole, we undoubtedly have sufficient human and financial resources to serve our mission. But they are certainly not sufficiently optimized. Managing, sharing and pooling our resources remains a major challenge.

The urgent needs of the Kingdom

73. Our history shows that the organization of our Congregation is constantly evolving. Our current responses in terms of structure and animation need to incorporate flexibility, openness to possible developments and a necessary "dynamic of the provisional".
74. Our structures are, fundamentally, at the service of the vitality of our charism and of a mission carried out by the whole Congregation at a given time. This requires us to regularly define the apostolic priorities of the Congregation, and to put in place an organization that enables us to share our know-how and our human, financial and spiritual resources even more effectively in the service of clearly identified missions.

75. The interdependence that already exists between our various territories needs to be pursued, developed and refined. We believe it is important to nurture an interdependence that is not simply organized vertically via the General Councils, but also via projects and transversal coordination between territories. In addition, each territory must have the resources it needs to carry out its mission: leadership, financial resources, know-how and the vitality of the charism. Subsidiarity, so dear to the Church's social doctrine, calls for interdependence that is articulated with a sufficient degree of autonomy.
76. To encourage this subsidiarity, it is important both to pool assets at a general level, which requires a degree of centralization, and to support each entity in developing its own resources through paid work, the establishment of structured donor networks and the professional management of real estate or movable capital.
77. For the Congregation to be properly animated, its entities (Provinces, Vice-Province, Vicariates, Regions, etc.) need to be of a human scale, reasonable in size, similar in scope and providing local accompaniment. This especially means reducing the size of the Province of Europe as soon as possible, and considering the next necessary step for the Province of Africa.
78. The Lay-Religious Alliance still needs to be translated into a better integration of lay members of the Alliance into the structures of animation and government of the

Congregation, leaving aside those decisions proper to religious life: pooling of goods, living under the same roof, commitments linked to vows. What is already happening in some places should inspire all the Provinces: the presence of lay people in Chapters (local, provincial, general), in animation commissions, in the government of works, in real estate societies, in the services and councils of treasurer, the systematic invitation of lay people to part of the Councils of the Province and occasional invitations to the Provincial Council on particular subjects.

In view of the coming of the Kingdom

Our territorial organization

79. At the stage where we find ourselves, the Chapter recommends that our governing bodies accompany the development of the Congregation according to the pattern we are accustomed to: provinces grouped by geographical zones. This pattern seems best suited to local accompaniment, and encourages the necessary subsidiarity and natural growth of our young territories towards the status of Vice-Province and then Province. In some cases, stronger links between "old" Provinces and more recent realities will be beneficial, particularly in the context of new foundations.

80. While acknowledging the growing interdependence and mutual support between Provinces, the possibility

of maintaining or creating new (Vice-) Provinces should be regularly evaluated, taking into account three main criteria: sufficient leadership resources, a certain capacity for economic self-sufficiency and sufficient means to deepen and bring to life our charism.

81. At the present time, we recommend maintaining the current distribution of Provinces, with the following changes:

- *The Province of North America* retains the status of Province in its present configuration, while developing and strengthening its links and concrete projects with other English-speaking entities of the Congregation

- *The Andean Province* and *the Province of Brazil* do not change their structure, but strengthen their collaboration through specific projects in the field of vocation policy, formation and apostolates, without setting aside the possibility of regrouping into a common entity in the not too future.

- *The Province of Africa* retains its present configuration (with the Vicariate of Kinshasa). It may change its name, for example to "Province of Central Africa", once the present Vice-Province of East Africa has been erected into a province. It will prepare an evaluation and proposals for the evolution of its structures for the next General Chapter.

- *The Vice-Province of East Africa* continues to consolidate its structures and will be erected as a Province by the next General Chapter.

- *The Province of Europe*, by increasingly delegating decision-making, continues to accompany the Vicariates of West Africa and Asia-Oceania towards greater autonomy, so that they can be erected as Vice-Provinces over the next six years and participate as Vice-Provinces in the next General Chapter.

- *The Province of Madagascar*, while retaining its current configuration, will pursue its international and intercultural openness, particularly through formation and interprovincial projects.

Our structures of animation:

82. Despite the fragility of the Provinces, our territorial organization will remain largely stable over the next six years. It is therefore essential to strengthen and develop the animation of the Congregation in a spirit of synodality, co-responsibility and availability for mission. Thus, the various councils - Ordinary General Council (OGC), Plenary General Council (PGC), Provincial Councils - supported at all levels by formators, will foster missionary mobility in the service of the whole Congregation.

83. Leadership training will be reinforced by various means: sessions for Provincial Councils, meetings of local superiors and treasurers, integrating new

brothers into the governing bodies of our works, calling on available resources (senior brothers, lay people, other congregations) to accompany our governing bodies... as well as by all appropriate means at the various levels of animation and government.

84. The Chapter encourages the development of various types of inter-provincial links, such as formation centers working more closely together (on a linguistic basis, for example), inter-provincial works or new foundations supported by several provinces. For example, a foundation in Indonesia could be supported by Asia-Oceania and Madagascar, a foundation in Ghana by West Africa and East Africa. These inter-provincial collaborations will be discerned and evaluated regularly by the PGC.
85. The Chapter requests that the General Councils set up structures of animation which integrate the accompaniment of the mobilizing works, in connection with the cross-organizational animation of the Congregation with regard to our principal apostolic axes.
86. The positive experience of the PGC encourages us to strengthen and develop its role. To this end, we need to discern more clearly the priority apostolic missions and the human, financial and support resources to be allocated to them, to set up a regular evaluation of interprovincial collaborations (works, new foundations, projects to be carried out in common), and to continue to prepare together and validate the opening and

closing of a community. In addition to face-to-face meetings, brief meetings by videoconference will enable the PGC to be more pro-active.

- 87.** At the end of its reflection, here are the values that the Chapter wishes to promote at the heart of our community organization: interdependence, solidarity, subsidiarity, transversality.

Called to Mission

The missionary character of the Congregation

88. "Missionary action is the paradigmatic for all the Church's activity." (Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, #15) It is this that gives direction to all pastoral plans and provides criteria to a community when it makes apostolic choices. Consequently, the Church must think of itself, structure itself and live out its life as mission-driven. All ecclesial activity must have a missionary thrust. This is true of the Assumption as well.
89. "It is not simply a matter of going out physically onto another territory; it is a matter, for the Church, of going out from its own world (its programs, its organization, its rules, its language), from its self-referential system, and to live less centered on itself in order to find its true center in what God does, and in the humanity to whom it is sent." (Council on Communities and Ministries of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of Quebec, *The Missionary Shift of Christian communities: becoming a "Church of outreach" after the Joy of the Gospel*, Montreal, 2016, p. 12).
90. The Church is missionary by getting close, by getting involved, by getting on its knees, following the Master, before others, in order to wash their feet. It is missionary insofar as it announces in action the love and mercy of God.

91. The call to missionary conversion is therefore nothing other than a call to conversion to Christ Jesus and to his Gospel which must be translated into pastoral practices inspired by the movement of God's going out and of his lowering himself in the Son.

The nearness and the signs of the Kingdom

92. Father Emmanuel d'Alzon wanted a modern congregation, attentive to the great causes of God and man. He wanted religious who were bold, generous and selfless. These are also the traits of our Assumptionist mission!
93. Throughout history, the Assumption has been involved in many missions: some religious got involved in their own country, others were sent far away, often forever. Our Founder's dreams have always been big. From the very beginnings of the Congregation, Father d'Alzon sent his religious to the Near East. The "Adveniat Regnum Tuum" knows no borders!
94. Even today, the Congregation is available to respond to the summons of the Church and the world. It is thus present on every continent, where religious and lay people work together, in a synodal spirit, to bring about the Kingdom of God in them and around them.
95. Mission, whether *ad intra* or *ad extra*, calls for conversion, 'decentering' of self, going out and creativity. Every land is "mission territory".

The urgent needs of the Kingdom

96. By our baptism we are all, lay and religious, sent by Christ (cf. Mt 28:19). We are all called to become “missionary disciples”.
97. To be a Christian is to be on mission. So it is that Pope Francis indicates that: “Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are ‘disciples’ and ‘missionaries’, but rather that we are always ‘missionary disciples’.” (apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, #120)
98. Following Pope Francis, we, Augustinians of the Assumption, clearly affirm that every religious and lay person of the Assumption is a missionary, and that the Assumption is missionary, in a doctrinal, social and ecumenical spirit (cf. RL #16).
99. The mission of the Assumption is to announce the Reign of God. Our first mission is the fraternal life lived in community at the school of Saint Augustine.
100. The mission of the Assumption is to announce the Reign of God. Mission has no age. *An elderly religious who reflects the joy of the Gospel in his community remains a missionary* (cf. RL #19).

In view of the coming of the Kingdom

“Our missionary vocation invites us to become “all things to all people. This availability requires especially: an openness of mind and heart to the cultural, social, and religious values of people from various backgrounds; a willingness to receive as well as to give, based on mutual esteem and respect; a concern for formation, competence, and adaptation; a readiness to take initiatives and to be creative; zeal, dedication to work, frankness, and daring.”
(RL #20)

Formation for mission

101. Right from the start of their formation, postulants, novices and young religious need to acquire a taste for the missionary adventure.
102. Preparing missionaries is becoming a key requirement for the Assumption. When the "Come!" sounds, the "Go!" is not far off and the preparation for "departure" must be put in place immediately.
103. At the Assumption, preparing missionary disciples means forming brothers who are bold, generous and selfless, living the gospel life flexibly, in truth, simplicity and joy. This missionary readiness is part of our recruitment criteria.

104. Formation for mission is a time to learn detachment and long-term commitment. It draws on the experience of missionaries. Care should be taken to identify a local network so that disorientation not be total.

Interculturality and internationality

105. For religious and lay Assumptionists alike, interculturality has become a major challenge. Entering into dialogue with others, opening up to other cultures and learning to work as part of an international team are all becoming necessary ingredients for mission.
106. Interculturality and internationality call for learning languages and developing reflexes that enable one to be open to new things, to acquire skills, to make a lasting commitment to the service of the Church and society, and to examine and analyze events and the signs of the times.
107. With a view to preparing missionary disciples, the Chapter reiterates the importance of the decision taken in June 2019 by the Plenary General Council: *"Every Assumptionist religious in formation will have to learn at least one international language of the Congregation (French, English, Spanish) other than the one that may already be his."*

New missionary fields

108. At every age, each religious is called to be open to the great causes: the youngest to form and prepare themselves for a mission near or far, and the oldest to put down roots in order to take on a mission entrusted over the long term, with competence and responsibility.
109. The new territories are numerous: the digital world, the world of ethics and ecology, the world of the excluded and migrants, the world of the little ones and the poor. There are still many areas to be explored, so that the name of the Lord can be proclaimed there. Every religious is called to get involved.
110. Our way of being missionary and of doing mission must become more synodal, opposing every form of individualism and clericalism.

Governance at service of the mission

111. The reorganization and governance of the Congregation must be seen in relation to the service of mission, because "*all renewal in the Church must have mission as its goal if it is not to fall prey to a kind of ecclesial introversion*" (John Paul II's apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania*, #19).
112. The Chapter proposes:
 - That, in the years of initial formation or afterwards, the possibility be facilitated for religious to have an experience outside their country or context in order to

strengthen their missionary spirit and enable them to experience interculturality.

- That before each religious is sent out on mission, there be a genuine preparation of the missionary. That the community that welcomes a brother for a missionary experience be prepared to welcome him as a brother and companion in the mission.
- That before any missionary experience outside the home environment, suitable places (communities) be identified and guidelines drawn up, with precise objectives that define the insertion of the religious who is undertaking the mission.
- That the Superior General and his Councils invent new forms of international meetings permitting participants to share missionary experiences.

Mobilizing works

« Everyone must have their own speciality, but all must contribute to the general good. No one can do or embrace everything in terms of direct action, but each should have for all the others a great benevolence and even the willingness to help, on occasion, any good work other than that to which one has more particularly devoted oneself. »

(Minutes of the Women's Third Order of the Assumption, December 16, 1870)

The nearness and the signs of the Kingdom

113. The "mobilizing work" label, introduced by the 2011 General Chapter and confirmed by the 2017 General Chapter, has enabled us to take significant steps forward to:
- mobilize religious and lay people in favor of the works thus designated (appointments, financial support, networking, prayer support...),
 - enable these works to mobilize and animate the body of the Congregation in a particular dimension of our charism, through pastoral internships, visits, formation sessions, information, alerts, etc.
 - mobilize the key players in these works, who become bearers of a special responsibility vis-à-vis the Congregation.

- 114.** The desired mobilization has not lived up to expectations, and these works often remain poorly known. The structures for support, evaluation and effective mobilization of our various resources could be improved. But even today, identifying mobilizing works for the whole Congregation seems relevant and useful for living and proclaiming the hope of the Gospel, mobilizing our apostolic body of missionary disciples, and stimulating and embodying our charism. They are not in competition with our other apostolic works that must mobilize locally, nor are they above them, but they help the Congregation to make important and sometimes necessary choices.

The urgent needs of the Kingdom

- 115.** First and foremost this label concerns the works of our Congregation's patrimony, since the face of the Congregation would be significantly changed by their disappearance. It also concerns one or other more recent works, likely to mobilize our entire apostolic body today. Their number must necessarily be limited in order to encourage the effective mobilization of our Congregation on their behalf.
- 116.** Not only is the list of mobilizing works not to be fixed once and for all, but it is opportune and necessary that it evolve regularly to mobilize the Congregation in line with today's calls, the great causes of our time and the priorities discerned by the General Chapter.

117. The 2011 General Chapter requested that mobilizing works meet "several criteria" from an established list.¹ The Chapter specifies that it is desirable for mobilizing works to meet most of these criteria, and adds an additional criterion, that of governance that remains under the control of the Congregation.

In view of the coming of the Kingdom

118. The Chapter wishes that each mobilizing work be accompanied by an « Assumption Commission », i.e. a strategic committee that can evaluate, advise, support, and develop the Assumptionist spirit and maintain the *raison d'être* of the work. This commission should be made up, as far as possible, of the principal members of the governance/administration of the work, competent persons from outside the work, religious and lay members of the Assumption and possibly sisters from our religious family. It should meet at least twice a year and provide its annual evaluation to the PGC.

¹ These include: conformity with our fundamental orientations (service of faith and communion, and solidarity with the poor); a significant presence of religious within the work itself; an existing or possible collaboration with members of the Assumption Family; a capacity and a desire to welcome religious from other Provinces on a temporary basis; a capacity and desire to receive volunteers; lay-religious collaboration, especially within the framework of the Alliance; an international dimension; the capacity to promote vocations; the existence of partnerships with other similar initiatives (networking); a precise identification of economic needs and a partial capacity for self-financing (cf. 2011 General Chapter, #99).

- 119.** The Chapter would like to see the accompaniment of mobilizing works better articulated with the transversal/cross-sector animation of the Congregation with regard to our main apostolic axes: education, communication and the digital continent, pilgrimages, the Oriental Mission and ecumenism, JPIC, inter-religious dialogue, and so on.

To this end, international commissions are to be set up to mobilize our entire body in favor of one of the important axes of our charism. Under the responsibility of an Assistant General or a Provincial (who may delegate a representative), each commission will draw on the skills of the mobilizing works and their mobilizing character, to encourage all the works and communities in its sector of animation. Wherever possible, the commission will encourage networking and twinning within its sector.

- 120.** With this in mind, the Chapter decided that the number of mobilizing works should not exceed 9, and asked the PGC to review the list of these works, on the basis of the criteria adopted and proposals made by the Provinces. Provisionally, the list of international commissions in connection with mobilizing works is as follows:

Mobilizing commission overseeing :	Current mobilizing works <i>(list to be reviewed by PGC)</i>	Other key works to be mobilized
Education	Assumption University (Worcester); Université de l'Assomption au Congo (UAC); Network of bush schools in Madagascar	Our high schools (in Belgium, in the Andean Province, in the Congo, in Kenya); other educational institutions; ALC (Philippines)...
Communications and the digital continent	Bayard	Radio Moto and Moto TV (D.R. Congo)...
Near Eastern Mission and ecumenism	St. Peter-St. Andrew Center (Bucharest)	Our communities in the Near Eastern Mission ...
Pilgrimages	Adveniat hostel (Paris)	Jerusalem, the shrines of Our Lady of Lourdes (Santiago, Buenos Aires); our pilgrimage associations (NDS, Vietnam, Korea); the Voyages of African Integration (VIA) ...
Justice, peace, and the integrity of creation	Accompagner (Brussels)	Mi Hogar (Colombia); El Paso (USA); the barge <i>Je Sers</i> (France); orphanage in Saigon; a structured network for the various initiatives for peace in Kivu...

121. The intercultural enrichment of the mobilizing works will be strengthened by the contribution of brothers and laypeople from other parts of the world. The call for volunteers will be improved, as will the quality of accompaniment of the brothers who are welcomed there: prior training, time needed for integration, formalized on-site accompaniment, etc.
122. The mobilizing works are essential for forming our brothers in the concrete implementation of our charism. For this reason, formators and superiors will take care, on the one hand, to call on people involved in these works to organize formation sessions, and, on the other hand, to ensure that most young religious are able to spend a period of initiation or discovery within one of these works.
123. Information on all of the Congregation's mobilizing works will be provided by regular news items in our institutional communications media, as well as by specific media: leaflets, videos, etc.
124. Through the mobilizing works, we want to promote: the vitality of our charism, the unity of our Congregation, a better knowledge of our apostolates and a lasting commitment to the service of these works.

Accompanying the People of God

« I cannot repeat it too often, my dear Brothers, we must be all things to all men. That is why we must make every effort to have as much contact as possible with the common people. And that is why it seems to me that we must do all we can to engage in apostolates to the common people. It is by the evangelization of the poor that the evangelization of the world began. In this respect let us be faithful to our vocation. » (Emmanuel d'Alzon, SW, pp. 129-130)

125. By virtue of its history and charism, our Congregation wishes to play an active part in the coming of God's Reign. Among the pastoral fields in which we want to cooperate with God's plan, parishes, pilgrimages and welcome centers (*centres d'accueil*) are privileged places to demonstrate the closeness of God who gathers and accompanies all his people. *« Our apostolate is that of the Church. »* (RL #13)

The nearness and the signs of the Kingdom

126. Our community life, lay-religious co-responsibility and family spirit, so dear to our Congregation, are assets for proclaiming the hope of the Gospel. They mark our commitment to the service of the local Churches, particularly in the parishes we serve. Through our missionary readiness, we pay special attention to the

most vulnerable and desire to reach out to those who, for various reasons, feel alienated from the ecclesial community.

127. The pastoral care of pilgrimages takes on an authentically "popular" dimension, enabling us to reach out to those who are simpler, deprived or wounded by the trials of life. We make ourselves pilgrims with the seekers of meaning who live the experience of a "*Church which goes forth*" (Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, #24). With them, with the members of the Lay Alliance who offer their dedication and compassion in the service of others, we share the profound experience of being "looked upon as one person speaking to another" (Saint Bernadette, *Carnet de notes intimes*).

128. Through welcome and hospitality, the Assumption seeks to create spaces for encounter, even dialogue, between the Church, civil society and the business world. In so doing, it strives to be attentive to the aspirations and efforts of the people of our time, in order to help build a more just and fraternal world.

The urgent needs of the Kingdom

129. Remaining open to the summons of the world and the Church, we want to deepen the roots of our charism where we are by cultivating the following dispositions.

130. We are invited to cultivate a solid interior life, nourished by our charism and imbued with the inner

experience of Saint Augustine: "Lo, you were within, but I outside, seeking there for you... but you touched me and I was burned for your peace. (*Confessions* X, 27, 38). The quality of our community life and prayer is the main ground on which we live and witness to the universal call to holiness. It is here that we draw our strength to respond to this call.

131. Our societies are becoming increasingly fragmented, with divisions, nationalism and conflict on the rise. Unfortunately, the Church is no exception to this reality. That is why, wherever we are, we want to redouble our efforts to promote unity, charity and truth, between peoples, within the Church and between Churches.
132. In committing ourselves to follow Christ, we are guided by a spirit of daring and fidelity. In this way, we follow in the footsteps of the many brothers and laypeople who have gone before us on this path. With them, we have learned the gestures and words that enable us to speak of God to the men and women of our time. As in every period of history, we are called to be inventive in bearing witness to God's closeness to his people. For the good of our missions, this means renewing our ways of working to make them more synodal.
133. As one of the first places where love is experienced, the family is part of the social and spiritual fabric of our world. Today, however, this basic cell of society and of the People of God is under threat. Against this backdrop, we want to contribute to the emergence of a "civilization of love" with its roots in families.

In view of the coming of the Kingdom

134. We will strive for close collaboration with the laity in all the places where we are in mission, in order to foster synodality in the animation and governance of our parishes and works. Together, we work for the good of the community.
135. In order to provide solid support for the People of God, the Chapter requests that formation in spiritual direction and discernment be offered to as many religious and lay people as possible. Pastoral agents (religious and lay) will take part in a short training course on prevention and protection against abuse, leading to the award of a certificate attesting to the training received.
136. The liturgy is a place of encounter and profound communion with God. We will ensure that our celebrations of the Eucharist and Divine Office foster unity and interiority, for individuals, for our communities and for the People of God as a whole.
137. We will promote training in pilgrimage animation according to the Assumptionist charism, particularly for recent foundations, and the transmission of our know-how in this field. This could be achieved through greater synergy between our works in this field.
138. Finally, we will be particularly attentive to reaching out to families, in their moments of joy as well as in their

moments of trial. However diverse their situations may be, our welcome must be one of warmth and caring.

139. Where parishes are entrusted to our care, we will continue to be attentive to the pastoral guidelines of the dioceses, while promoting our own charism (cf. *Assumptionists in Parishes: Some Guidelines and Economic Directory*, 2022).

Communications and the digital continent

The nearness and the signs of the Kingdom

140. The media and digital communication, particularly social networks, have an ever-growing and ever-changing influence on the world and the people of today. They greatly facilitate the exchange of news and opinions, and can connect isolated people, as we saw during the Covid-19 health crisis. Christians are themselves marked by them, even if not as strongly in the South as in the North, and must approach them without fear or idealization of the culture thus created.

141. The Assumption, which has been involved in the world of communication for 150 years, is doubly concerned by these realities. On the one hand, it lives at the heart of this globalized world and shares the condition of its contemporaries: our religious life is marked by this. At the same time, its charism of communication makes our Congregation an actor in this culture.

142. The current evolution of communication methods is dramatically marked by the rapid development of artificial intelligence, at the risk of undermining personal thinking and creating a partial or even one-sided approach to the complexity of today's world.

The urgent needs of the Kingdom

143. This "digital world", which is growing up before our very eyes and making its mark on our lives, calls for a compelling and difficult task of inculturation on the part of Christians: we need to develop the languages, symbols and codes that will enable us to express the faith in this digital culture and bear witness to it to the humanity that is imbued with it. This urgency calls for "*a creative and constructive approach*" that fosters a "*culture of good neighborliness*" (Dicastery for Communication, *Towards Full Presence*, May 2023).

144. Such an evolution calls for religious who are well-versed in the digital culture to contribute to this inculturation, so that Assumptionists can be authentic missionary disciples in this world. This mission requires a significant presence of religious, alongside lay people, in the media and on the digital continent: this is both an opportunity and a potential source of manipulation. An Assumptionist who expresses himself on social media engages more than just himself.

145. Within religious families, the Assumption stands out for its direct responsibility and involvement in the media: Bayard, but also Radio Moto and Moto TV (North Kivu), the publications of our shrines in the Andean Province, etc. Its responsibility is then to put these means of communication at the service of unity, truth and charity, signs of the coming of the Reign of God, through education and human and spiritual formation. In this,

our commitment to the world of communications is prophetic.

146. Our Congregation's investment in the media and the digital world means that we must constantly take care of our own communications: within the Congregation first of all, by continuing to improve our internal communication tools, and *ad extra*, by daring to make our realities and charism known by the most appropriate means - including digital! - to a wide audience.
147. Faced with such an overabundance of communication, in today's world and even in our own circles, it is vital to preserve and promote spaces of silence and any other means of nourishing interiority.

In view of the coming of the Kingdom

148. The Chapter encourages religious and communities to adopt a positive approach to the world of media and digital technology, and to discern lucidly the values and anti-values that coexist there, with "*prudence, self-control, a balanced lifestyle and wisdom in the use of the means of communication*" (RL #37).
149. The service of communication cannot be improvised! In all our Provinces, we are committed to training religious and members of the Lay Alliance in a better understanding of media and digital culture, their anthropological and ecclesiological consequences, and even their pastoral and professional use.

150. Bayard is a privileged place to encourage this inculturation. The Chapter offers it its support and encouragement in a difficult economic and financial context. Our "work/enterprise" will facilitate the reception of religious and lay people to train them in these realities. Wherever the company is present, we will strive to strengthen the link and familiarity between it and the Assumption, beyond the already existing bodies, by creating meeting places and times adapted to the greatest number of religious.
151. In terms of the internal life of the Assumption, digital data will be pooled at the level of each province and then of the entire Congregation, in order to make the riches of our heritage accessible to all.
152. An international commission for communications and the digital world will be set up. Its mission will be to weave links between the various commitments of religious in the media and to nourish, for the benefit of the entire Congregation, a reflection on the meaning and scope of the Assumption's presence in this field. In particular, it will be tasked with drawing up a "charter for the digital continent", to help religious and communities find their bearings in this universe and provide keys to its proper use, both personal and apostolic.

Called to Formation

Forming missionary disciples

153. Receiving many religious in formation is a gift from God, but also a responsibility for a Congregation. At a time when we are experiencing major changes in our Churches and societies, which are accompanied by a shift in the Congregation's center of gravity, Assumptionist formation will have to adjust to new needs, while reaffirming its foundations in order to ensure the proper transmission of the charism.

The nearness and the signs of the Kingdom

*« The reason God gives us
his graces is to sanctify us. »*
(Emmanuel d'Alzon, SW, p. 805)

154. Our *Ratio* has updated our charism, reaffirmed its demands and given broad guidelines for Assumptionist formation.
155. The Congregation's current figures show that there are many brothers in formation, most of them from the new areas. This is a cause for thanksgiving, but also a duty to pass on our spiritual heritage to future generations, in fidelity to the intuitions of our Founder, the Venerable Father Emmanuel d'Alzon.

156. At the school of our Founder and that of our Patriarch Saint Augustine, we have an abundant spiritual heritage to discover, assimilate and deepen throughout our lives.
157. Having international communities, enabling communication and collaboration between formators, is an excellent opportunity.
158. In the context of internationality and interculturality, the experience of religious in mission calls us to consider the sending and welcoming of our missionaries as a sign of the Kingdom.
159. The International Communities of Assumptionist Formation (CIFA, in French) provide formation in internationality and interculturality, and encourage the learning of a new language. In this way, they contribute to mission preparation. The diversity of our places of formation in terms of countries, languages and cultures makes our unity visible.
160. The Plenary General Council (PGC) is a forum for sharing our human and financial resources, working more closely together as a network and seeking partnerships between Provinces, as well as making new proposals for activities or formation experiences, in conjunction with local formators and formation commissions.
161. The General Secretariat for Formation (GSF) was set up to contribute to a more integrated system of formation within the congregation. In collaboration with the major

superiors and formators, the General Secretary for Formation promotes the implementation of the Ratio at all stages of formation...

162. The first apostolic appointment is a sign of the Congregation's missionary character and manifests the unity of its body

The urgent needs of the Kingdom

« *Before all else, we shall be apostles* »
(Emmanuel d'Alzon, SW, p. 124)

163. *The Assumptionist adventure.* The Kingdom of God knows no borders. By developing our openness, we open ourselves up to other cultures and missionary horizons, which entails learning languages.
164. *Reading the signs of the times.* To proclaim the hope and nearness of the Kingdom to the men and women of our time, we feel the need to form religious who are attentive to the signs of the times, while encouraging the ongoing formation of formators.
165. *Missionary availability.* In order to live and proclaim the hope of the Gospel, detachment and the gift of self will be discernment criteria in recruitment.
166. *Discernment.* Authentic discernment about the orientation of a religious in formation requires dialogue with the Major Superior. This dialogue should address

the religious's availability for the Congregation's mission, his skills and his desire.

167. *Different vocations.* The choice of religious life urges us to encourage all vocations, whether to ordained ministry or not, in order to meet the needs of today's mission (cf. Ratio n. 132).
168. *Formation for mission.* We will shape formation in the service of the works that already mobilize us in the Congregation. We will be thinking about succession management right from initial formation, through better preparation and pooling of human resources in line with our needs: education, media and communications, social work and health care, development, and ecology.

In view of the coming of the Kingdom

« The Assumption desires to collaborate in the search for holiness of every man and woman.

This is our contribution to the coming of the Kingdom of God ».

(Fr. Benoît Grière, Letter n#8 to the Congregation on vocation, p. 12)

169. The Chapter encourages religious in formation to be sent outside their linguistic or cultural zone, for a significant period of time, in order to promote internationality, interculturality and the learning of the languages of the Congregation.

170. The General Secretariat for Formation will propose a training schedule for formators. It will encourage the vocation of theologians, who will be encouraged to take part in formation within the CIFAs.
171. Provincial, vice-provincial or vicariate formators will accompany local formators in their task of rooting young people in the charism and in the knowledge of our Founder and our Patriarch Saint Augustine.
172. Assumptionist formation must help religious integrate the charism and orientations of the Congregation into their pastoral activities, while taking into account the context and realities of the local Church.
173. In collaboration with the General Secretariat for Formation, local formators will propose formation projects for specialized studies to the CGP, in line with the needs of the Congregation.
174. In the houses of formation, formators will ensure that spiritual - and psychological, if necessary - accompaniment be provided, as well as sessions on affective life and abuse prevention.
175. As far as possible, we will include lay members of the Alliance in the formation of religious.
176. Training sessions on the Economic Ratio will be organized at each stage of the training.

177. The Chapter recommends that the PGC periodically assess the role of the Secretary General for Formation, in order to clarify his responsibilities and help him develop a network with formators.

Education

"I begin by establishing that the purpose of education is to form Jesus Christ in souls."

"Jesus Christ must be known."

(Emmanuel d'Alzon, *Anthologie des textes*, 119)

The nearness and the signs of the Kingdom

178. Out of zeal for the great causes of man and God, the Assumption as a body is significantly committed to education in all its forms.

- Throughout the world, from kindergarten to university, it welcomes some 30,000 students annually in 88 educational establishments to face a variety of challenges: ignorance, secularism, unbelief, indifference, individualism, social discrimination, insecurity, poverty, materialism, etc.

- In this chapter year, the Assumption celebrates 150 years (1873-2023) of Bayard's presence among the world's major media, with "the concern to accompany its readers from one stage of life to another. Whether it's a child's first steps, learning to read, entering adolescence or reaching retirement" (Bayard, *Toute une histoire*, 2023) in more than 40 countries around the world.

- We are pleased to see the emergence of other innovative initiatives in the service of education throughout the Assumptionist world, whether in other media (Radio Moto, Moto TV, etc.), parishes, cultural centers, homes or orphanages, etc.

179. Faced with the diversity of contexts, cultures, languages, distances and challenges of our time, networking between educational establishments (within and beyond provinces) is a sign of the Kingdom.
180. Heir to the patrimony of Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon, as already affirmed by the 2017 General Chapter, the Assumption contributes to "forming men and women who are free, responsible, bold, full of imagination, capable of developing their potential, finding their place in society and contributing their share to the work of creation" (Acts of the 33rd General Chapter, #87).
181. The Assumptionist school is a "*true community*" (Pope Francis), penetrated by a remarkable spirit of family and synodality through trust, openness, generosity, simplicity and truthfulness in the relationships between members.

The urgent needs of the Kingdom

182. In October 2019, Pope Francis issued an invitation to all those involved in the education of young people and children to join the Global Compact on Education. The Compact's key ideas are taken from his encyclicals *Laudato si'* and *Fratelli tutti*. These include, in particular, placing the human person at the center of education, a commitment to the care of the common home, integral ecology, and the building of a "Global Village" where we are all brothers and sisters.

- 183.** There are still many unmet educational needs around the world. "Knowing that today there are more than 260 million out-of-school children and that more than 600 million do not have the minimum competencies in reading or mathematics" (Br. Robert Schieler, Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools), we live and proclaim the nearness of the Reign of God through education in our different contexts.
- 184.** The values proposed by the Global Compact on Education reinforce the principles or values of dalzonian pedagogy, reaffirmed by the Congress on Education at the Assumption held in 2016 (cf. "Reference text for Assumption education today", #12 and #15). These values or tasks are promoted and carried out in schools as well as in other apostolic environments such as the media (Bayard, Radio Moto, Moto TV), parishes, ecumenical formation centers, etc. (cf. RL #18).

It is about:

- transforming people and raising them in their environment to take on major tasks in society;
- proposing faith in Jesus Christ, living and proclaiming the hope of his Kingdom;
- building a world of solidarity and brotherhood;
- promoting a sense of the common good;
- learning to discern the good, the beautiful, the true and the just, in dialogue with one's time;
- developing love, respect, freedom, family spirit, daring, initiative, selflessness, courage, wonder, listening, etc.

- being open to others in their cultural diversity;
- forming leaders in society and the Church;
- developing a sense of human dignity, for peace, justice and the integrity of Creation;
- taking into account the new realities of our world: migrants, people displaced for ecological or war-related reasons, refugees, non-traditional families...

In view of the coming of the Kingdom

At the general level

- 185.** Help the entire Congregation to deepen the theology of education according to the teaching of the Magisterium, at various levels: Global Compact on Education, Pope Francis' apostolic constitution *Veritatis gaudium*, John Paul II's encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, etc.
- 186.** Maintain the International Education Commission, in order to work in synergy with the provincial education committees and to continue to form in the Assumptionist charism those involved in education within our works, for example by organizing a second congress on education.
- 187.** Strengthen networking among educational institutions, encouraging twinning between similar institutions, especially within the larger Assumption family, and facilitating connections between educational institutions and Bayard.

- 188.** Raise awareness, in our educational institutions, of our policy to prevent and protect against sexual and spiritual abuses as well as those of authority.

At the provincial level

- 189.** Continue to form those responsible for our educational institutions with regard to the orientations of the Global Compact for Education.
- 190.** Support initiatives that help transmit the Assumption charism to educators, and strengthen the relationship between institutions and the Congregation: pilgrimages in the footsteps of Fr. d'Alzon, pilgrimages to Lourdes, Santiago de Compostela, Jerusalem or Rome, English language training camp in England, international volunteer program, World Youth Day (WYD), Mi Hogar (Andean Province), African Integration Trips (AIT) in West Africa, language school in Manila...
- 191.** Create an Assumption governance committee or supervising body, with the mission of bringing the Assumptionist heritage to life within our educational communities, by proposing a formation program.

At the local level

- 192.** Learn and live the theology of Pope Francis using his encyclicals, *Laudato si'* and *Fratelli tutti*.
- 193.** Strengthen the spiritual life of our institutions by organizing pastoral services, children's and youth

groups, creating spaces that encourage recollection or prayer, and establishing a program of formation in interiority.

194. Encourage initiatives that promote the proposition of faith, even in highly secularized contexts.
195. Establish links between peoples and cultures, by offering young people an image of the other that is open to cultural diversity.
196. Introduce young people to interdisciplinary dialogue as part of their education.
197. Put our passion for the media and communication to work, building critical thinking by making the media arenas for encounter, dialogue and the promotion of truth.
198. Promote:
 - the education for vulnerable people or those at risk of dropping out of school: migrants, displaced persons, refugees;
 - the education of girls, where their rights are not respected;
 - the creation, where appropriate, of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) commissions within our educational establishments.
199. Maintain links with the alumni of our schools, in order to continue deepening the charism, and involve them in

the Congregation's mission by developing, for example, volunteer experiences.

- 200.** Make our educational establishments safe, secure homes for the children and young people entrusted to their care.

Young people and vocations

The nearness and signs of the Kingdom

201. Youth ministry as well as vocation ministry is above all at the service of young people and their growth. The Lord is present in their lives. He is always calling workers into his harvest, inviting them to turn their eyes towards the horizon of the Kingdom. The desire for holiness that runs through young people can help us as we follow in Christ's footsteps.
202. As Pope Francis points out, "young people themselves are agents of youth ministry, needing to be helped and guided, but at the same time left free to develop new approaches, with creativity and a certain audacity." (Apostolic exhortation *Christus vivit*, #203) They can contribute their dynamism, generosity and knowledge of today's youth. If stimulated and accompanied, they are perfectly capable of "finding appealing ways to call" other young people (*Christus vivit*, #210) and build a more fraternal world.
203. We have assets. Youth ministry and concern for vocations are part of the Assumption's genes. Today, we encounter the world of youth in our many institutions: parishes, colleges and universities, pilgrimages, shrines, hostels and welcoming centers ('maisons d'accueil)... Keeping in touch with these young people helps us to be present alongside them when existential questions arise. The internationality of the Congregation enables

us to help them discover a Church open to the world, as well as other cultures, as in the Assumptionist volunteer program or the Voyages d'Intégration Africaine in West Africa.

204. Notre Congrégation est toujours présente auprès des jeunes, et des religieux se dévouent à la pastorale des vocations. La proximité avec les familles peut en être un pilier. En Europe ou en Amérique, quelques jeunes frappent à la porte de nos communautés, notamment là où se sont poursuivis les efforts. Mais il faut reconnaître que les résultats ne sont pas proportionnels aux attentes.
205. Welcoming young people into our communities invites us to regular conversion and strengthens our fidelity to our own religious commitment (cf. RL #7). The coherence of our lives as followers of Christ, interiority and living as brothers in community can then become signs of the Kingdom.
206. Our usual outreach is to be complemented by new initiatives. We therefore need to continue with existing activities: vocation days, Bible camps, youth missions, *lectio divina* groups, Eucharistic adoration, national and international youth meetings, etc. We are also invited to persevere in praying for vocations in the Church and in particular at the Assumption.

The urgent needs of the Kingdom

207. The demographic shift of the Congregation is part of a wider context of change in the Catholic Church. In the "older" lands of Christianity, such as Europe and America, secularization has driven young people away from the Church, and the questioning of the value of long-term fidelity has accentuated the vocations crisis. In Asia, Africa or Madagascar, in more dynamic Churches, religious vocations are more numerous, even if in some places, especially in cities, a numerical decline seems to be looming. The future of the Congregation lies in its ability to welcome vocations.
208. Neither youth ministry nor vocation ministry is an easy task. In a context of secularization or the emergence of other religious groups, some young people are distancing themselves from the Church, sometimes to engage in political battles. The abuse crisis has also increased mistrust of the Church. Many questions (such as the need for peace and social justice, concern for our common home, the place of digital technology, gender, the search for fraternity) deeply affect today's youth, who are looking for answers.
209. Our primary goal is not to recruit, but to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom to young people, according to the charism of the Assumption. In a world where young people are particularly affected by anxiety (in the face of war, the climate crisis, migration, the prospect of unemployment), our spirituality invites us to convey a prophetic message of faith and hope. Faced with ethnic-

based separatism and the temptation of dabbling in the exotic, we want to offer them experiences of communion and service to the poorest. We also wish to share with them a conviction: happiness does not lie primarily in social success, material well-being or withdrawal, but in self-giving and fraternity.

In view of the coming of the Kingdom

210. We have to learn to work with young people, not just for them. The Kingdom is already present in their lives, and they have much to teach us. We are invited to involve them in our mission and to integrate them into our youth and vocation ministry teams.
211. For youth and vocation ministry, we need stable teams, led by motivated and willing religious who know how to work as a team. It's important to stay in such a position for as long as possible, so as to establish bonds. These teams benefit from collaboration with the Assumption Family and lay members of the Alliance.
212. Being responsible for youth ministry, spiritual guidance or vocation promotion requires training. The religious involved need to receive adequate and regular training, in conjunction with dioceses and other religious institutes. Preventing abuse makes this necessity all the more relevant today.
213. Digital technology, which is playing an increasingly important role in the world of young people, is an unavoidable apostolic field. We want to train religious

in the techniques of the new media, so that the Assumption can be more present there in the service of the Kingdom.

- 214.** Let us not be afraid to say who we are and present our Congregation. All the Provinces have a vocation ministry program and discernment criteria for welcoming candidates. We invite them to put these programs into practice and to evaluate them according to the reality of each country, with the help in particular of the modules prepared by the Ordinary General Council.
- 215.** Calls from the Spirit are leading the Assumption to open itself up to welcoming new profiles of young people, from other backgrounds, other countries, other apostolic sectors: universities, the media world...
- 216.** Vocation recruiters are responsible for following up on young people who contact us. Sharing an up-to-date list of those responsible for vocation ministry in each province will help this networking, especially when young people contact us from a distance.

Called to Holiness

Charism: Postulation and archives

The nearness and the signs of the Kingdom

217. The charism, the way Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon lived it and passed it on to his brothers, is an enduring sign of the relevance of the Kingdom of God for us.
218. The charism guides us in every place and at every moment. It is in our hearts, minds and souls when we have to decide on our major apostolic orientations, but also in the day-to-day animation of our communities, works or parishes, in our vocation ministry, in our preaching and overseeing the formation of young religious, and in our way of educating in our schools and universities.

The urgent needs of the Kingdom

219. We can sometimes drift away from the charism, when it becomes a mere object of overly theoretical study, with no real link to our life and mission, when we no longer know how to share it in the Church or relate it to the world in which we live, when it ceases to be missionary. The heritage of the Assumptionist charism demands the courage to examine our personal and community lives. The nearness of the Kingdom becomes blurred when our way of life or organization distances us from our charism. So we are asking that the Assumptionist charism be for us the object of regular evaluation and continual conversion.

220. Are we where we should be? Are we as we should be?
221. Fraternity enables us to grow together in fidelity to our charism and to be, in the midst of the world, a prophetic sign of the Kingdom. We want our structures, the animation of our Provinces, our local chapters to be always at the service of this fraternity and to allow us to examine, in good will and fraternal correction, the coming of the Kingdom in us, among us and around us.

In view of the coming of the Kingdom

222. To live our charism to the full, we need practical animation tools, adapted to our cultural and ecclesial contexts and to what we are living together today. We need to refocus on our properly Assumptionist virtues, encourage their personal discovery from the postulancy on and their practice in our communities.
223. We'll take a closer look at the Augustinian way of living or proposing spiritual direction.

Communities

224. Each community will specify how the charism enables it to bear witness to the life and holiness of the whole Church.

Mobilizing works

225. In his apostolic exhortation *Gaudete et exsultate* (2018), Pope Francis emphasizes the link between the desire for holiness and apostolic fruitfulness. We want to transmit our desire for holiness through our mobilizing works. We want these to be more a reflection of our charism and for religious and lay people in the Alliance to be able to receive and embody it through them. Through them, we wish to build the Kingdom of love and proclaim the hope of God's nearness.

Provinces

226. Provinces are committed to fostering the personal and community discovery of Fr. d'Alzon, so that:
- young religious may connect Fr. d'Alzon with their choice and pride in being Assumptionists today;
 - all can adopt our Founder's type of leadership (authority as part of fraternity, paternity without clericalism);
 - the means be put in place to meditate on or read the writings of Fr. d'Alzon.
227. In this sense, the Chapter is sharing ideas such as:
- organizing a competition for the best essay on Fr. d'Alzon;
 - organizing a prize for eloquence regarding Fr. d'Alzon;
 - developing "On the path of Fr. d'Alzon" itineraries in Rome, Nîmes, Paris... in audio and by QR code;
 - write, translate and distribute a popular biography of Fr. d'Alzon (approx. 150 pages);

- accompanying Morning and/or Evening Prayer with the reading of a short text by Fr. d'Alzon;
- continuing to renew the iconography of Fr. d'Alzon.

Postulation

- 228.** Assumptionists are increasingly interested in getting to know Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon: it's a sign of the times. In a world in search of identity, where people are looking for solid reference points on which to base their lives, Fr. d'Alzon is the common point of reference for our entire religious family.
- 229.** Engaged ourselves in a quest for holiness, we believe it is important to promote the cause of beatification of Fr. d'Alzon. This becomes a commitment for every Assumptionist, capable of mobilizing the Congregation and marshaling our energies. This cause has the advantage of showing our cultural diversity and our hope for the world. It also serves the mission of the whole Church: witness to the faith, service of the weakest, prayer and communion.
- 230.** Each religious or lay member of the Assumption, whatever their origin or age, is called upon, according to their abilities and talents, to participate actively in the promotion of the cause of beatification of Father Emmanuel d'Alzon:
- by reading and meditating on his life and writings;
 - by reflecting on his charism;
 - by making his life and apostolic work known, including through communication media accessible to the

greatest number of people: video, comic strip, slide show...

- by praying with and for the most vulnerable, to obtain for them the grace to heal or come through trials.

General archives

231. The Chapter requests that the Plenary General Council include the position of General Archivist among the "key positions" of the Congregation. The prospective archivist should be informed as soon as possible, so that he can be trained for the position, specializing in the history of religious life and familiar with the archives of the General House in Rome.

Our presence in Nîmes

232. Following a decision by the Council of the Congregation in 2008, an international Assumptionist community was founded in Nîmes, with a threefold mission:
- To be a resource for the charism and knowledge of Fr. d'Alzon, notably through the animation of the Rue Séguier memorial site and the hosting or accompaniment of various forms of pilgrimage in the footsteps of the Founder;
 - Collaborate with our Oblate Sisters of the Assumption in the pastoral care of the Institut d'Alzon school complex;
 - Serve the Diocese of Nîmes according to our needs and skills.

233. In September 2022, the diocese of Nîmes entrusted the animation of Sainte-Perpétue church to the Assumptionists and Oblates of the Assumption, in association with lay members of the Alliance.
234. The diocese of Nîmes is also an essential location for advancing the cause of beatification of our Founder.
235. As a result, Nîmes is becoming even more of a place for us to recharge our batteries, to share our charism as widely as possible, and to produce and disseminate innovative means of animation.
236. Finally, Nîmes offers an opportunity to see how Fr. d'Alzon's personal charism became the charism of our congregations, inspiring our mission initiatives and nurturing the vocation to holiness of all the baptized.

Making of the Assumption a safe home

« It is essential that we, as a Church, be able to acknowledge and condemn, with sorrow and shame, the atrocities perpetrated by consecrated persons, clerics, and all those entrusted with the mission of watching over and caring for those most vulnerable....and protect them. »

Pope Francis, *Letter to the People of God*, August 20, 2018

« We shall remember that.....they have rights over us, and the only one we have over them is the one Jesus granted to us so that we might guide them, with the means at our disposal, towards their own protection. We have only the right, given us by Christ, to lead them toward the holiness to which they are invited. »

Emmanuel d'Alzon, *Directory*, SW p.56

237. The revelation of sexual assaults in the Catholic Church has rightly deeply shocked public opinion and Christian communities in many countries. The prevention of sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable persons and the fight against all forms of abuse must become major, central and priority issues for the Church and the Assumption everywhere.

The urgent needs of the Kingdom

238. Since the 1980s, voices have been raised to denounce the sexual violence committed within the Church

against minors and vulnerable people. The main response of our institutions was silence, concealment of the facts and, all too often, defense of the institution and the aggressors, and failure to take care of the victims. From now on, this approach must be totally rejected.

239. More recently, it has become clear that these sexual assaults were made possible by a clerical system that allowed all kinds of abuse: abuse of power, spiritual abuse, economic abuse and sexual abuse. "To say 'no' to abuse is to say an emphatic 'no' to all forms of clericalism." (Pope Francis, *Letter to the People of God*)
240. Unfortunately, our congregation has not been spared this scourge. On all five continents where we are present, some of our brothers have assaulted minors or vulnerable people. Victims of such abuse have been able to obtain from the Congregation recognition of the assaults suffered and various forms of reparation. Other victims, whether they have already come forward or not, are waiting for some form of recognition and restorative justice from us.
241. Society as a whole has become aware of the extent of sexual violence and various forms of harassment in families, institutions and the workplace. Depending on the country, the State, civil society and religions are mobilizing against these phenomena.

The nearness and the signs of the Kingdom

242. Thanks to the mobilization of victims and the religious men and women, priests and lay people working alongside them, the Church is finally taking action. Popes Benedict XVI and Francis have given decisive impetus. Bishops' conferences and conferences of religious men and women are resolutely committed to fighting abuse, accompanying victims, and evaluating and reforming all aspects of Church life affected by this scourge. There are many areas in which work is being done: follow-up of complaints, support for victims and restorative justice, initial and ongoing training, governance (internal and external controls), support for those implicated, weaknesses and resources of our religious traditions (e.g. vows), confession and spiritual accompaniment, memorial events, analysis of causes, procedures for recognizing new communities, etc. All these important tasks must mobilize us.
243. Since 2008, our Congregation has asked every religious to commit to and fully adhere to the Norms applicable in the Congregation of the Augustinians of the Assumption regarding sexual abuse; this text was revised in 2014. Training sessions for religious in formation, for the PGC and for our institutions and communities have been organized. Our various educational institutions and some of our parishes are committed on the basis of charters for the protection of minors and good pastoral practice, for example via the Global Compact for Education. The Bayard group is strongly committed through its publications for young

people, its support for organizations fighting against this scourge, and its information and denunciation of situations of abuse. In 2021, an Assistant General was appointed as the Congregation's point man for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Persons. We give thanks for the steps already taken.

244. A task force, made up of four lay people and three religious, worked during 2022 to propose a guide to good practice in this area: to protect minors as well as vulnerable adults; for all religious and lay people collaborating in an Assumption apostolate with minors or vulnerable people; to help us prevent, in the long term and in all areas, any act of violence towards a minor or vulnerable adult.

The dossier compiled by this group provides us with a good basis for continuing our work as a congregation. The work is divided into ten areas:

- The revision of the 2014 document, "Norms applicable in cases of sexual violence";
- Initial training of religious;
- Ongoing training for religious;
- Educational attitudes appropriate to the supervision of minors;
- Questions raised by the system of governance in the Church and at Assumption;
- Recommendations for spiritual guidance and confession;
- The problem of intellectual control/domination;
- Recommendations made by the commission;
- Good practices for religious and lay Assumptionists;

- Elements for editing a sheet summarizing these good practices.

In view of the coming of the Kingdom

245. The quality of our community and fraternal life, enriched by the openness of our communities to our lay friends, is the first step in our fight against the various forms of abuse. To achieve this, we need to pay close attention to the accompaniment and personal attention given to each brother, the quality of our fraternal correction, and respect for our structures of animation and governance, which are powerful bulwarks against all forms of abuse. The local Superior or a member of the Provincial Council must meet each religious on a regular basis.
246. We reaffirm the need for a proactive commitment on the part of the Congregation, the Provinces and every religious and lay person of the Assumption to fight against sexual aggression and the phenomena of domination, to work for restorative justice towards those who have been victims of aggression, to accompany potential aggressors in the best possible way and to make the Assumption a safe home.
247. This necessity will be reflected first and foremost in a proactive commitment to follow the procedures, best practices and recommendations of the universal Church, bishops' conferences, the conferences of religious in our respective locations, as well as the civil institutions of the countries where we are present.

248. While our local Churches are more or less sensitive to these issues, the internationality of our Congregation and our communities is an essential asset to allow each of our situations to be enriched by the experiences and good practices already in place in other milieux. Assumptionists, religious and lay, together with all the networks of religious life, must be at the forefront of more proactive local Churches in these matters.

Recommendations:

249. The Chapter recommends that our commitments in this area, as well as the resources we make available and the contact names for them, should appear clearly in our institutional social media outlets and written material: the Congregation's website, provincial and vicarial websites, the websites of our institutions in contact with minors or vulnerable adults, etc.
250. We would like to see the appointment in each province of a designated coordinator for the protection of minors and vulnerable persons, who will oversee, with an ad hoc working group, the relevant projects in this field for his or her province.
251. Each province will ensure that all religious in formation or in pastoral activity receive a brief systematic training. This training must lead to a certificate attesting that it has been received, in order to meet the requirements of the Church and its institutions (parishes, schools, etc.). Local religious conferences offer systematic training

courses that can be enrolled in. Training can also be provided online.

252. We encourage the Congregation to integrate into its key positions the training of religious specializing in these fields.

Ordinance:

253. The Chapter decides to create an International Assumptionist Commission for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Persons, made up of coordinators at the general, provincial, and regional levels as well as with lay members of the Assumption. The mission statement of this Commission will be specified by the PGC; it will in particular ensure that the ten projects identified (cf. n 244) and the recommendations of religious conferences that have already made progress in this area are followed up at the general and/or provincial level.

Economy

at the service of the charism and the mission

*«As each one has received a gift,
use it to serve one another as good stewards
of God's varied grace» 1 Pt 4:10.*

254. In a world increasingly marked by individualism, personal success and relationships governed by give-and-take, we want to bear witness to another possible path marked by the gratuity of gift, specific to our religious life, by the vow of poverty, by the charism inherited from Father d'Alzon. *"The evangelical credibility of consecrated persons is also linked to the way in which their goods are managed"* (Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life, *Economics at the Service of Charism and Mission*, 2018, #12)
255. Religious poverty calls for all to work and to and for the sharing of goods and talents (cf RL #28). All religious must feel that it is their responsibility to pay the greatest attention to ensuring that the administration of economic resources is always at the service of the Assumption charism (cf RL #29). *"There is no contradiction between the charism and the management of works: managing according to economic criteria does not stifle the charism, but on the contrary makes it possible to pursue and achieve shared objectives"* (ibid, #37).

The nearness and the signs of the Kingdom

256. Over the past 6 years, significant advances in the economic management of the Congregation have led to greater inter-provincial solidarity. This is a clear sign of the interdependence at work within our religious family. These advances can be seen especially in
- putting in place more frequent budgeting at all levels and thus encouraging local responsibility.
 - developing a Medium-Term Plan (MTP) for real estate, enabling us to anticipate the needs of the provinces for serving the mission.
 - setting up health and retirement insurance measures, to ensure that our brothers can be cared for in the best possible health conditions.
 - distribution an economic training plan, to raise awareness of these issues among all religious.
 - publishing an economic directory for parishes, enabling them to make a fair contribution to the life of the brothers who are involved.
257. Interdependence and the development of local resources are constantly evolving realities. These cover several aspects:
- economic support
 - sending brothers away from their home provinces for study and/or mission.
 - participation in self-financing by involvement in our works.
 - training of religious to enable remuneration for the work in which they are engaged.

This work that has been undertaken over the past six years needs to be pursued and consolidated over the next 6 years.

The urgent needs of the Kingdom

Synodality

258. What concerns the greatest number of people must be debated by the greatest number of people to enable an informed decision.
259. Our works exist to proclaim the Kingdom and serve the people of God in our societies and local churches. In our works, be they educational institutions, welcoming centers, social involvement... we want to take care to include all those involved (including beneficiaries) in the decisions that concern them in terms of management and animation.

Laudato si'

260. Awareness of issues raised by *Laudato Si* of Pope Francis is at different stages, depending on the location of the Congregation's presence. We believe that everyone is called upon to participate in safeguarding creation. We encourage religious to take these realities into account in their formation of religious, especially those entrusted with economic responsibilities at the service of communities, provinces and the Congregation.

Workers, mendicants, investors

261. Genuine and total pooling of all income at the local level is a prerequisite for any progress towards self-sufficiency.

262. As already detailed by the previous General Chapter in 2017 (#131 and #132), economic autonomy is made possible through the development of multiple sources of income:
 - as workers: salaried employment, remuneration for pastoral work in or outside our works, development of food self-sufficiency, good management of our small self-financing works;
 - as mendicants: mass stipends, development of local donor networks, appeal for bequests, increase in the work of the Office of Development and Solidarity (BDS) and of foundations and associations;
 - as investors: optimizing the management of our portfolios and the use of our real estate assets.

263. Reduced expenses and better monitoring of medical expense reimbursement files also help to improve our finances.

In view of the coming of the Kingdom

Recommendations:

Governance

- 264. The Chapter asks Major Superiors to ensure effective pooling of income: gifts, salaries, mass intentions, etc.
- 265. The Chapter recommends that the CEC and PGC, at their annual joint working session, evaluate and encourage the progress of our younger realities towards greater economic autonomy, notably through the definition of the Real Estate Medium-Term Plan.

Formation

- 266. The sound economic management of our Congregation, at the level of its various governing bodies, works and communities, calls for collaboration with lay people who master certain skills. To enable fruitful collaboration, the chapter calls for a greater emphasis on the formation of religious through the economic formation plan, integrating issues raised in *Laudato Si*.
- 267. In order to form religious to take on responsibilities in economic matters, particularly in the search for funding, the chapter suggests integrating younger religious who could be trained in conjunction with the BDS (Office of Development and Solidarity) director.

268. Taking up a recommendation from the 2011 General Chapter (#173), the chapter asks provincial councils to work on creating or developing a network of donors in each province, vicariate or country.
269. To contribute to the animation of the charism, we encourage the provinces to train brothers in professions corresponding to the needs of our works. These professional formation courses will also open up the possibility of remuneration in view of participating in the economic life of communities.

Planning

270. To continue the work of planning and to foster inter-provincial solidarity, the Chapter encourages the continuation of work on the Real Estate Medium Term Plan.
271. To support the General Treasurer and train future economic leaders, the Chapter recommends that the PGC consider appointing a religious to the Generalate to assist him (assistant treasurer) or to accompany him (Assistant General).

Task forces

272. The chapter recommends that the Plenary General Council set up a task force made up of lay experts and religious to study the interest and feasibility, right down to the practical details of implementation, of pooling the management (but not ownership) of all the

Congregation's investment funds with a view to improving returns (better managers and advisors, better financial techniques; broadening the universe of possible investments) and reducing the various management costs.

273. Taking into account the real burden of financing the General House today, but emphasizing the role it plays in animating the Congregation, and attaching great importance to the symbolic, spiritual, historical and practical aspects attached to the Due Pini house, the chapter asks the Plenary General Council to set up a working group to evaluate whether other locations for the General House would be opportune and possible without affecting its purpose but reducing costs.

Ordinances:

Assessments

274. To take into account cumulative inflation since 2018, starting in 2024, provincial assessments for the General House are set as follows (corresponding to 14% cumulative inflation over the 2018-2022 period)
- Rate 1: \$627
 - Rate 2: \$319
 - Rate 3: \$177
- Category 1: perpetually professed members from Europe and the Near Eastern Mission, the United States, Canada, Korea and New Zealand.

Category 2: perpetually professed members from Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Brazil, Mexico, Vietnam and the Philippines.

Category 3: temporarily professed members of the entire Congregation and perpetually professed members from other countries.

Participation in international sessions

275. On the occasion of PGC meetings, the General Treasurer's councils, sessions organized by the General Government and the General Chapter, convoked religious contribute to an equalization fund for travel expenses up to \$535 USD per person (\$470 today).

Ceiling amount

276. In the case of the alienation of real estate, the limits above which a province must request the authorization of the Superior General remain unchanged:
- for the Provinces of Europe and North America: 800,000 USD;
 - for the Andean and Brazilian Provinces: USD 400,000;
 - for the Provinces of Africa and Madagascar: 120,000 USD.

This rule applies to the Provinces and their real estate societies.

Preservation of the Congregation's patrimony:

277. The chapter asks that a definition of the Congregation's patrimony be included.

"Stable patrimony consists of all movable and immovable property which, by legitimate transfer, is intended to guarantee the subsistence and purpose of the Institute. For goods managed by the General House, this assignment is made by the General Chapter and requires a 2/3 majority of the votes cast. For goods belonging to a province, this allocation is made by the Provincial Chapter and confirmed by the Superior General with the consent of the Plenary General Council. The same authority is competent for adaptations (c. 677 §1), transformations and alienations of goods assigned to the stable patrimony".

278. The chapter defines the stable patrimony of the General House as follows (see *Administrative Directory* for explanations):
- Ownership of the house in Rome.
 - The property of Saint Peter in Gallicantu in Jerusalem, for its role in the history of the Congregation and because of local law (*status quo* of the Holy Land).
 - As for the Solidarity Fund, we decide to allocate \$18 million to the stable capital.
 - As for the General House Fund, we decide to allocate 3 million euros to the stable capital.
 - All the books in the Emmanuel d'Alzon's library.

- 279.** The chapter requests that each province draw up a list of its stable assets during its implementation chapter of the 34th general chapter.

Statutes

Capitular rules

280. The General Chapter modifies numbers 186, 187, 193, 195, 202, 208, 210, 211, 212, 213, 218, 226 and 235 of the *Capitular Rules* as follows (modifications appear in italics):
281. **186.** The Provincial Superior convenes the Provincial Council (...).
Within the Council of the Province, the number of elected members must be greater than that of ex officio members.
When an elected member leaves the Provincial Council, he is replaced by the first of the substitutes elected by the Provincial Chapter.
282. **187.** In accordance with RL #77 and #95f, any transfer of a religious will be the subject of a written document between the Provinces concerned. This document will specify the duration of the stay, the nature of the collaboration, living expenses, the authority responsible, and the various forms of support, including health insurance *and old-age benefits.*
283. **193.** *General Officers* may be called upon to participate in the Council as substitutes. The number of substitutes will always be less than the number of members of the Council
284. **195.** The Superior General, before taking decisions which fall within his competence, requests the opinion of the Plenary General Council (PGC) on:

- a) (.....) ;
- f) the constitution as a *canonical* association of lay Assumptionists for those groups in each Province who request it;
- g) (...).

285. 202. Throughout their formation, candidates, and later religious themselves, are encouraged to turn to *an experienced person (who, except during the novitiate, should not be their superior)* for spiritual guidance.

286. 208. Throughout the period of temporary profession, an annual written evaluation will be made by the religious and by the *local* person responsible for his formation.

Before perpetual profession, *the director of formation of the Province*, after consulting the Formation Committee, will make an evaluation of all the years of formation. *The community* will also produce a report. The Superior, together with *the local formator*, will briefly express their opinion separately.

287. 210. For the grave reasons indicated by law (*cf. canons #694-696 and #1398*), the Superior General, with the consent of his Council, may exclude from the Congregation (...).

288. 211. Financial assistance between communities will be provided *through the Provincial Commissary*. *Financial assistance between Provinces will be channeled through the General Treasurer's Office.*

289. **212.** (...) Wherever possible, the Provinces also contribute to the Solidarity Fund (Formation and Old Age).
290. **213.** Care will be taken to observe civil laws *concerning the formalization of the employment relationship through a contract, and* guaranteeing fair wages and security for all persons who, in any capacity, work in the service of our communities and works.
291. **218.** Each year, the Treasurer, together with the local council, prepares a provisional budget for the community. This is examined by the local Chapter before being submitted to the Provincial Superior for approval, with the consent of his Ordinary Council. *This approval is formally communicated to the community.*
292. **226.** The community's accounts must include the accounts of attached religious.
At least once a year, normally at the end of the calendar year, a copy of the bank statement for the accounts of the community and its members will be sent to the Provincial Treasurer's Office.
293. **235.** *The stable patrimony consists of all movable and immovable property which, by legitimate assignment, is intended to guarantee the subsistence and purpose of the Institute. For goods managed by the Generalate, this assignment is made by the General Chapter and requires a 2/3 majority of the votes cast. In the case of goods belonging to a province, this allocation is made by the Provincial Chapter and confirmed by the Superior*

*General with the consent of the Plenary General Council.
The same authority is competent for adaptations (canon
677 §1), transformations and disposals of goods assigned
to the stable patrimony.*

Powers delegated to the Superior General for the final redaction of the texts of the General Chapter and their interpretation

294. This General Chapter delegates to the Superior General, with the consent of his Ordinary General Council, the following powers:
- to set up a commission for the harmonization of texts;
 - in the event of doubt or discussion as to the meaning or implementation of texts adopted by the Chapter, the power to interpret them;
 - the power to alter the form and expression of texts, with due respect for thought and ideas, in order to improve their presentation to the communities and their publication.

***Message
of the 34th General Chapter***

**To all brothers,
To all sisters,
To all members of the Alliance.**

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

Over the days, we have sought to listen to God's summons to the Assumption to live and proclaim the hope of the Gospel in today's world. In this process, we have been able to count on the support of your prayers and friendship. We 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 its fruits, 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 theological expertise

and experience of interculturality to help the promoter and moderators lead the debates.

- Andrea Riccardi, founder of the Sant'Egidio Community, reminded us of the urgent need to work for peace and fraternity, without fear of making history with the strength of the weak 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 to the closeness of the Kingdom. Fraternal life, experienced on a daily basis, urges us to extend this fraternity to everyone and to all creatures, working in the service of peace and justice in a perspective of integral ecology.

We have 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, that of our

brothers and sisters, and 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 which 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 wealth and our poverty, on the apostolic project of the Assumption as expressed in the first article of our Rule of Life: "Faithful to our founder, Father d'Alzon, we choose before all else to work, out of love for Jesus Christ, for the coming of the Reign of God in ourselves 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. This is why 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 always accompany us in our mission to extend the Kingdom of your Son in fraternity and unity."

Rome, June 24, 2023.

Annex

Address of Pope Francis to the 34th General Chapter of the Augustinians of the Assumption

(Vatican, Hall of the Consistory, Thursday, June 22, 2023)

Dear brothers, good morning and welcome!

I am pleased to welcome you as you come towards the end of your 34th General Chapter. I greet the new Superior General - thanking the outgoing one for his work - and offer my best wishes to you and to the Council you have elected.

I would like to share some reflections on the theme that guides your Chapter work: “The Kingdom of God is at hand” (Mk 1:15). Living and proclaiming the hope of the Gospel. This is a good way to bring up to date the motto left to you by your founder, the Venerable Emmanuel d'Alzon, in the spirit of Saint Augustine: **Adveniat Regnum tuum!** And indeed, one of the principal missions of apostolic religious life is to manifest very tangibly, in daily life, this vicinity of the Kingdom, and thus this hope for every person and for the whole world. Wherever you are, you are signs of the Kingdom by your closeness to the people to whom you are sent.

This proximity naturally passes through works, both those proper to your Congregation and those linked to the apostolic initiatives of the Church to which you contribute. But, beyond the actions, it is the very fact of making yourselves close to people, starting with those who are most in need of a supportive and fraternal presence, to show them that the Kingdom of God

is approaching, that there is a horizon, that there is some hope, that life is not closed: this, to make them feel it through your evangelical witness. Witnessing has this power: to open windows to see the hope of a Kingdom that is near.

I would like, in this regard, to mention in particular two achievements, already consolidated and always alive, of your Congregation: the apostolate of pilgrimages, beginning with the National Pilgrimage to Lourdes, the fervour of which you have spread to distant countries, as far as Latin America. I remember, as a child, 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 be reached... I remember this well. And then the involvement in the media, which you develop today in all continents, for a varied audience, even distant from the Church.

Allow me also mention one of your historically most incisive and still present, albeit more modest, apostolates: your Eastern Mission. Thank you! I encourage you to continue that mission, in the Middle East where the plight of Christians is under threat, and in Eastern Europe, where the war in Ukraine endangers the civil and religious balance of the region. I would also like to express the Holy See's gratitude for your faithful commitment to the small Catholic Church of Byzantine rite in Bulgaria, which is counting on you. Your long experience of dialogue with Orthodoxy, as well 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.

The aim of your General Chapter was to define the broad lines of your action for the six years to come. [Addressed to the Superior] And it is up to you to guide this. I assure you of my

prayers and my confidence that you will be able to invest in it the best forces, especially those of the countries of the Global South which, in your Institute as in many others, are taking over the resources now declining in the North. They tell me that one in every three members of your Institute is in formation. This is great! In this time of scarcity of vocations, of zero birth rate, or “occasional”, let’s say, this is a grace. This remarkable proportion opens up 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 together 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 frighten us: we are all a little afraid of novelty, but we must be courageous. Is not the Kingdom of God itself a radical irruption of newness for our humanity? It is this. Be courageous.

To accept this challenge, do not be afraid to cultivate in yourselves and around you the “threefold love” that Fr. d’Alzon taught you: love Christ, love the Virgin Mary, and love the Church. In this way you will be faithful to your charism and you will find the ways, both faithful and innovative, to bring it up to date.

In all these things, this old and new ways, dear brothers, you can count on my prayer and my trust. The Church is confident in you. I wish you a good conclusion of your Chapter, and a good mission to you all, wherever the Lord sends you. I bless you all. And please, do not forget to pray for me.

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Single digits refer to chapter text numbers.

*(in **bold**: the most important passages on the subject).*

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