

# AA News of the Assumption



**ECHOES OF THE 5<sup>th</sup> PGC**

**THE 16<sup>th</sup> ASSUMPTIONIST  
BISHOP**

**THE JUBILEE OF  
CONSECRATED LIFE**

# Agenda

## Plenary General Council

n° 6 : June 1-10 (Romania).

## Ordinary General Council

n° 19 : February 23-27, 2026.  
 n° 20 : April 7-10  
 n° 21 : May 4-8  
 n° 22 : June 11-12  
 n° 23 : September 7-22

## Fr. Ngoa

- **January 6-10** : Annual Retreat
- **January 15-February 10** : Philippines (canonical visit).
- **June 23-July 3** : Tanzania (missionary sessions).

## Fr. Benoît

- **December 26-January 8** : France (family, and formation on the Web).
- **January 10-February 2** : Florence (course in Italian).

## Fr. João

- **January 23-25** : Paris (JPIC inter-Assumption).

## Fr. Thierry

- **December 29-February 20** : Kivu.

## Fr. Étienne

- in Rome.

## On the cover

Previously serving as Provincial of Europe, Fr. Fabien Lejeusne was named by Pope Leo XIV on October 6, 2025, bishop of Namur (in Belgium, the place of his birth). The Episcopal ordination was celebrated on December 7 in the cathedral of the capital, Wallonne, before a large crowd---including many brothers, sisters and lay of the Assumption! (read pages 12-13)

## 1st Vocation Conference in the Philippines



**A**s we face a crisis in the calls to religious life, a very important step was taken for the directors of vocations from March 10 to March 12, 2025. I participated in the conference at Silang Cavite with 160 directors for religious vocations. The Philippines are known as one of the major sources for religious vocations in the Church. In recent years, convents have seen a gradual decline in their number of candidates. This decline raises concerns about the future of religious life and what is referred to as the "lineage" of each religious community. Mgr. Roberto Gaa, bishop of Novaliches, shared several causes contributing to this crisis. Religious life is less attractive to the young because of secularism and individualism. Similarly, the traditional methods of vocation promotion, such as posters and vocation fairs, are not effective to attract the youth, who are more engaged in social media and their phones.

In response to this crisis, those directors present shared their own personal vocation stories and suggested some solutions to increase interest in religious vocations. One idea suggested is to turn to the digital world. We are encouraged to utilize social media, on-line discernment, and digital platforms that the youth are familiar with. This is probably what we must do in the Assumption: intensify our social media presence and allow others to take part in our activities to increase awareness of our congregation. Similarly, links with other institutions might help the candidate in the process of discernment by presenting diverse options in the vocational journey.

It is a call for all of us: promoting vocations is not only the responsibility of directors and promoters of vocations but of all religious. Our communities should revive their missionary spirit with passion and joy, so that the youth will be attracted by their testimony. Other calls: be mindful of new members to the community, organize weekly or monthly worship services to pray for religious vocations.

This conference is an alarm signal and a serious challenge for the Church in the Philippines. We can see the reality of despair, but sparks of hope are evident to continue to serve and refresh efforts to help our youth to listen to the call of God. May we, the Assumptionists of the Philippines, continue to be a light of hope for our future brothers.

Fr. Joseph PANAGUITON  
 (Digos)

# Forgiveness: A Gesture of Hope

To mark the close of the Jubilee Year, the statue of Our Lady of Hope, from the parish of San Marco di Castellabate in the province of Salerno (southern Italy), was placed in St. Peter's Basilica. It was to remain there for Christmas and until Epiphany. This signifies, according to an article in *Vatican News*, that the Jubilee of Hope concludes under the gaze of the Virgin Mary.

May this maternal gaze, full of tenderness, infinite love, and hope, which brings comfort, accompany us throughout this New Year. I invite you to choose to look to the future with renewed hope: hope to restore one or more relationships within your family or communities; hope for a better world, even if bad news floods the media; hope for an inner peace that strengthens the steps of those who wish to move forward.

Forgiveness can be the catalyst we need to move forward. A lack of genuine forgiveness is an emotional burden that paralyzes us. We also know what generates this resistance to forgiveness: a great deal of bitterness, anger, and resentment that severely affects everything. Not only does our spiritual life become purely formal, but our emotional well-being is also affected. Clearly, this profoundly hinders our ability to share a harmonious personal and community life. It is true that we ask the Lord for forgiveness every day at the beginning of the Eucharist. And rightly so. *"If you, Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?"* (Psalm 129:3). This beginning of 2026 can be a wonderful opportunity for us to turn to our brothers and sisters and ask for forgiveness. Among the points in our Rule of Life most frequently cited in self-assessments for perpetual vows and ordained ministry, number 8 comes out on top by a wide margin: *"We accept each other as different, for the One who unites us is stronger than what separates us. We must constantly overcome our divisions and limitations to find ourselves again in welcome and forgiveness."*



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

*If we prioritize attentive listening and respect for others over differences of opinion and distinctions of origin, age, mentality, or health, our diversity becomes a richness."*

"This is not simply a "copy-paste" of ideas, but a reflection of a profound reality and a calling that dwells within us: community life is a precious and fragile gift, therefore it must be welcomed and preserved.

The virus of discord respects neither age, nor responsibilities, nor the knowledge we possess. To deny this fact would be a mistake. The Rule of Saint Augustine, which we have chosen to adopt, insists in a unique way on the call to mutual forgiveness: *"Whoever has harmed his brother, through insults, slander, or a serious accusation, should not forget to remedy the harm he has caused by offering his apologies without delay. As for the one who has been wronged, let him forgive without question. If they have harmed one another, they must forgive each other their offenses."* (Rule of Saint Augustine VI, 2)

In my short Christmas message for 2025, I quoted a line from a popular Brazilian song: *"Every being, within themselves, carries the gift of being capable."* I deeply believe that this gift received from God makes us capable of mutual forgiveness. Pope Leo XIV, during the general audience on Wednesday, August 20, reminded us of this: *"Even if the other does not accept it, even if it seems futile, forgiveness liberates the one who grants it: it dissolves resentment, restores peace, and reconnects us to ourselves."* This is a grace to ask for again at the beginning of this year. Let us not hesitate to receive it or offer it, *"even when we do not feel understood,"* said Pope Leo XIV.

May 2026 be a year of renewal for all of us. And may God, rich in mercy, transform us from within so that the forgiveness received and offered becomes a source of peace and new life in faith and hope.



# Calls, nominations, agreements...

Fr. Ngoa Ya Tshihemba, Superior General, with the consent of his Council, has called:

## ■ TO PERPETUAL PROFESSION

### **KAMBALE MULI Justin**

(Africa) (11/04/2025)

### **NZANZU MUHESI Nelson**

(Africa) (11/04/2025)

### **Guilherme FRANZINI BARBOSA**

(Brazil) (11/04/2025)

### **GICHANA Philemon Angwenyi**

(East Africa) (11/04/2025)

### **NYANG'WARA OROKO Isaac**

(East Africa) (11/04/2025)

### **NYAKUNDI MOMANYI Justine**

(East Africa) (11/05/2025)

### **WASSWA SSEBULIBA Julius**

(East Africa) (11/05/2025)

### **MASEREKA Augustine**

(East Africa) (11/05/2025)

## ■ TO DIACONAL ORDINATION

### **Leonardo DE ALMEIDA CASTRO**

(Brazil) (11/05/2025)

### **SIMTORO Romain**

(East Africa) (11/05/2025)

### **ONG'ANYO OUMA Kelvin**

(East Africa) (11/05/2025)

### **SIMLAWO Euloge**

(East Africa) (11/05/2025)

### **KASEREKA MASTAKI Fiston**

(East Africa) (11/05/2025)

### **PALUKU KATEMENGI Charles**

(East Africa) (11/05/2025)

### **Roberto KIM TAE-SIK**

(Europe) (11/05/2025)

### **Christian AZIAMALE**

(Europe) (11/05/2025)

### **Joseph NGUYEN QUOC Son**

(Europe) (12/12/2025)

### **Joseph THAI Dinh**

(Europe) (12/12/2025)

## ■ TO ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD

### **Daniel MAGIN SAMBONY**

(Andean Province) (11/05/2025)

### **Maurice WOMBARAGUEMA**

(Europe) (11/05/2025)

### **Ariel VIDANES**

(Europe) (12/12/2025)

## ■ NOMINATION OF A PROVINCIAL SUPERIOR

Fr. Ngoa Ya Tshihemba, Superior General, with the consent of his Ordinary General Council, has named **Fr. Nicolas POTTEAU Provincial of Europe**, for a first mandate, beginning on January 1, 2026.

*(read the portrait of Fr. Nicolas Potteau that is included)*

## ■ OPENING OF HOUSES

Fr. Ngoa Ya Tshihemba, Superior General, with the consent of his Plenary General Council, has given his approval for the opening of:

- a parish community in **Pará de Minas (Brazil)**;
- a parish community in **La Haye (Netherlands, Province of Europe)**;
- an apostolic community « **Vinh 2** » (**Vietnam, Europe**);
- an apostolic community in **Kinshasa-Kimbondo (DR-Congo, Africa)**;
- an apostolic community in **Muhila (DR-Congo, Africa)**.

*(read pages 8-10)*

## ■ DEPARTURES FROM THE INSTITUTE

Fr. Ngoa Ya Tshihemba, Superior General, with the consent of his Ordinary General Council, has granted an indult for a definitive departure from the Institute to Brothers:

- **NKALUMU MUTUMBOTE Kelvin**

- **KASEREKA VISOMA Pontien**,

temporarily professed from the Province of Africa.

The Holy See (the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life) has granted an indult of secularization on August 21, 2025, to Br. **Herinirina Jean Christien RAKOTOMALALA**, a perpetually professed from the Province of Madagascar.

The Holy See (the Dicastery for the Clergy) rescripted on September 16, 2025, an indult of laicization to **Fr. Gaston MUMBERE NDALEGHANA**, of the North American Province, with the loss of vows and his clerical state.

# Fr. Nicolas Potteau, new Provincial of Europe

Fr. Nicolas Potteau, 46, was born on June 12, 1979, in a faith-filled family in Roubaix, Northern France. Following secondary studies in Roubaix ( College of Jeanne d'Arc and Lycée Jean XXIII), he undertook engineering studies in Lille (IHEI). He had a transformative experience in Rome in 2000 at the World Youth Days: "Upon returning from JMJ, I wanted to get involved in my parish, and with the university chaplaincy at the Catholic University of Lille. It was there that the question of my vocation arose. . . An Assumptionist chaplain suggested I come and stay with the community in Lille." He discovered fraternal life in the Augustinian spirit and the spirituality of the Kingdom with an openness and clarity toward the world. « I came, I saw. . . and I



stayed", he continues. The steps followed: postulancy in 2003, including three years of professional experience in IT, novitiate in Juvisy in 2005, and first profession in 2006. After a one-year break in Madrid-Leganès, he began studies in theology in Strasburg and in 2011 began a doctoral program on "Saint Augustine, reading and

interpreting the Book of Isaiah" at the Centre Sèvres (today the Facultés Loyola). He resided in community at the youth hostel, Adveniat. His thesis was published in Augustinian Studies. He was ordained in 2012.

In 2019, Fr. Nicolas was named Master of Novices at Saint-Lambert-des-Bois, in the Parisian region. After spending one year in Lyon teaching patristics at the Catholic University, he returned to Saint-Lambert. . . where one of his first decisions as Provincial will be to appoint his successor as Master of Novices! As of January 1, 2026, Fr. Potteau succeeds Fr. Fabien Lejeusne, who became the Bishop of Namur on December 7, 2025. (read pages 12-13)

## The encounter of Leo XIV with Msgr. Pelâtre

For his first apostolic visit outside of Italy, the new bishop of Rome wanted to honor the invitation from the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew 1st of Constantinople to celebrate the 1700th anniversary of the 1st Council in the history of the Church. This was held in Nicaea (today Iznik, in Turkey). Leo XIV was also honoring the project begun by Pope Francis. Francis died before seeing the completion of this project that assembled all the Christian denominations at the end of November. Before this ecclesiastical

« summit », however, another very moving event took place on November 28 in Istanbul. Among the few visits decided upon by the pope was the retirement home of the Little Sisters of the Poor on the European shore of the Bosphorus. It was in this house that Msgr. Louis-Armel Pelâtre, an 85 year old Assumptionist, had decided to reside due to declining health. It was a profound joy for our brother, as well as for the Little Sisters and all the residents, to see Leo XIV warmly greet him and thank him for his 50 plus years of service to the Church in Turkey.



# Accompanying, consolidating... without ceasing to build!

The 5th session of the General Plenary Council, held in Rome in early December, focused on the entities that will change status and on situations of fragility within the Congregation... while also welcoming the grace of new foundations.



▲  
The PGC meets with the CEC in Rome.

**I**t was hoped that this would be the time: finally, the CGP in full session? It will have to wait for another session! Indeed, in addition to the unexpected absence of Fr. Fabien Lejeusne – who went from Provincial of Europe to Bishop of Namur (see pages...) and was replaced by his Vicar, Fr. Iulian Dancă – another member, the Vice-Provincial of East Africa, was unable to obtain his visa in time... But Fr. Benard Odhiambo Yala participated via videoconference in all the discussions of this meeting, held at the General House from December 1st to 10th. With the pres-

ence, as at every Roman session, of the Provincial Treasurers forming the Congregational Economic Council (CEC) for the first two days, and that of the three Vicars (West Africa, Asia-Oceania, and Kinshasa) for the entire session.

In addition to the issues that are addressed at each Council, more specific themes marked this one.

**- The evolution of several entities toward a new status:** the Vice-Province of East Africa toward that of a Province, and

the two Vicariates of Europe toward that of Vice-Provinces. The General Conference of the Parish Council (CGP) reviewed the steps underway to achieve this by the next General Chapter (2029): East Africa prepared a strategic plan at its Vice-Provincial Assembly in May, emphasizing the formation of religious in leadership and governance, as well as in project management and financial resources. For the "European" Vicariates, the work is currently focused on their individual and collective evaluation; this will be followed by a period of summaries and presentation to the Provincial Council, after which the General Conference should, next June, either give the green light to continue the process according to the deadline set by the General Chapter, or propose an extension to reach the Vice-Province stage.

The economic aspect has of course not been forgotten, in order to put in place the own resources and/or the aid necessary for their sustainability, their viability over time, their development, their financial autonomy, etc. Projects are underway: training of religious people in economic responsibilities, real estate projects with external investors, loans to create income-generating works... and of course a whole variety of initiatives for self-financing: schools, production and sale of mineral water or fruit juice, hair salon, sewing workshop, agro-pastoral farm, small livestock farms, guest houses, etc!

- Several **situations of fragility and isolation** concerned the General Council, particularly the countries with only one community: there are about fifteen such countries out of the 33 na-

tions where we are present! The Council discussions helped identify the potential vulnerabilities arising from this situation and to consider courses of action at all levels to address the observed weaknesses. This work is only just beginning.

- For the first time, the Council took the time to reflect on the mission and work of the **Assistant Generals**: sometimes perceived as "the shadow of the Superior General," these four religious play a pivotal role between him and the realities they support on his behalf, both the Provinces and the sectors of our religious and apostolic life (formation, Alliance, JPIC, education, etc.), not to mention their work within the two General Councils and their participation in the life of the General House. This sharing allowed the members of the CG to express their satisfaction and areas for possible improvement.

- Another rarely discussed topic: the **Congregation's liturgical "proper,"** which has been updated with a view to publishing our supplements to the missal and the Liturgy of the Hours in our three official languages. Fr. Benoît Bigard is leading this project in several stages: selection of a patronal feast by each (Vice-) Province, validation by the Dicastery for Divine Worship of our new liturgical text (the last approval dates back to 1975); publication of the new documents in high-quality books for liturgical use.

- Finally, among the economic issues, particular attention was paid to the **Bureau for Development and Solidarity (BDS)**, currently headed by Brother Didier Remiot. This work demands con-

siderable time and expertise. One of the major challenges is to better train and empower the brothers who lead local projects, so they can respond professionally to the stringent requirements of funding agencies. There is also a need to professionalize the management of financial investments handled by the Provinces.

Other topics, recurring on the agenda of each General Conference, are no less important. This session also took time to evaluate *mobilizing projects* (it was the turn of the University of the Assumption in Congo and Assumption University in Worcester, USA), to hear the two reports of Fr. Vincent Leclercq, as *Secretary General for Formation* and as *Postulator General*, to update the list of *key positions* within the Congregation, and to discuss recent *international sessions* (Novice Masters, Provincial Secretaries) and upcoming ones (review of missionary experience, formators), and of course, to approve the 2026 budgets: General House and Interprovincial Solidarity for Formation.

...not forgetting the least tangible but perhaps most valuable contribution of these meetings: the *exchanges among the Major Superiors* and with the Father General, to share their experiences and questions, and even their human and financial resources. In this respect too, this 5th session was very beneficial!

**Fr. Michel KUBLER (Rome)**  
with the contribution of the  
"common thread" written by Fr.  
Benoît Bigard

# One session for five foundations!

**It has been a long time since we have seen such an “avalanche” of new communities approved by a single CGP... without any closures elsewhere.**



One of the chapels in the parish of Pará de Minas (Brazil).

One in Brazil, two for the Province of Europe, including one in Europe itself, and two for the Province of Africa: this is the tally of new foundations that were presented at this CGP session and validated by the latter! Let us briefly review their projects, as presented by the Major Superiors concerned.

## • Pará de Minas (Brazil)

More than 40 years after an Assumptionist community was founded in the world's largest Catholic country, the Province sought to revitalize its presence by opening a house in the large city of Minas Gerais, in the southeast of the country, to care for a parish, with a particular focus on youth and vocations ministry.

Pará de Minas (Diocese of Divinópolis) is a medium-sized city of 100,000 inhabitants, lo-

cated in the Belo Horizonte metropolitan area. The Santo Antônio parish has 20,000 inhabitants, spread across 13 vibrant and dynamic Christian communities, four of which do not have a place of worship. Pastoral work there will primarily focus on forming lay people and fostering and supporting Christian, priestly, and religious vocations. The local clergy is receptive and welcoming to our project. Catholics make up 78% of the population, and Evangelicals 16%.

The prospect is, in time, to expand into other Brazilian states: Goiás or even Mato Grosso or Bahia. Having a community midway between these other states will facilitate expansion into the increasingly populated interior of the country. However, these still-young churches need priests and in-depth training for their communities and lay people. Fur-

thermore, the proximity of this foundation to Belo Horizonte, the capital of Minas Gerais, the second most economically important state and a recognized center for specialized studies, could help us establish a presence there in the future as well.

## • The Hague (Europe)

Here is a country where the Assumptionist order was thought to be dying out, since only two Dutch religious remained! The project originated with Father Marc Leroy, sent to the Dutch capital for French-speaking pastoral work. Two years later, with the support of two Congolese religious, the project is operational. Three motivations led to this foundation: the call of the Bishop of Rotterdam; the experience already gained over two years in the field; and apostolic opportunities in line with our charism, in a city of 600,000 inhabitants renowned for its international institutions but also for its large student community. The city has a Catholic population of 20%, a Protestant population of 14%, and a Muslim population of 5%.

The three religious working there are Fathers Marc Leroy, Kasereka Kisangani Pierre, and Kasereka Mwendakulala Justin. The pastoral project entrusted to them by the diocese is the Parish of All Saints, an international French-speaking community, where the aim is to revitalize the faith among expatriates while integrating them into the local Church. Father Marc has been



(top) The French-speaking parish of All Saints in The Hague (Netherlands).  
 (bottom) In a hospital in Vinh (Vietnam).

appointed parish priest and Father Pierre vicar. Pastoral activity is already very active, with 400 parishioners attending Sunday Mass, with a very young average age. Hence the importance of youth ministry, which brings them together at the rectory once a week (Eucharist, teaching, and fellowship). A youth center is being planned. Another priority is pastoral care for the many professionals in the parish. This does not preclude service in the surrounding Dutch-speaking parishes: Fathers Pierre and Justin have specifically learned Dutch with the intention of eventually serving there.

Parish website:

<https://paroissetslahaye.com/>

### **"Vinh 2" (Europe)**

Located in North-Central Vietnam, this city has already been home to a community for several years now, responsible for the parish of Phan Thôn (which is also the name it will henceforth bear in our congregation's toponymy). The opening of a second house in the same city, no longer a parish house like the first but dedicated to healthcare



and youth ministry, was prompted by the local human and ecclesial realities.

Indeed, the current Phan Thôn community comprises 150 volunteers working in 19 hospitals and supporting thousands of patients. From this foundation, it has developed a comprehensive healthcare ministry centered around four main activities: providing a welcoming space for the families of the sick, charitable works, and offering visits and sacraments. Furthermore, Vinh is a large university town, and we already run six youth hostels

there, housing 53 young people: youth ministry will therefore be a major focus of the foundation, without losing sight of its vocational dimension.

A team of four or five religious is planned for this foundation. It will be located on land 4 kilometers from the Phan Thôn community, on the road to the airport. The community will be able to rely on income from its pastoral activities and donations from benefactors to ensure its local resources.



The future community house in Kimbondo (DR Congo).

### • Kimbondo (Africa)

This new community – the 6th – of the Vicariate of Kinshasa is located in a neighborhood on the outskirts of the Congolese capital, within the Diocese of Kisantu: a suburb where our formation house was located until 1998, before being transferred to the Archdiocese of Kinshasa due to transportation difficulties to Mazenod University (27 km), shortages of drinking water, and excessive costs.

The Province now wishes to revitalize this land and protect it from any outside interest with a community intended primarily to house brothers pursuing secular studies. Its pastoral project focuses in particular on the pursuit of non-theological university studies in institutions near Kimbondo; parish pastoral involvement as Sunday vicars; professional integration into schools; and strengthening self-sufficiency through pig farming, the sale of well water, and gardening.

A highly motivated team of religious men is planned for this foundation, which bears the name of Bishop Charles Kam-

bale Mbogha (1942-2005), Assumptionist bishop of Wamba and then of Isiro, who died prematurely at the beginning of his subsequent ministry as Archbishop of Bukavu.

### • Muhila (Africa)

This ten-year-old project has finally come to fruition! Located in a rural area near Butembo (Democratic Republic of Congo), it involves establishing a community on land where a wealthy

businessman, Prosper Katashire, donated 7.5 hectares to the Assumptionists. On this land, he built a church and a house for the community, including four bedrooms, a chapel, and common areas.

The apostolic project integrates pastoral care for the workers at the soap factory managed by the donor, located in the immediate vicinity of our property, secondary education, parish ministry, and self-financing.

Three religious are planned: two will serve as chaplains to the workers, developing a pastoral outreach strategy, and one will teach at the secondary school. They will be able to participate in parish ministry and contribute to self-financing through gardening activities. The chapel and other common areas will also need to be equipped gradually.

The church dedicated to the Assumption in Muhila (DR Congo).



# “Be sowers of the future!”

## Excerpts from the closing address of the 5th session of the General Plenary Council by Father General.

“Should we speak of a ‘final word’ or a ‘closing remark’? There is certainly a nuance. Today I prefer to speak of a sending off remark. We are indeed at the end of our GPP. But our gaze is turned toward the future. This remark is therefore part of the dynamic of reviving, encouraging, and supporting this momentum for what comes next, that is to say, the future. This future which, generally speaking, does not yet give rise to major fears. You don’t even need this remark; your ultimate desire is to return to the next GPP with more good news. You will not accomplish the impossible, even if that is your wish.

We have made a good start. The roundtable discussions with the Provinces and Vicariates gave us a sense of the congregation’s mood. The diagnosis is not too dire.” It is rather encouraging. As I said once, we are not facing irreversible realities.

To move forward in life and mission, we need personnel on the one hand, and funding on the other. But what can personnel and funding do if there is no philosophy and spirituality to guide our intuitions? What is this philosophy or spirituality that can mobilize us more fully?

There is a small book by a Beninese priest, Alphonse Quenum, entitled: *The Mysticism of the Sower*. He defines mysticism as an inner force that inspires, nourishes, and sustains action. The action of the sower, of course. And the sower is anyone who works, visibly or invisibly, to accomplish something and

who does everything to ensure that it yields positive results.

So, that is the sending off word. Go forth and continue to be sowers of the future for your Provinces, for our Congregation. And the major components of the mysticism that must accompany us have fueled our discussions during these 10 days of the Plenary General Council, and they correspond exactly to those proposed by Alphonse Quenum in his little book. We need foresight, generosity, action, openness, and so on.

Foresight means selecting the best seed. We want to revitalize a mission or a community; we want to venture into an apostolic or financial adventure; we want to improve a way of doing things... Let us select the best seed.

The 34th General Chapter has already given us another fundamental element of the mysticism that must accompany us: “*To live and proclaim the hope of the Gospel*.” Hope must be accompanied by vigilance. It is in this sense

that, while thanking you for the work we have just accomplished together, I feel it my duty to remind you of the following.

The very good news of the opening of five communities during this Council, which is nothing short of a miracle for some congregations today, should not make us forget the need for vigilance in our relationship with the bishops, in our calls, and in the appointments we make to certain somewhat special communities. (...) We talked a lot about investment and sustainability. Perhaps we need these four elements that we identified in the synodal process initiated in the Province of Europe in accompanying the Vicariates toward the status of Vice-Provinces: a **path** that must be followed **together**, with a **method**, and by allowing ourselves **to be guided**. This was also the approach for this Plenary General Council.

**Fr. NGOA Ya Tshihemba,  
Superior General**

## Solidarity Campaigns in the Assumption

Fr. Alex Castro, Treasurer General, briefed the General Conference on ongoing campaigns:

- **In 2024**, the campaign was intended to help build a dormitory for 50 boys at Assumption High School in Nairobi (East Africa): the required amount has not yet been reached.
- **In 2025**, the focus was on contributing to the roof renovation of

Kambali College in Butembo (Africa Province).

- **For 2026**, the General Conference chose to support the installation of solar panels for Radio Moto in Oicha (DR Congo), with a hoped-for amount of USD 18,000. The proposal has been sent to the Provinces in three languages, so that all communities of the Congregation are aware of it.

# Monsignor Lejeusne, a Provincial named bishop

**This is the totally improbable journey of a former resident of the Oblates, who became an Assumptionist—and even Provincial of Europe—before being entrusted by the Pope with the diocese of Namur, in his native Belgium!**



**The new bishop in front of two of his consecrators, Archbishop Luc Terlinden (Mechelen-Brussels) and Bishop Benoît Gschwind, a.a. (Pamiers, France).**

“That is it, it is done!” These were the first words of the new bishop of Namur following a three-hour celebration of his ordination in the Cathedral of Saint-Aubain on December 7. Were these words of relief or apprehension? Perhaps a little of both, undoubtedly. So palpable was the feeling that seized our brother Fabien Lejeusne when faced with a highly improbable destiny: that of a child once entrusted by the Belgian social services to a foster home run by the Oblates of the Assumption, baptized at 18 years old and becoming an Assump-

tionist 7 years later, having experienced a number of responsibilities until becoming Provincial of Europe only two years ago. It was incredible when Pope Leo XIV named him bishop of Namur, the largest diocese in Belgium, on October 6, 2025. (read the attached)

Yes, it is done. Two months later, our brother Fabien became Monsignor Lejeusne, seated in his cathedral, coiffed in his miter and holding his crozier, amidst 20 bishops of whom two were cardinals<sup>1</sup> and nearly 400 priests and deacons coming from everywhere---including from Rome where the CGP was being held. The Assumption was adequately represented on this rainy day in the Ardennes: the Oblates from Froyennes where Fabien grew up (in the front row of the cathedral was Sr. Renée-Lucie who raised him at the home) and from far beyond, and Assumptionists, religious and lay people from all over, arriving by the busload...It was the people of Wallonia who were there from civic leaders of high status and military personnel to the very simple faithful, that the 1200 seat Baroque cathedral could not hold. A chapel and an auditorium were able to transmit a live-stream of the event. It is true that the unexpected nomination of two young bishops, who spent much of their lives in Belgium (the second, Monsignor Rossignol, was a Spiritan missionary named at Tournai), caused a great deal of media attention in Belgium.

<sup>1</sup> Msgr. Jozef de Kesel, Archbishop Emeritus of Malines-Brussels, and Msgr. Jean-Claude Hollerich, Archbishop of Luxembourg (the diocese bordering Namur).

<sup>2</sup> You can find the list of the 15 bishops in AA Info n°3 (January 2024), p. 12. There are currently three living Assumptionist bishops: two practicing---one in France and one in Belgium and one emeritus bishop in Turkey, Msgr. Louis-Armel Pelâtre. (read pg. 5)

As for the Assumptionist touch, it continued to mark a celebration that was organized down to the last detail, yet joyful and solemn. The choice of Msgr. Benoît Gschwind, bishop of Pamiers, France, (named only two years ago), as one of the three concelebrants with Msgr. Terlinden, metropolitan archbishop of Malines-Bruxelles and Msgr. Warin, the presider—very well loved, based on the applause! The motto of Msgr. Gschwind was also adopted by Msgr. Lejeusne: “*Adveniat Regnum tuum*”: one cannot change who they are! The coat of arms of the 16th bishop in the history of our Congregation<sup>2</sup> could not be left out either. (*read the attached*)

The first words of the new bishop were addressed primarily to the youth, of which there were many at the celebration. “Dare to be adventurous in following Christ, he offers a path to happiness that will fill you with joy. It starts with your yes to give generously and to build a fraternal society, to build, with others, the Kingdom of God (...) This enables you to be free for a mission that might be disconcerting. I can testify to this today that there are many ways to live this availability, as a religious, as a priest, in marriage and family life, or in service to others in some way. Serve where God calls you and live your mission with joy.” There was a joy that radiated from Bishop Lejeusne at that moment, and one that we can only hope will continue to light up his pastoral view for a long time to come.

Fr. Michel KUBLER  
(Rome)

## The largest diocese in Belgium

The diocese of Namur is the largest in the country (26% of the Belgian territory), incorporating the provinces of Namur and Luxemburg, but it is the least populated (6,7% of the population). The territory is very diverse with rural areas and others more urban. It is the diocese including the most churches and abbeys (Chevetogne, Maredsous, Leffe, Orval. . .), including the Marian sanctuary at Beauraing.

The population is 63% Catholic (with around 500,00 to 800,000 inhabitants), with 363 priests ( 224 dioceses and 139 religious) and 55 permanent deacons, servicing 709 parishes divided into 20 deaneries and 6 regions. There are two seminaries: Notre-Dame, for those francophone dioceses in Belgium, and Redemptoris Mater for those following a Neo-Catechumenal Way. The three predecessors of Msgr. Lejeusne are still living: Msgr. Warin, Msgr. Vancottem, and Msgr. Léonard.

To contact Msgr. Lejeusne :

[mgr.lejeusne@diocesedenamur.be](mailto:mgr.lejeusne@diocesedenamur.be)



## The coat of arms of Msgr. Lejeusne

The colors red and yellow (gold) are those of the diocese of Namur. Inverted between the parts of the shield represent the two provinces that form the diocese. The mortise joint unifies the two parts and recalls Fabien Lejeusne's training as a carpenter.

The three spikes of wheat represent the Trinity and the grapes represent the

Eucharist. The enlarged, pierced heart, placed on the book of the Word, refers to his Augustinian spirituality based on charity and the search for God.

The processional cross placed behind the shield stresses the importance of Scouting in the life and vocation of the Bishop.

# The Assumptionists in Athens, Yesterday and Today

The Assumptionist presence in the Greek capital has taken many different forms over the centuries, from the Founder himself to the present-day community.



The community in Athens took the members of the General Curia to its secondary house near the sea.

## Father D'Alzon and the Assumptionists in Greece

In 1863, Father D'Alzon traveled to Constantinople to study the project for a Byzantine Rite seminary for the Bulgarian people. On the way, he stopped in Piraeus, the port district of Athens, hoping to establish the congregation in Greece: a plan that had been constantly postponed and delayed. Nevertheless, young men from the Catholic islands of Syros and Tinos went to study at the minor seminary in Kumkapi, Turkey.

The congregation has always struggled to establish itself in Greece. The Catholic authorities hesitated to give their approval. However, two Assumptionist priests, then three, and then four, provided pastoral care to the Marist Brothers, the Brothers of the Christian Schools, and the Sisters of Saint Joseph. Finally, on May 25, 1933,

after eight years of negotiations, the Latin Archbishop of Athens, Archbishop Filippucci, granted the Assumptionists permission to settle there. On All Saints' Day 1934, they took possession of the house at 32 Eptanissou Street, in the Kypseli district, where they live to this day.

The unity of the Churches: illusion or utopia? The Catholic Press Office in Athens lamented: *“Although what unites the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church is greater than what divides them, ecumenism does not exist.”* “But this is a hope that the Assumptionists, along with their brothers, have been striving to realize for many years. Thus, as early as January 1936, just two years after their arrival, the first religious organized an “octave of prayer for the unity of the Churches.” In January 1949, Father Sévérien Salaville established the Center for Byzantine Studies in Athens,

which is highly regarded by researchers and theologians, both Orthodox and Catholic.

For nearly 80 years, the Augustinians of the Assumption have been present in Athens, serving Latin Rite Catholics, whether Greek, Filipino, or the many English- and French-speaking African migrants. They also serve the cause of ecumenism. In the past, three of them have served as bishops in the country, the most recent being Archbishop Antonios Varthalitis of Corfu, who served for 40 years.<sup>1</sup> For his part, Father Augustinos Roussos founded the Fraternity of Spiritual Ecumenism, with numerous activities and reflections on Christian unity. Finally, Father Elpidios Stefanos founded the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross in Agia Paraskevis.

For several decades, the religious celebrated Sunday Mass in a small chapel, which became the parish of Agia Theresia (Saint Theresa) in 1975. They primarily served Greek Catholics of the Latin Rite, but also the Filipino and African communities, offering services in either English or French. Our activities are mainly limited to the parish, with four liturgies on Sundays and feast days: one in Greek, primarily for the Greek faithful; two in English; and one in French, primarily for the Congolese (1).

### The Assumptionist Community Today

The Athens community currently consists of five religious: Fathers Alexandre Psaltis (parish priest, Greek), Germain Salamu (superior, Congolese), Rex Navarro (Filipino), and Janvier Kulala (treasurer, Congolese), and Brother Pierre Bala Bala (Cameronian).

The Filipinos receive catechetical support from the Daughters

### The General Curia on a Visit

Continuing a long-standing tradition, the Ordinary General Council held its extended session at the start of the academic year partly at its headquarters in Rome, and partly by taking a few days of work and relaxation elsewhere. It thus spent a whole week in Athens in mid-September, receiving a very warm welcome from the local community.

Its itinerary included ample time for conversation with the local religious community to learn about

their lives and ministries, visits to some exceptional cultural sites of ancient Greece (the Acropolis, the Areopagus, the Byzantine Museum, as well as excursions to Epidaurus and Corinth), not forgetting the essential trip with the brothers to their "second home" by the sea, and of course, the equally indispensable sunset over the Temple of Poseidon at Cape Sounion. A truly enriching stay in every respect!

of Charity, in collaboration with Father Rex. They have a regular family Mass on Sundays in English; once a month, Mass is celebrated in Tagalog at 4:00 p.m., with a session for lay people. After Mass, the Filipino migrants gather at the Miraculous Medal Center for spiritual formation in the form of catechism for all (adults, young people, and children). Other parishes also have Filipino parishioners with a Tagalog Mass once a month.

The African community, also called the "English community," is made up of a mix of migrants from different parts of Africa, with a few Filipinos; it is accompanied by Fathers Germain and Janvier. The Missionaries of Charity, for their part, care for the English-speaking community, catechism classes, and the care of children and those in need, sharing two or three bags of bread each morning that Father Alexandre collects from a local bakery, as well as the food and clothing that people bring to the parish.

Father Alexandros (85 years old), the only remaining Greek at the Assumption, is the parish priest. Always active, always on the go, always ready to help, he is called upon at any time of day, and even at night, to transport a sick or elderly person, help a family in need, listen to a young person seeking guidance, collect or distribute clothing or food, chat with an Orthodox neighbor... Some of the priest brothers are also involved in the work of Caritas.

Every Wednesday, the community goes to its summer house in Lagonisi, an hour from the center of Athens, for a time of gardening and relaxation. There, we do some manual labor, rest, and during the summer we swim in the nearby sea.

**Fr. Rex Navarro (Athens)**

*excerpt from an article in Vicariate News Asia-Oceania (Oct. 2025)*

(1) According to a Pew Research Center survey conducted in 2015 and 2016, 90% of Athenians are Orthodox, less than 1% are Catholic, and 3% belong to other Christian denominations.

# Kinshasa, a « Vicariate under construction »

**(From October 1-29 the western part of the Province of Africa received a canonical visit from Father General and his designated assistant. Here is the latter's testimony.**

The expression "Vicariate under construction" is taken from the report of the Vicariate Council prepared in view of the canonical and fraternal visit of the Superior General, Fr. Ngoa Ya Tshihemba, to Kinshasa last October. The phrase spontaneously brings to mind the construction of houses, bridges, etc. Based on this idea, we might also refer to the establishment of the Kinshasa entity, to the fraternity, and to the means for the mission in this part of the Province of Africa.

## The construction of the Vicariate entity

The Kinshasa mission was an expansion of our foundation in Butembo (1929), initially to establish a center for theological formation in the Congolese capital. The project, which took shape in 1987, came to fruition in 1988 with Fr. Charles Kambale Mbogha, future archbishop of Bukavu, as its driving force. The group of founders first rented a house in Kintambo, on the outskirts of the capital, then a house belonging to the Association of Major Superiors in Lemba, before settling in Kimbondo, in the commune of Mont Ngafula. The Emmanuel d'Alzon theologate was established in Ngaliema, in the city of Kinshasa, in 1998.

The mission expanded beyond formation in 1997, when the Assumptionists took charge of the parish of the Divine Master in the commune of Masina (in the Sans



**Building under construction in Ngaliema**

Fil neighborhood). At first, it was served by the Emmanuel d'Alzon community. In 2000, the Josaphat community (Avenue Maréchal) was established for this mission, before founding a community within the parish itself. Formation continued to expand in Kinshasa with the opening of a postulancy house and, above all, the CIFA (Communauté Internationale de Formation Assomptionniste/International Community of Assumptionist Formation) label awarded to the E. d'Alzon scholasticate after the 2011 General Chapter.

In 2012, the Assumption mission in Kinshasa was granted the status of Region. Then, in 2017, the 33rd General Chapter (cf. Acts, nn.164-166) decided to upgrade it to a Vicariate, which was established in 2023. This entity now has 55 religious, divided

into six communities: the Emmanuel d'Alzon CIFA in Ngaliema, Divine Master parish in Masina, Josaphat, Sainte-Isabelle, and the postulancy house in Bibwa. To these will be added the community of Most Rev. Charles Mbogha, established by Father General at the recent Plenary General Council (PGC) and made up of four members.

## Building fraternity

Given the origins of the religious who make up the Vicariate, interculturality and internationality must characterize the life and mission of the brothers in Kinshasa. Thus, the 34 members of CIFA, from eight countries, seek to live this out in a concrete way in their life and mission: songs in various languages in the liturgy, cuisine marked by different cultures, and Independence Day celebrations of their countries of origin high-



Mass celebrating the official entry of students into the Emmanuel d'Alzon I complex-

light each other's cultures. And to better experience closeness among brothers, they organize themselves into living groups, with celebrations, sharing, and exchanges within them. Listening, understanding, and mutual acceptance cultivate fraternity marked by interculturality and internationality, both within this community and throughout the Vicariate.

The Assumptionist fraternity extends beyond the congregation to include lay people who have been sharing our charism in Kinshasa since 2013, and to the women's congregations of the Assumption, all based in the Congolese capital, as well as the Little Sisters of the Presentation of Our Lady, founded by Bishop Henri Joseph Pierard, AA, first bishop of Butembo-Beni.

### Projects to support the life and mission of the Vicariate

Renovation work is currently underway at the Emmanuel d'Alzon CIFA in Ngaliema: to

make better use of the property, one of the houses is adding a second floor, and the house closest to the street is being completely transformed for a real estate investment project.

The Vicariate is deeply committed to education through the Emmanuel d'Alzon I school complex in Masina and the Emmanuel d'Alzon II school complex in Bibwa, institutions that are highly regarded by parents for the quality of education they provide. Here too, there are projects that need additional support: construction of buildings for the Emmanuel d'Alzon I secondary school, the need for additional classrooms in Bibwa, etc.

The religious in charge of the Sainte-Isabelle parish currently live in a very simple house in a working-class neighborhood and dream of one day living in a house of their own. A recently completed building will house the Kimbondo community where work continues to prepare for garden-

ing and livestock farming with a view to making the community self-sufficient.

These numerous projects of the Vicariate bear witness to the dynamism and creativity of the Assumptionists in Kinshasa. Faced with challenges, particularly economic ones, the religious are not giving up. With support from the congregation, local efforts are making it possible for them to move forward. Moreover, the Vicariate has just benefited from the canonical visit of Father General from October 1 to 29. Interpersonal encounters, meetings in groups, in communities and in vicariate assemblies with Fr. Ngoa served to encourage the religious of Kinshasa to continue to be active in the construction of the Vicariate through their commitment to the Assumption and their fidelity to Christ for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

**Fr. Étienne Ratalata**  
**RAFANAMBINANTSOA**  
**Assistant general (Rome)**

# The Assumptionists of Quebec Celebrate 100 Years

**It was at the end of 1925 that religious brothers arrived from Worcester to Québec.**

Quebec City is a Canadian city affectionately known as the National Capital, the seat of the province's political institutions, with its majestic Parliament Building, the Premier's Palace, and several other provincial government buildings. Beyond the pride Quebecers take in being a distinctly Francophone nation in North America, it was in their city that the first Assumptionist community in Canada was established in 1925. And it is still in the same Sillery neighbourhood that our only community in the country remains as we celebrate this centennial.

## First Contacts

The idea of founding a community in Canada dates back to our Founder, Emmanuel d'Alzon, nearly three-quarters of a century before it came to fruition. In his letter of September 6, 1860, to Father François Picard, Father D'Alzon mentioned the idea of assigning Father Paul-Elphège Tissot to Father Edmond O'Donnell for a foundation in Canada. The idea of a foundation itself originated with Father O'Donnell, who had been insistently suggesting it to Father D'Alzon, though its source remains unknown.

There were subsequent requests for foundations in Canada addressed to the Congregation, as well as Assumptionist initiatives and attempts. In 1889, Archbishop Cornelius O'Brien of Halifax (Nova Scotia) wrote to the Superior General, Father Picard, requesting religious to attend to the spiritual well-being of French fishermen stopping in the ports of the diocese: a request that went unanswered. But in 1899, Father Yves Hamon visited all the places where French fishermen stayed on the west coast of Newfoundland, which was not yet a Canadian province, and the neighboring islands.

Another request appears implicitly as confirmation of an Assumptionist intuition. This intuition belonged to Father Marie-Clément Staub, who had been thinking since 1912 about founding a Montmartre in Canada. Having learned from a nun that a celibate layman, Joseph Auguste Cantin, had launched the same idea in Quebec City in 1915 without having heard of Father Staub, he went to Quebec City urgently.

As for the Assumptionist initiatives, these were initially just ideas that came to nothing, such as that of Father O'Donnell in 1860, or that of Fathers Amédée Ollier and Fulgence Moris in 1896. They suggested that Bishop Gravel of Nicolet would gladly welcome French religious to preach in his city. This project, however, was not approved and therefore never materialized. Other religious came to Canada for simple visits or on short-term occasions. Father Marcellin Guyot was sent by Father Picard in 1892 to promote pilgrimages for the 1893 Eucharistic Congress in Jerusalem, and returned in the summer of 1896. Father Emmanuel Baily, Superior General, visited Quebec City, Montreal, and Ottawa between June 15 and 25, 1904, then again Quebec City and Montreal for a Eucharistic Congress, and once more Toronto and Niagara Falls in September 1910.

## Establishment in Quebec City and Expansion in Canada

Father Staub's project to establish a Montmartre in Canada was the only attempt to successfully establish an Assumptionist foundation in Canada. To achieve this, he made several trips from the United States, notably to Montreal, his initial preferred city, Sherbrooke, and Quebec City, where he made some insistent visits. He met with the bishops of these cities and their collaborators, friends, and even Mr. Cantin.



He then reported on his progress to Father Bailly, then to Father Joseph Maubon, Vicar General who succeeded Father Bailly after the latter's death, and also to Father Stéphane Chaboud, Superior for North America, then in Paris.

Following his meeting on February 21, 1917, with the Archbishop of Quebec, Cardinal Bégin, Father Staub obtained on March 2, 1917, the document authorizing the arrival of the Assumptionists and the work of Joan of Arc in the diocese, but outside the city limits. Land belonging to the Redemptorists in Bergerville, Sillery, was purchased on August 13, 1921, and plans for the residence, drawn up since 1921, were approved on June 8, 1925. Since June 2, 1925, a true community of Fathers Staub had existed in Sillery. Tranquille Pesse, superior, Marie-Clément Staub, and Réginald Bonnet. They were staying with the Sisters of Joan of Arc, in a wing reserved for them.

It was only in August 1926 that they took possession of their own residence.

Regarding the development in Quebec, particularly in the Capitale-Nationale region and the Eastern Townships, one would have to list the novitiate, house for ministries, specific works, sanctuary, college, seminary pavilion, and youth hostels. Of all this, and in addition to the members of the community, only the Canadian Montmartre project, the Centre for Culture and Faith in Quebec City, and Bayard Canada with its offices in Montreal and Toronto remain, where the presence extends the Canadian Assumptionist work beyond Quebec alone.

### Celebrating the Heritage and Rethinking the Foundation

The theme motto "Heirs and Founders" and the Centennial logo represent our vision of this anniversary. The purpose of this

anniversary is indeed to continuously celebrate our heritage and rethink our foundation. For the opening celebration on Sunday, December 28, Fr. Chi Ai Nguyen, Provincial of North America, was to preside at the Eucharist. Two retreats will follow during the year: the Sacred Heart Retreat and the Assumption Retreat, preached respectively by Cardinal Gérald Cyprien Lacroix, Archbishop of Quebec, and Fr. Benoît Bigard, Vicar General of the Congregation. The closing ceremony, scheduled for November 22, 2026, is to be presided over by Fr. Ngoa Ya Tshihemba, Superior General. Finally, a thematic presentation will be offered on the first Friday of each month. These various conferences will also provide an opportunity to reflect on our Assumptionist heritage in Quebec and on ways to rebuild it.

**Fr. Sadiki KAMBALE KYAVUMBA  
(Quebec)**

# Consecrated persons also celebrated!



The General Community on pilgrimage to the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

Among dozens of groups invited to celebrate this year's Jubilee of Hope, religious men and women gathered in October. Among them was Fr. João, Assistant General.

Under the theme "Pilgrims of Hope on the Paths of Peace," the Jubilee of Consecrated Persons, held in Rome from October 8 to 12, 2025, was a time of grace and communion. Coming from more than one hundred countries, over 16,000 consecrated persons—religious men and women, monks and contemplatives, members of secular institutes, consecrated virgins, hermits, and representatives of new forms of consecrated life—formed a true mosaic of spiritual beauty, evident in the variety of denominations and habits. Everyone radiated joy in the conference rooms, basilicas, squares, and streets, eager to experience an authentic encoun-

ter with faith at the heart of the Church.

The welcoming atmosphere and the time devoted to personal prayer and reflection, with the opportunity to receive the sacrament of reconciliation and pass through the Holy Door, gave primacy to divine mercy in the adventure of consecrated life. Yes, it is mercy that regenerates us and rekindles our mission.

The themes of peace and hope were illustrated by the prophetic testimonies of those who live a committed hope and become peacemakers in the small trials of daily life, in their relationships, and in the activities they undertake: we will only be peacemakers in this fractured world if we

prophecy Hope. This requires listening to the Spirit with simplicity and courage, using kindness as our universal language, while remaining free and obedient. For peace is not the absence of conflict, but a gift that demands ongoing reconciliation, a keen historical awareness, and a spirituality capable of recognizing its own vulnerabilities.

If, in our communities, we learn to better manage conflicts by cultivating a culture of listening and acquiring skills, we will experience fruitful harmony in diversity and become ecosystems of peace and laboratories of non-violence, heralding the possibility of a more just and fraternal world. From this perspective, Pope Leo

paternally sought to guide the mission of consecrated persons with paths for the life of prayer and the practice of the evangelical counsels, embodying a way of loving that offers the world the oxygen of God's love and proclaims future blessings in eternity.

The exchange among the participants was based on the synodal methodology, leading us to practice "conversation in the Spirit" through listening and dialogue. The very place of the meeting, the Paul VI Hall where the Synod on Synodality was held, further enhanced this sense of fraternity. Speaking of the vocation of consecrated life in the contemporary world, the Pope exhorted us: *"Your life, the very way in which you are organized, the often international and intercultural character of your institutes, place you in a privileged position to live daily values such as mutual listening, participation, the sharing of opinions and abilities, and the common search for paths according to the voice of the Spirit."*

This call to foster more authentic encounters—among ourselves and with the realities of our mission—challenges us to be the weavers of a "grammar of encounter": creating environments and structures for fraternity, placing those left on the margins at the center, giving voice to those who remain silent in the face of so much misery, paying attention to the poor, caring for creation, heeding the cry of our common home, and seeking a new paradigm capable of making life sustainable and abundant for all.

Fortunately, consecrated life allows us to reach the most inhospitable places and the most abandoned people. Wherever consecrated persons live their mission, they sow seeds of hope in diverse settings, enabling everyone to

cultivate a beautiful garden in the deserts of our time. Together, we can accomplish so much. It is therefore urgent to move beyond the "closed self" of each congregation to embrace an "open we" that heralds a new era.

Walking together as consecrated life means embracing the consequences of the ecclesiological conversion advocated by Vatican II, which emphasizes the fundamental belonging of all to the Church, on the basis of which diversity can be expressed without losing the equality of the baptized (cf. LG 10). As consecrated men and women, we will continue to prioritize dialogue, nurture relationships, and believe in ecclesial processes and practices at the service of humanity. This is the time of our conversion.

May Mary of the Assumption, model of consecrated life, encourage us to an authentic response to the Spirit of the One who "makes all things new" (Rev 21:5). May she help us to sing our *Magnificat* by inspiring in us a profound rereading of history, by casting a prophetic gaze upon reality, even in tribulation, where she, full of grace and blessed, "sees the impossible."

**Fr. João Gomes,  
Assistant General (Rome)**

## The Due Pini Community on Jubilee Pilgrimage

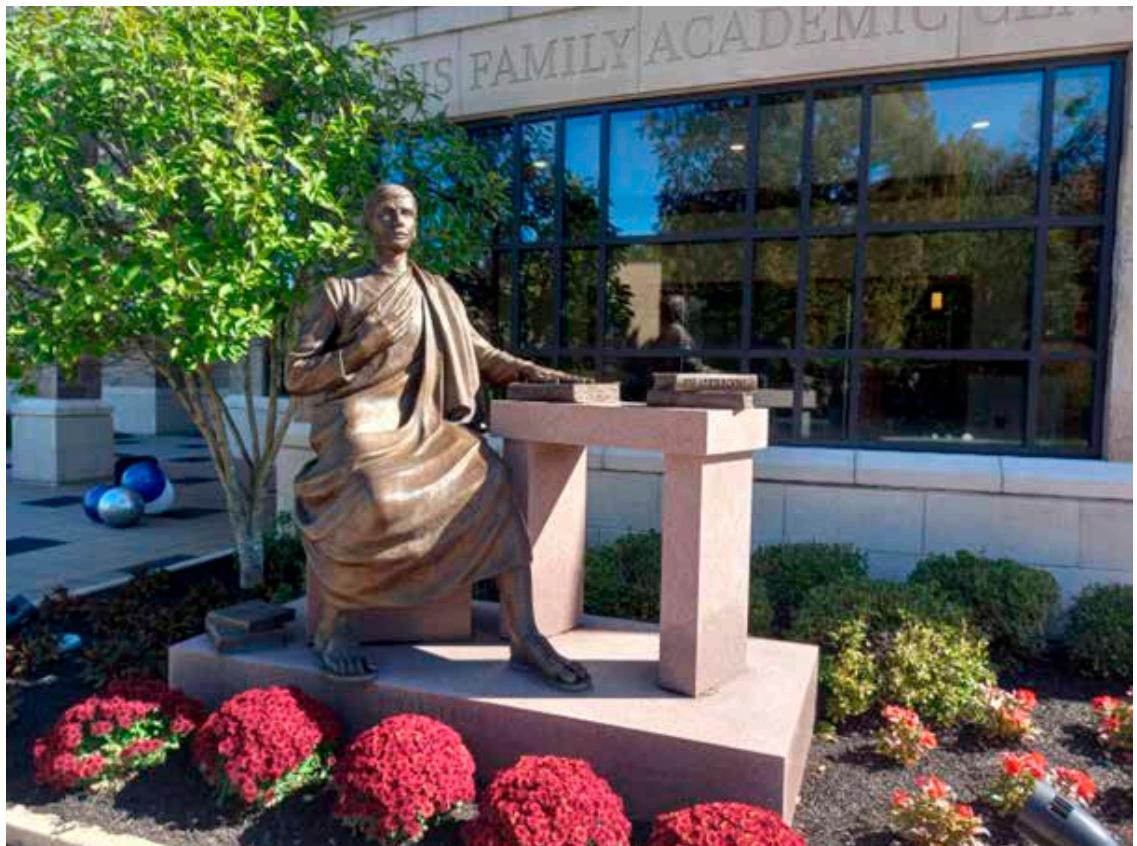
Following in the footsteps of the tens of millions of pilgrims who have come to Rome during this Holy Year, the Due Pini community, in turn, made the pilgrimage to the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica on December 13th. Of course, we had all likely already undertaken this journey since the beginning of the year, either personally or by accompanying various groups of pilgrims, including to the six other sites designated as Roman Jubilee shrines. But it seemed important to us to also experience this journey together, as a community. And, in our experience, it is true that walking up the entire Via della Conciliazione, from the Tiber to St. Peter's Square, singing the litanies and the "Psalms

of Ascent," or reciting the rosary with simplicity and humility, was a profound experience.

The high point of this jubilee celebration was our descent beneath the basilica to visit the excavations of the Vatican necropolis, begun by Pius XII in 1940. There, beneath the imposing Baroque sanctuary of Julius II, we discovered the remains of the first basilica, built in the 4th century by Emperor Constantine, and even the structure housing the presumed remains of Saint Peter, visible a few meters away in a niche against the Trophy of Gaius. Everyone was deeply moved, and our prayers were profound.

# D'Alzon, son of Augustine and founder of the Augustinians

The connection between our 19th-century Founder and the illustrious 5th-century Bishop of Hippo is further strengthened by the Augustinian influence of Pope Leo XIV.



St. Augustine.  
Bronze statue  
on the campus  
of Assumption  
University in  
Worcester (USA).

What do Emmanuel d'Alzon and Pope Leo XIV have in common? Both quote Saint Augustine extensively. This provides an opportunity to re-examine the latter's influence on our Founder, as well as his close relationship with the one who might one day decide on his beatification.

In total, 330 quotations from Augustine appear in d'Alzon's writings. Augustine's name appears 41 times in the *Spiritual Writings* alone. Without reviewing them all, let us revisit the important themes of his spirituality, which are also the pillars of our Augustinian lineage.

## D'Alzon, a close friend of Augustine

Our General House carefully preserves Father d'Alzon's library. A visit is worthwhile to appreciate his intellectual and religious stature. Among his many books (in Latin, Greek, French, English, Italian, and even German) are the eleven volumes of the complete works of Saint Augustine, the first critical edition published by the Maurist Benedictines in the 17th and 18th centuries, which the Orantes (the community of the Orantes) kept for a long time in Le Vigan.

We know more about his devotion to the Bishop of Hippo thanks to the work of Jean-Paul Périer-Muzet,(1) as well as

an article by Charles Monsch,(2) and the contributions of Edgar Bourque,(3) and more recently Jean-Paul Sagadou,(4) Nicolas Potteau, and Patrick Zago.(5)

Father d'Alzon read Augustine throughout his life, from his first year of law school until his death. (6) Rare for the 19th century, he quotes him more often than Saint Thomas Aquinas. Of Augustine's 103 writings, he had read 33 with certainty. Within this immense body of work, D'Alzon focused primarily on the Homilies on the Gospel of John, the Commentary on the Psalms, the Confessions, the Letters, and the Sermons. He also cites lesser-known works, such as the Treatise on Virginity. And while references to *The City of God*—"a second revelation," he writes—are few, its influence on his political thought is considerable. This is evidenced by his later writings, the 17 articles published in *La Croix mensuelle* in 1880.

### A Spiritual Dynamic Focused on Charity

For Augustine, the spiritual life aims at perfection, which is itself summed up in charity. D'Alzon adopts this perspective. Charity is, for him, the principal virtue, alongside which he places another theological virtue, faith, both nourishing prayer and humility.

A true Augustinian must cultivate the natural virtues and allow piety, knowledge, courage, and wisdom to grow within him. He achieves this through personal asceticism but above all through the imitation of Christ. Through him, the goal is the contemplation of God and his love, the true driving force of being and action, of our religious consecration, and of the joy of living in Him.

### A Neoplatonic Lineage

At first glance, Augustine and D'Alzon, the "patriarch" as well as the "founder," seem to align themselves more with Plato than with Aristotle. This lineage is important for understanding Father D'Alzon's spiritual roots as well as his personal journey. Indeed, his motto, *Adveniat Regnum tuum* (May Your Kingdom Come), and his attentiveness to the signs of a God who reigns within us, among us, and in human history, temper Augustine's Neoplatonism. His project for religious life, both Augustinian and Alzonian, draws our attention to his own interpretation of Augustine and makes us sensitive to how the current pope understands Augustine. Will Leo XIV be Augustinian in the manner of Benedict XVI, concerned with "truth in charity"? Or will he seek to rebuild "unity in charity"? The challenge is to see how the Augustinian tradition can shape a pontificate or the life of a congregation, and to better understand what the Bishop of Hippo, an Augustinian pope, Father d'Alzon or our spiritual family can bring specifically to the universal Church and to the men and women of today.

### Do not separate the love of Christ and the love of the Church.

Augustine and d'Alzon shared a commitment to uniting the love of Christ and the Church. D'Alzon added to this the love of the Virgin, about whom Augustine spoke little. Drawing on his treatise *\*On Holy Virginity\**, d'Alzon reminds us that the Church, like Mary, is "virgin and mother"—even if it means freely reversing the original word order of Augustine.

*"O Mary, the angel in his reply revealed to you the mystery of the Virgin who became Mother of God, and this reply also applies to an-*

*other mother and spouse like you, the Church, as Saint Augustine teaches: 'Ecclesia quoque virgo et mater est.'"(7)*

This somewhat approximate way of quoting the text is quite common in d'Alzon's writings. He knew "his Augustine" so well that he often quoted him from memory, without checking the original text. Moreover, as Charles Monsch writes, "he uses it in every way imaginable," so deeply is it imbued with his thought (8).

1) "Father d'Alzon, a close friend of Augustine," *Itinéraires augustiniens* no. 7, 1992, pp. 25–31; *Cahiers du Bicentenaire d'Alzon*, no. 3, pp. 203–212.

2) "Emmanuel d'Alzon, a devoted reader of Saint Augustine," in *Itinéraires augustiniens* no. 25, 2001, pp. 31–42

3) "Father d'Alzon and Augustine," Session d'Alzon, Rome, April 23–25, 1888. Unfortunately, this text is lost.

4) In the footsteps of Father d'Alzon, "With Saint Augustine as Master," pp. 32–34.

5) "One in Him Who Is One" and "Of the same family as Pope Leo XIV," in *L'Assomption et ses Œuvres*, No. 783, 2025 (4), pp. 22–23. pp. 20–22.

6) Letter to D'Esgrigny of August 31, 1830: *"I have read the Bible, Tertullian, and the Confessions of Saint Augustine. What a lovely book those Confessions are! What a beautiful soul that man had!"* Letters 1810–1842, p. 104.

7) The quoted passage from Augustine is rather *"Nam Ecclesia quoque et mater et virgo est"*: for the Church is also mother and virgin. *On Holy Virginity* II, 2. BA 3, p. 113. The quotation is taken from *Le Pèlerin*, January 17, 1880, p. 874.

8) Pp. cit., p. 33.

## The 15th Meditation on Prayer

For D'Alzon, the first step in prayer is to unite oneself with God here below. But "how can one unite oneself with the One whom nothing can contain?"(9) D'Alzon answers by quoting at length from Confessions I, 3-4 and comments thus:

*"This effort is meant to be humble, and every page of Saint Augustine's writings shows us the profound sense of his wretchedness, the conviction that he can do nothing without God. But the Christian who wishes to attain prayer must not be content with a passing effort; a constancy is needed that triumphs over all obstacles...one must wait for God's hour, and wait for it with great patience."*

Second step: to rise to God by separating oneself from earthly realities. The influence of the Confessions is evident: "Now, in these things, [the soul] finds no rest; they have no stability, they are like a perpetual flux..." (IV, 10)

The third stage, finally, consolidates the union of the soul with the Trinity. This is the "novitiate of heaven": "Here, the effort; there, the joy."(10) Recalling the *Treatise on the Trinity*, D'Alzon reminds us that "love is like a bond that unites or strives to unite two beings":

*"It is therefore through charity that we become conformed to God, and, conformed and like him and separated from this world, we are no longer confused with the things that must be subject to us."*(11)

Prayer is understood as an ascent toward the Lord, the Supreme Good and source of all love. It belongs to the order of contemplation: D'Alzon does not address its existential dimension here, nor does he explain how God also allows himself to be grasped through his work in the

daily course of our lives. This will be the subject of the examination of The Kingdom and the birth of a completely different form of Alzonian prayer.

## An Analogy Between the Soul and the Trinity

D'Alzon had the gift of putting into Augustine's mouth what he wished to convey. He saw in him an admirable commentator on the Word of God and a very reliable interpreter. Drawing inspiration from his treatise, he established an analogy between the human soul and the three persons of the Trinity:

*"Now," Saint Augustine continues, "man has three faculties: memory, intellect, and love, which correspond to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And if you ask me how man, in the innermost part of his being, resembles God: the soul," this great Doctor continues, "remembers itself, understands itself, and loves itself. Ecce mens meminit sui, intelligit se, diligit se."* (12)

In his commentary on the Gospel of John, Augustine exclaims, "Caritas, Deus meus, accende me!" And d'Alzon added: "Thus was Mary; thus we must strive to come to prayer through faith, hope, and charity." In a circular on prayer, d'Alzon quotes Augustine's Letter 130 to Proba, who asked how to pray, reminding him that prayer is a matter of desire:

*"After establishing that through faith, hope, and charity, we pray with a continuous desire, Saint Augustine observes that the soul must seek this habitual state of prayer, and he adds: 'A nobler effect will follow that which precedes a more intense fervor. [...] Is praying without ceasing anything other than desiring without ceasing from Him who alone can give it this blessed life, which can only be eternal?'"* (13)

9) E.S., p. 427-447.

10) ES, p. 437.

11) *De moribus Ecclesiae catholicae* I. I, 13. Translation by Roland-Gosselin for the edition of his *Ecrits Spirituels*, p. 445.

12) D'Alzon in L'Assomption of December 1, 1876, citing *De Trinitate* XIV, 8, 11, p. 181.

13) 2nd circular on prayer (1876), E.S. p. 292.

14) Augustine, Letter 194, 19.

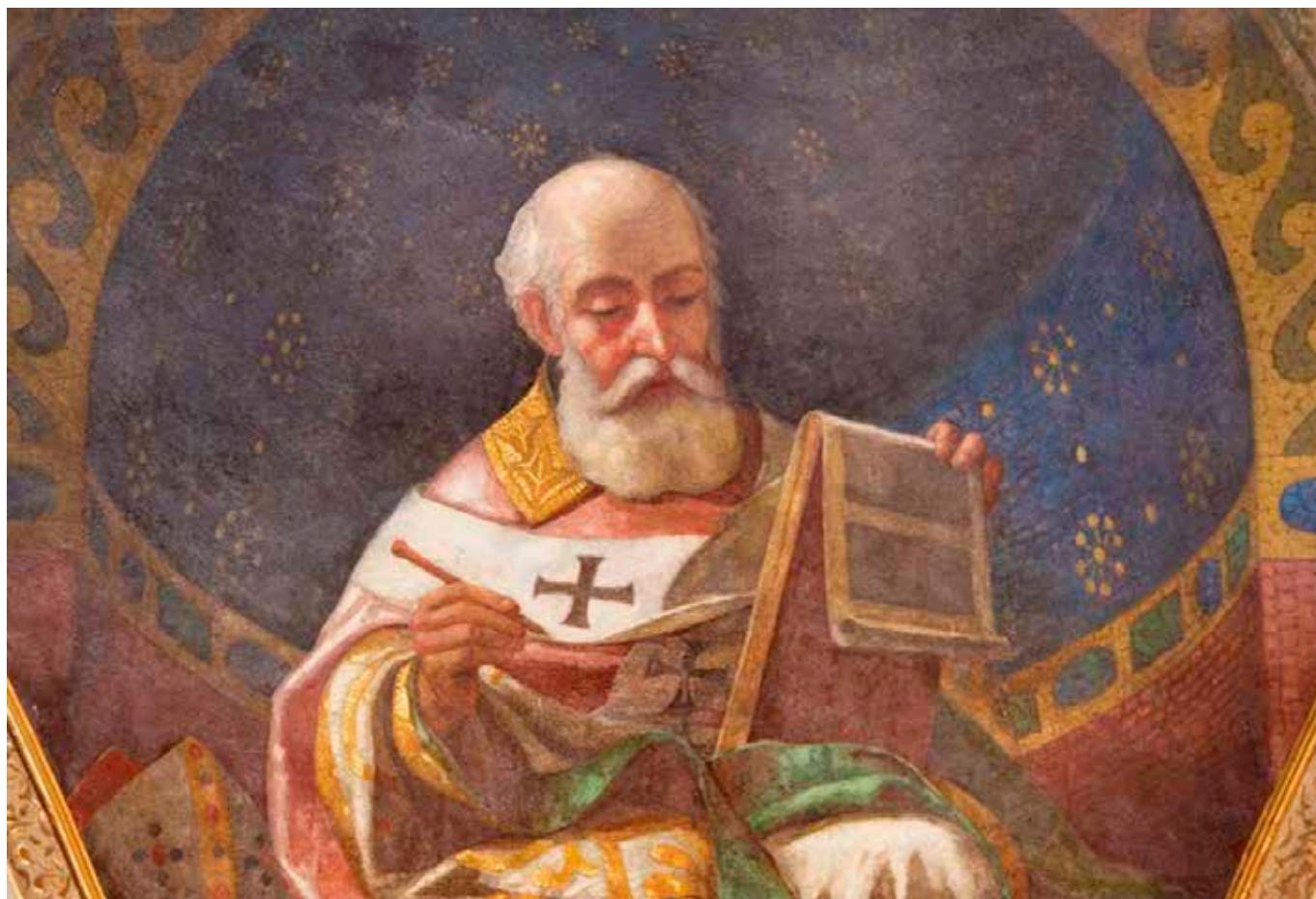
15) Le Pèlerin of January 26, 1878, p. 55.

16) E.S. p. 863.

17) 21st meditation, on "the usefulness of wishes", E.S. p. 495-496. Free translation by D'Alzon of "Quod autem redditur, reddens ipse servatur" (Letter 127, 6).

18) E.S. p. 495.

19) E.S. p. 305, note of May 25, 1879.



*"What we had in common was an immense and infinitely rich domain, God himself"* (Sermon 355, 2). Fresco depicting Saint Augustine.

### The Primacy of Grace, or Relating Everything to God's Gift

Grace comes from God, not from us. And yet, it does not work without us. *"All merit in us is the work of grace, and God, in crowning our merits, crowns only his gifts."* (14) D'Alzon concludes that grace must not remain inactive in our lives: *"God, by his grace, will give us his crown,"* says Saint Augustine, *"if we walk in accordance with the first grace he granted us."* (15) Its goal is holiness:

*"The purpose for which God gives us his graces is our sanctification... If we are not saints afterward, we are monsters."* (16)

D'Alzon evokes the grace of vows in this same perspective, echoing Augustine's conviction: *"What is given to God is added as an additional good to the one who gives."* (17) Our vows are not a gift we

give to God or the Congregation in the hope of a reward. They are a grace in action in our lives. Our human "counter-gift"—vows, prayer, fraternal and community life, apostolates—must be placed back in God. In other words, our Christian life or our religious consecration is already, or still is, God's gift to us. Thus, *"when we make a promise to God, it can have no other use than our own."* (18) The benefit for us is to be united more perfectly to God through his love:

*"The more I read Saint Augustine, the more I am struck by the truth of this saying: that religious life rests on the practice of the counsels, the counsels on charity, charity on God, to whom charity unites us, and that religious life is the means of uniting ourselves more perfectly to God through charity."* (19)

### The Scandal of a Divided Church

Anything that harms union with God and fraternal communion is dangerous. D'Alzon drew extensively on the anti-Donatist controversy to express his horror of schism and to fuel his zeal for the unity of the Church. Quoting Augustine, he draws on Cardinal Wiseman, whose teachings he had followed in Rome:

*"Dr. Wiseman... established... the most striking analogy between the Donatists of the 4th and 5th centuries and the Anglicans of the 16th... Wiseman repeated against the Anglicans, with Saint Augustine: 'In all certainty, the universe judges therefore that they are not good, those who separate themselves from the universe in any part of the universe whatsoever.'* (20)





Father d'Alzon with students. Bronze statue on the campus of Assumption University in Worcester, MA (USA).

### God's Truth and the Vacancy of Existence

Through his Neoplatonic roots, D'Alzon evokes the supernatural humility that originates with God and descends to humanity. In his Spiritual Writings, this deductive conception is counterbalanced by a more inductive perspective on humility, one that is no less theological, since it rests on the Incarnation of Jesus:

*"God gives us humility: 'Ipse vobis ostendat gratiam humilitatis, qui cœpit habitare in cordibus vestris,' exclaims Saint Augustine, 'and indeed, who has been more humble than the divine Savior, and what proof of humility does He not give us when He comes to dwell in our hearts, defiled by so many pas-*

*sions, enslaved by so many sins?'"* (21)

D'Alzon has the gift of connecting with the faithful on the ground of their personal experience. He cultivates this gift alongside the true shepherd that Augustine also was. Both knew how to articulate the supernatural and the accidental, the truth of the Most High and the vagaries of existence, asking each person to return to their heart. *"Outwardly, God warns; inwardly, He instructs,"* noted the Bishop of Hippo. (22)

Our lives are sometimes scattered or drawn toward external things. Augustine and D'Alzon perceived the danger of a life oriented toward what ultimately

turns us away from God. God speaks both outwardly (*foris*), because we are "externalized" beings, but above all inwardly (*intus*) to reveal to us the meaning of events. This faith in the Word made flesh opens each person to the truth of their existence and allows them to reread their life.

Beyond the Neoplatonic vocabulary and inspiration, D'Alzon thus points to concrete issues that are still relevant to us today.

### The Rule of Saint Augustine

The choice of the Rule of Saint Augustine—one of the five possible rules for religious after the Fourth Lateran Council (1215)—was not accidental. For d'Alzon, it would never be a mere "flag of convenience." He first mentioned

it in the preface to the Constitutions of the Assumption of 1865 (23), in the version of the Hermits of Saint Augustine. (24)

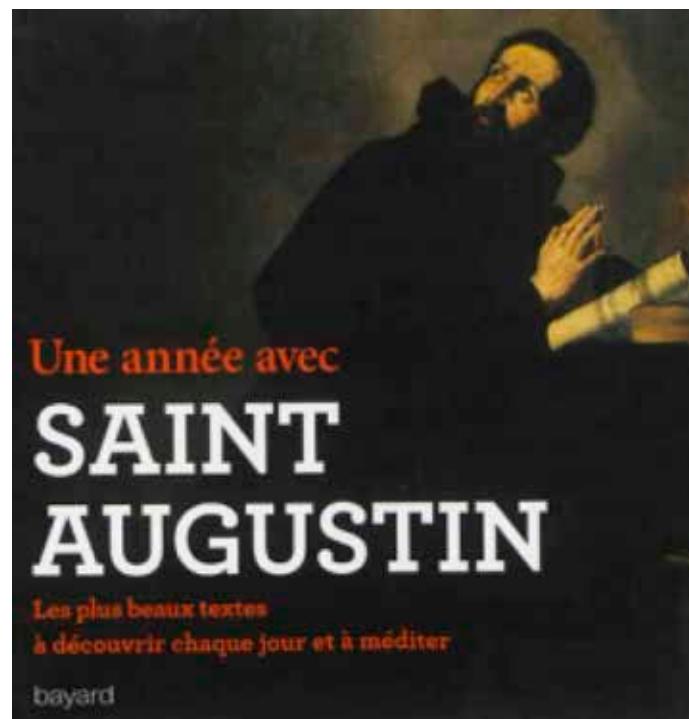
The Rule emphasizes the ideal of the very first Christian community (Acts 4:32). The catechumens to whom Augustine addressed himself must understand that it is a matter of sharing not only our material goods but also our spiritual ones: our souls and our hearts. The reason is not only practical—sharing goods facilitates our material organization—but primarily theological. Community, generosity in sharing, and selflessness in self-giving characterize Alzon's spirituality. No one can belong to the head, Christ, if they do not also belong to his body, that is, to the Church and therefore to a community. To Laetus, who wished to leave the monastery to return to his parents, Augustine wrote:

*"Your soul is not yours alone, but belongs to all your brothers, just as, in turn, their souls belong to you; or rather, their souls and yours are not souls in the plural, but are one soul, the one soul of Christ"* (Letter 243, 6).

## Zeal

The final pillar of Alzonian spirituality is apostolic zeal—although this mission is passed over in silence in the *Rule* of Saint Augustine, written for monastic life. This is unless one reads the final invitation: "Spread the fragrance of Christ" (8:1), an expression inspired by Saint Paul (2 Corinthians 2:14-15).

Augustine's apostolic commitment is revealed by observing him living and bearing the "*episcopal burden*" (*negotium*), or by reading *Sermon 356* on the tasks performed by the clerics who



shared his life, some of whom managed important affairs for the Church.

In Letter 48, addressed to Eudoxus, Augustine asks the monks not to refuse the mission: "*When the Church calls us to it, we must work in the apostolate, for if Christ is not proclaimed, he will not be known and faith cannot be awakened.*" For D'Alzon as well, religious life is not an escape from the world or the illusion of living selfishly with the Lord. The Rule makes us men of prayer and apostles in the fullness of the world.

## Conclusion

For Emmanuel d'Alzon, founder at the age of 35, passionate about truth and unity, the Augustinian path is the royal road to charity. It also provides the means to achieve it through the choice of community life, as specified in the Rule. It opens onto love for the Church through apostolic zeal, which is its extension. Augustine provided important guidelines

"so that the Kingdom may come." And the Assumptionists readily acknowledge them as their own spiritual journey today.

**Fr. Vincent Leclercq,  
Postulator General**

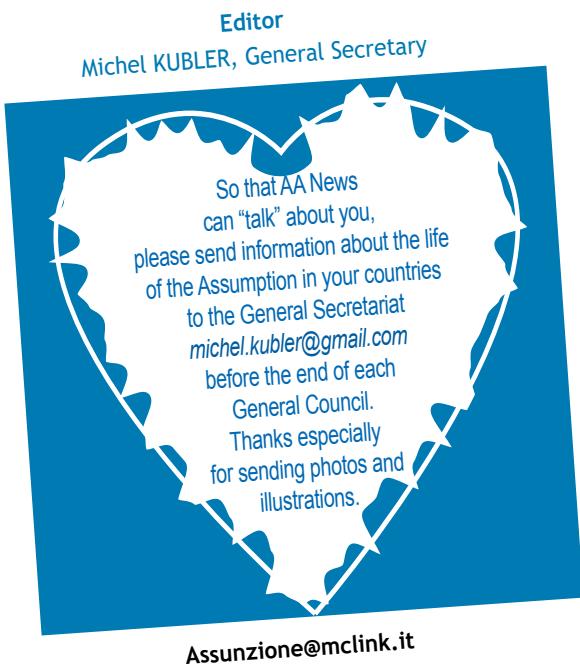
20) Bulletin of Saint Francis de Sales, 1866. D'Alzon cites *Against the Letter of Parmenian*, III, 4, 24. BA 28, p. 457.

21) E.S. p. 889; *Homilies on the Gospel of Saint John*, III, 15.

22) "*Foris admonet, intus docet.* » (De Libero arbitrio II, 14, 38).

23) As early as July 1846, he wrote to his bishop: "Monseigneur, you will perhaps ask me for my regulations. To that I have only one answer: I have devoted myself to the Rule of Saint Augustine; I am still only taking notes." (Letters, vol. C, p. 81).

24) The French translation appearing in our Rule of Life is that of Luc Verheijen (1967).) ES, p. 437



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# Our deceased brothers



† Fr. Michel ZABÉ, of the Albertville community (Province of Europe), died on October 16, 2025, in Albertville, France. His funeral was celebrated on October 22 in the chapel of Notre-Dame des Vignes, followed by burial in the cemetery at Chiriac. He was 95.

† Fr. Gerard MESSIER, of the North American Province, died on October 25 in Worcester (USA). His funeral was celebrated on October 30 in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit at Assumption University. He was 93.

† Fr. Lambert MAURISSEN, of the Leuven community (Province of Europe), died on November 28, 2025, in Bierbeek, Belgium. His funeral was celebrated on December 4 in the Church of Sint-Geertrui de Leuven. He was 96.

† Fr. Tomás GONZÁLEZ, of the community of the Gentle Name of Mary in Madrid (Province of Europe), died on December 12, 2025, in Madrid, Spain. His funeral was celebrated on December 13 in his native village of Villantodrigo (Palencia, Spain). He was 86.