



Plenary General Council

Rome, December 1-10, 2014

Number 7

At a glance

Many believe they know the Assumption, but as a recent web-clip shows, it is not that easy to situate it on the checkerboard of religious life. Today, its functioning is far from being what it was just a few years ago. Firstly, as of this year it is made up of a new organization into six provinces. Africa and Europe have a lion's share of it: the first for its human resources and its youth with 280 religious whose average age is less than 40 years-old and its twenty novices; the second with the wealth of its traditions and its material means and its 53 communities spread over 18 countries (Cf. the Official Acts of the Provincial Chapter of the Province of Europe, 2014, 130 pages) makes us think of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar where the enormous statue is still brilliant but the feet are made of clay (Daniel, 2:31). The Provinces of North America-Philippines and its three territories as well as the Andean Province and its four countries are preoccupied with their ageing, their disparities and especially the endemic crisis of vocations. Finally Brazil and Madagascar are still young and fragile realities that benefit from a homogenous territory and want to believe in their future. Brazil has five communities and Madagascar eight.

Since 2011, the annual Councils of the Congregation with their senatorial functioning have been replaced with a more operational government, the CGP allowing the Congregation to be more conscious that it was this body that Saint Paul speaks of (I Cor. 12: 12).

Twice a year, at planting time and at harvest time, the Plenary General Council, (CGP), meets with the Superior General to examine the body and give it a complete check-up. At the beginning the diagnosis was not clear, but the method was more and more polished and step by step found its way and its functioning. Common orientations and decisions today allow the Congregation to better understand itself ▶

On the road to Lyons in 2017

The signal has been given and we have begun. We are now on the way to the General Chapter of May 2017. The 33rd General Chapter of the Congregation will be held in Valpré. During this 7th Plenary General Council, the capitular first steps were initiated. It is now a question of sensitizing the communities and the Provinces to enter into the perspective of this preparation. During the session, the Superior often quoted the word of Isaiah: "Let us walk in the light of the Lord" (Is. 2:5). The light of the Lord enlightens us and we must let ourselves be guided by that Light, and listen to the Word of God. The discussions reflected the attention that each one must give to all the realities of the Congregation: a path to be pursued unceasingly. Stopping would be signing our death warrant.

"Religious must be made sensitive to the fact of inevitable evolution. Nothing must be done without the collaboration of all the religious," concluded Father Benoît Grière. And he added: "In 1980, Cardinal Marty, Archbishop of Paris, had told the Assumptionists that "we were heirs and that we had to be founders" [...] Faithful and heirs: we are that when we promote internationality in the Congregation. Our work showed that there was a true complicity among us all. [...] How can we be founders while our fragilities are manifest everywhere? I believe that we have not allowed ourselves to be weighed down by the difficulties even as we recognize that they are real. Rather, we have tried to find paths to the future. I hope that each Province will be able to establish an apostolate program for the next twelve years. That will allow for more continuity. A vision for the mission. The Assumption must continue on its road in the old Provinces, but it must also prepare for the future. I was saying with Pope Gregory the Great that we had to "go to the Barbarians". It is desirable to discern where we are called to found. Those peripheries that Pope Francis designates as priorities for us: where are they? We will have to accompany an unavoidable evolution of the Congregation and that must not scare us."

Father Benoît then formulated a wish and an encouragement.

A wish: "I would want you to return to your Provinces with the conviction that we are able to react and not be ▶

as a body just as the Chapters of 2005 and 2011 invited it to. Even if it still has a long way to go, it has had a good start. Much remains to be done, but the tone has been set in three essential areas. In formation, the Congregation has given itself international houses of formation in order to respond better to its needs in this area and the international dimension of this little family faithful to Father d'Alzon. The reflection on the mobilizing works sets the tone for the apostolic and missionary choices for the Congregation. Finally, the first apostolic nominations are already the promising fruit of a common discernment of the Provincials and the Superior General.

Co-responsibility and subsidiarity have taken a face and we now understand better how the community organization of a religious family, such as the Assumption, needs to stick to the realities that are by definition always changing: "A witness of the love of the Father and in solidarity with men, the Assumptionist religious wants to be a man of faith and a man of his times." Those are the two dimensions recalled by the Rule of Life {2 to which we must stick. For us it is an unavoidable aspect to be considered during this Year of Consecrated Life, or we risk to be disconnected from the present, or enclose ourselves in the past and no longer know how to go into the future.

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▶ simply content with the inevitable. The greatness of the Christian is to live in hope and to believe that nothing is ever finished.

It is important to present the Assumptionist vocation to young people. We must find new initiatives. I am uneasy when I see in certain territories the advanced ages of the candidates we recruit."

An encouragement: "I encourage this attitude that must firstly be an interior attitude. We are to listen to the will of the Lord and that passes in priority in our prayer life. I have just written on brotherhood. Communities are alive and united when they are fastened by the prayer life. I am already working on the next letter that will be consecrated to interiority. I have ascertained almost everywhere that there is a lack of interiority. We are certainly not great mystics, but we can be more rooted in prayer and meditation. I am counting on the Provinces to give the example. I count on each one of us. » ■

Assumption College and tomorrow?

The members of the CGP had requested of Father Miguel Ayllón that he express the present perspective to intensify and renew the Assumptionist presence at Assumption College, the mobilizing work of the Province of North America-Philippines. After the Canonical Visitation of the Superior General, it was a question of seeing how to respond to the needs that prepare for tomorrow. What kind of presence do we want for the Assumption in this work? How from now on do we want to propagate the witness of our Assumptionist life on the campus? Today the two communities are in a fragile situation that urges us to be innovative and think of how to renew our way of being present. It can be diverse and have multiple aspects, but unavoidably it passes through a strong witness of an authentic religious and community life.

The mobilizing works

Just as in each of its sessions, the CGP took time to look at the mobilizing works, notably three of them: the Bush schools, Bayard Presse and the Saint Peter-Saint Andrew Center in Bucharest.

The bush schools (Madagascar) are the reflection of the desire of the Congregation: solidarity with the poor. Its annual report shows that there has been renewal in the team of religious

A good collaboration with the 70 teachers is developing. But the Christian identity of the project needs to be affirmed better among the 4000 students they touch and their families. By means of an educational project and a good catechesis, it aims to make it a true instrument of evangelization.

Bayard is an imposing enterprise that is developing internationally, but where the economic preoccupations remain major because of the digital revolution. There also the spirit of re-foundation is to be pursued in order to touch new geographical areas.

The Saint Peter-Saint Andrew Center of Bucharest (Rumania) is a work where the collaboration between the Oblates and the Assumptionists is deployed. The list of propositions that the center offers is impressive and reveals a real dynamism under the guidance of Father Michel Kubler. The center enjoys a great influence in the Rumanian capital in the midst of a society in profound transformation. There as elsewhere a question is asked: "how to awaken vocations through our center?"

Sexual abuse

In a unanimous vote, the CGP adopted the "*Normes applicables dans la congrégation des Augustins de l'Assomption en matière d'abus sexuels.*" This text is the revised version of the document of 2009, published ad experimentum (cf. Documents Assomption, no. 34, p. 49-77) and takes into account the norms and procedures published by the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, notably in its letter to the episcopal conferences of May 3, 2011. Another new aspect, compared to the old text, references the spirit and the mission of the religious of the Congregation.



The Quebec project in debate

Before the members of the CGP, Fr. Miguel Ayllon presented a note entitled: “Le projet Québec” on the presence of the Assumption in the Belle Province. Certainly the perspectives in the median and the long term for our community are multicultural, but the experiences of these last ten years have allowed us to measure the major pastoral challenges of this Church and of this society that is going through secularization at a dizzying pace. It is a question of making the Montmartre, our only implantation, a center of formation and of awakening to the faith for persons marginalized in the Church and the youth, to join in the other initiatives taken to the Church a new visibility, through solidarity with the poorest, but also through the media and notably by a support of Bayard Canada. But realism imposes itself. The cultural environment of secularization does not produce enthusiasm and vocations no longer present themselves. The future of our presence is from now on tied to a global strategy of the Congregation. We know that dispersion penalizes this almost hundred year-old foundation.

It was on March 2, 1917 that though the good care of the Venerable Father Marie-Clément Staub (1876-1936), Cardinal Louis-Nazaire Bégin (1840-1925), Archbishop of Québec bestowed on the Assumption its canonical admission, made official by a Bill in 1925. Ten years later, on January 6, 1927, the first stone of the Montmartre was blessed.

*Fr. Marcelo Marciel,
Fr. Etienne R. Ratalata,
Fr. Luiz Carlos de Oliveira,
Fr. Miguel Diaz Ayllón,
Fr. Emmanuel Kahindo Kihugho,
Fr. Juan Carlos Cisterna,
Fr. John Franck,
Fr. Benoît Griere,
Fr. Protais Kabila Kalondo,
Fr. Bernard Le Léannec,
Fr. Benoît Gschwind,
Fr. Jean-Baptiste Kambale Migheri,
Br. Didier Remiot,
Fr. Victor Blanco.*

Three program statements of the Pope

By being joyful! Show everyone that following Christ and putting into practice his Gospel fills your heart with joy. Contaminate with that joy those who come to you and then so many persons will ask you for the reason and they will feel the desire to share with you this splendid enthusiastic evangelical adventure.

By being courageous! The one who feels loved by the Lord knows that in Him rests his complete confidence. That is what your founders and foundresses did by opening new ways of service for the Kingdom of God. Through the strength of the Holy Spirit, who accompanies you, go on the roads of the world and show the innovative force of the Gospel that, if it is put into practice, works wonders even today and can give answers to all the questions of man.

By being men and women of communion! Well rooted in the personal communion with God whom you have chosen as the unum necessarium (cf. Luke, 10:42) of your existence, become unflagging builders of brotherhood, above all by putting into practice among yourselves the Gospel Law of mutual love, and the with others, especially the poorest. Show that the universal brotherhood is not a utopia but the very dream of Jesus for all of humanity.

(Message of Pope Francis for the opening for the Year of Consecrated Life)

First apostolic nominations

Father Benoît Grière, Superior General with the assent of his Plenary General Council has given the first apostolic nomination of :

- KAKULE MBACKULA, Jean Baptiste (Province of Africa)
- PALUKU KAMILI, Jean-Paul (Province of Africa)
- PALUKU SIRIMWENGE, Désiré (Province of Africa)
- BWANBALE KALIPI, Dominique (Province of Africa)
- KAMSELE AGBAKA, Bienvenu (Province of Africa)
- KASEREKA SINDANI, Edmond (Province of Africa)
- KOLELA, Venceslas Quentin (Province of Africa)
- MUMBERE NDAKEGHANA, Gaston (Province of North America-Philippines)
- NGUYEN CHI AI, Joseph (Province of North America-Philippines)
- KAKULE KYAHWERE, Jeurie-Bertrand (Province of Africa)
- KAMBALE LIKO, Athanase (Province of Africa)
- KIARIE NDUATI, John (Province of Africa)

THE THREE MESSAGES

To Africa in suffering

All our work was marked by the daily massacres that occur in your territory, especially in the area of Beni.

... We salute the role that your Church plays in seeking reconciliation, peace and justice in your country and we assure it of our solidarity.

Whatever the length of the night and the weight of the suffering, do not tire of being in solidarity with our people and working for the coming of the Kingdom for which you have given your lives. It is in this manner that you will be able to work for communion and cultivate true peace, not that of armaments but that of the love that Jesus Christ,



Prince of Peace brings us...

We assure you that, everywhere we are in mission, sisters and brothers pray for your parents, brothers and sisters kidnapped during these last years and for your captive brothers, the Assumptionist priests, Edmond, Jean-Pierre and Anselme. Without respite, we try to be with you and for you a voice in solidarity to make heard in our respective countries your cry of anguish that is also ours...

...May the light of Christ who comes, enlighten you in these times of darkness that you live and may the dawn arrive without delay! Those are our dearest wishes.

To the Quebec brothers

The CGP wanted to express its encouragement to the community living in a post-Christian society, congratulating its apostolic efforts and its commitment to live the mission in close collaboration with the laity.

The CGP shows this support by the apostolic nomination of Brother Gaston MUMBERE as a missionary in the Province of North America and in the territory of Canada.

The CGP encourages the development of projects and search for means to put into place for a greater collaboration with Bayard, a renewed proposition to live a new evangelization in the context of secularization and recalls also that our presence to young people and our care for vocations is not to be forgotten.

...In this Year of Consecrated Life, we are invited to look beyond this known region that gives us security and comfort and not fear to go towards new horizons!

Our presence at Assumption College

In a message to the religious of North America-Philippines, The CGP wanted to express its encouragements. Following the report of the Provincial, Fr. Miguel Ayllon, it declares understanding the needs of the Congregation and the various means to put in place to assure its character. It wished to encourage all those who are committed to it. As a sign of its support, the CGP voted that the first nomination of Father Ai Joseph NGUYEN CHI, of the Province of Europe is transferred to the Province of North America-Philippines to assume the responsibility of teaching at the College. The CGP commits itself to make all necessary efforts to find the means of fortifying this presence in the future. This message ends with the word of Isaiah: "Those who place their hope in the Lord find new strengths; they deploy like eagle's wings, they run without tiring" (Is. 40:31).