



CONGRÈS D'ÉDUCATION À L'ASSOMPTION  
CONGRESO DE EDUCACIÓN EN LA ASUNCIÓN  
ASSUMPTION EDUCATION CONGRESS  
2016

## **A REFERENCE DOCUMENT FOR AN ASSUMPTION EDUCATION TODAY**

*The Augustinians of the Assumption, the Oblate Sisters of the Assumption, and their lay friends and partners, gathered at Assumption College in Worcester Massachusetts, USA for an International Education Congress from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup> of July 2016, propose the following principles and convictions meant to inspire the educational institutions sponsored by these Congregations.*

### **Chapter I Knowing the aim of education in Fr. d'Alzon's eyes**

*"We are all called to communicate the truth and love through education. Make this the object of our meditation, of our desires, of all our efforts. May we be passionate about this apostolate and become worthy of it."*

E d'Alzon, E.S., p. 1332

- 1.** The educational vision of Father Emmanuel d'Alzon grounds our Assumption educational project. This vision is inspired by the Gospel and animated by the passion of Father d'Alzon for the Reign of God and his desire to respond to the intellectual, moral and spiritual challenges of his day.
- 2.** This vision is shaped by its 19<sup>th</sup> century context, an era, like our own, marked by ignorance, indifference and unbelief. It seeks to know, love, and imitate Jesus Christ in the conviction that knowledge of Christ draws us closer to God and enables us to become free and fully human. It is Jesus Christ reveals the true face of God and the vocation of every man and woman created in his image and likeness.
- 3.** The Assumption educational project welcomes and accepts each person. It strives to build an academic community where all belong to a single family. In an Assumptionist institution, teaching and learning move the student toward greater freedom, responsibility, justice, and community.
- 4.** Faithful to Fr. d'Alzon, the Assumption is devoted to the cause of God and humankind, in service to Truth, Charity, and Unity.
- 5.** The academic community regularly offers opportunities both to explore the thought of Fr. d'Alzon and the foundations and goals of the educational project of the Assumption by means

of workshops, readings and retreats, led by the Assumptionist Congregations and lay partners and to assess their practices in their light.

## **Chapter II**

### **Announcing the Christian faith in an Assumptionist institution**

*“By means of the great and wonderful work of education..., we communicate the power of life through the Father, intelligence through the Son, and love through the Holy Spirit.”*

E. d’Alzon: 50<sup>th</sup> Conference to the Religious of the Assumption, 6 March 1871

**6.** An Assumptionist education is founded on a vision of the human person which is rooted in Christian revelation.

Assumptionist education is an integral part of the Church whose mission it is to announce the Good News that is Jesus Christ himself.

**7.** In an Assumptionist institution the Gospel is announced and practiced. An Assumptionist education seeks to help people live as Christians and as members of the Church. In its academic communities, it does so especially through the sacraments and the study of God’s Word. It nurtures the development of interiority in each person.

**8.** In an Assumptionist education, faith, hope, and charity hold pride of place. It draws attention to the spiritual and social consequences of these theological virtues and believes that faith and reason together make possible a deeper understanding of the realities of the world today.

## **Chapter III**

### **Educating in today’s world**

*“The Apostle loves the one who sends him, but he must love the one to whom he is sent, since his is a mission of love and of mercy.”*

E. d’Alzon, E.S., p.781

*“The most intimate thought of my soul is that the world needs to be penetrated through and through by a Christian idea; otherwise it will fall apart..... we need to teach it and to do so in words it can understand.”*

E. d’Alzon, Letter to Alphonse de Vigniamont, 28 March 1835

**9.** Knowing and loving the world is at the heart of an Assumptionist education.

**10.** Such an education looks at the world through a Christian perspective. In order to reach this world, it uses a language that is accessible and comprehensible to the men and women of our time.

**11.** An Assumptionist education teaches people to discern the good, the true, and the just, in dialogue with the contemporary world. It forms one’s judgment and brings together what is often separated: heart and mind, faith and reason, the acquisition of a certain expertise and the ability to use it wisely.

**12.** An Assumptionist education promotes serious reflection on the fundamental causes of racism, exclusivity, and extremism. It invites women and men to recognize the inherent

dignity of each person as created in the image and likeness of God. It nurtures a sense of community, characterized by respect and genuine encounter with others.

**13.** An Assumptionist education favors openness to internationality and encourages the study of languages as well as exchanges among Assumptionist institutions throughout the world.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Living the family spirit**

*“How might we further define the spirit of the Assumption? (...) It is easier to sense it than to define it. It’s that which makes an institution sui generis; it’s that which characterizes such an institution and not another (...). And yet being formed in this general spirit is essential because it helps students to join together, to become one, to love one another, to support one another, and to pursue, once they have left the institution and set out on life’s journey, a common goal with a greater sense of meaning.”*

E. d’Alzon, *Aspects de pédagogie chrétienne*, pp. 45 and 137

**14.** An Assumptionist education fosters ‘a family spirit,’ characterized by love, trust, generosity, simplicity and genuineness in one’s relations.

**15.** This family spirit family spirit requires a continual search for unity, despite differences; an attention to each person; and the formation of a true academic community where all experience a spirit of belonging to the Assumption family and to the body of Christ that is the Church.

## **Chapter V**

### **Studying at Assumption**

*“Young people are not simply empty canvases on which you have only to apply a few colors. We do not shape them like clay on which the artist leaves an imprint that is more or less inspired.”*

Report by Fr. d’Alzon to Assumption College, Nîmes, 1847

**16.** The ambition of an Assumptionist education is to form men and women who are free, responsible, daring, imaginative, and committed to their full development in order to find their place in the world and to contribute actively to the work of creation. While encouraging excellence, an Assumptionist education recognizes the uniqueness of each student and the need for free development at his or her own pace. Fr. d’Alzon calls us “to encourage in our students a certain freedom in their own growth rather than to force them all “to assume the same form”.

**17.** The search for the truth, the development of the capacity to judge in a deep, balanced and intelligent way their own culture, a sense of dialogue—all of this is at the heart of the goals to be pursued.

**18.** Training and education should not be opposed; there is a time for acquiring expertise and a time for acquiring wisdom. The different disciplines taught are not meant simply for the acquisition of information, but for the assimilation of certain life principles and the discovery of certain truths.

## Chapter VI

### Teaching at Assumption

*"It's not enough to teach. We also need to educate, and education is a task considerably more difficult than simply teaching."*

E. d'Alzon, E.S., p. 481

**19.** Teaching at an Assumptionist institution requires meeting the young students where they are in their lives. As Father d'Alzon wrote: to teach is "to be attentive to what is special in each student, to identify what is good in order to help it develop, and to shape the character in order to give to each student a certain quality, while respecting his or her individuality."

**20.** Educators at Assumption are personally convinced of the mission of their institutions and are conscientiously devoted to its realization. Deeply committed to their own discipline, they continue to pursue knowledge in their respective fields and to deepen their knowledge of Fr. d'Alzon's educational vision.

**21.** Consistent with Assumption's educational vision, teachers are invited to exercise a breadth and openness of spirit, as well as patience, perseverance, generosity, enthusiasm, and a capacity for collaboration.

**22.** At the Assumption, religious and lay people are partners in service to the same mission, loving their students and witnessing to them in an authentic and joyful way.

## Chapter VII

### Being welcoming at Assumption

*"One feeling growing in me is love for my fellow man... Humanity in our day sins in two ways: we love too little, and our knowledge is so deficient. Humanity needs to be taught, but first we need to give humanity a heart of flesh..."*

E d'ALZON : Letter to Luglien d'Esgrigny, 1 October 1834

**23.** An Assumption institution is open to all. Assumptionist institutions welcome all regardless of their origin or ability, displaying great respect for the cultural and religious affiliations of each student.

**24.** Assumptionist institutions seek to provide a holistic education to support the human and spiritual growth of each student.

**25.** Assumptionist institutions acknowledge the realities of the contexts in which they operate and seek at all times to be attentive to the poor and the weak. They demonstrate a particular attention to their own students in need, whether they be personal, family, or social needs.

**26.** An Assumptionist institution maintains its Catholic identity while educating students to Gospel values and introducing them to ecumenism and intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

## Chapter VIII

### Forming students to solidarity and social responsibility

*“Education is not simply a theory; it has practical consequences for each day and at all times.”*

E. d’Alzon, E.S. p 237

**27.** An Assumptionist institution seeks to help students realize and live their vocations. It fosters a particular fidelity to the Church

**28.** It invites its students to seek what is “true”, “good” and “beautiful”. It is best understood as a part of God’s plan for his creation. Fr. d’Alzon encouraged students to “acquire a heart able to love all that is great and noble and ready to set aside all self-centeredness.”

(November 15, 1876, Conference on Christian Education)

**29.** It insists on the unity between thought and social action. It teaches people to be responsible, in view of forming them to become involved and to serve, whatever work they assume in society or in the Church, with a particular sensitivity to those in greatest need.

**30.** It encourage social service programs joined with serious reflection on these activities in order to understand their meaning and importance. All are taught to care for our “common home,” the earth.

**31** Assumptionist institutions teach students about peace, the equality between women and men, and the meaning of the common good. All of these perspectives are brought to bear on the important political issues of the day. Students are taught to use the media, especially the internet, in a responsible and critical way.

## Conclusion

Teaching was an essential part of the Assumption at the time of its founding by Father Emmanuel d’Alzon and continues to hold an important place in the mission of the Oblates of the Assumption and the Augustinians of the Assumption. The religious of these Congregations desire to involve in this work as many lay people as possible who share the same educational vision.

- It is a vision that seeks to educate the whole person, at every level.
- It is a search for the truth, a way that is profoundly humanizing.
- It helps young people to assume responsibility for their own lives, in solidarity with others, in order then to build a society that is more fraternal.
- It has a spiritual and theological dimension in the sense that it educates people to participate in the work of salvation, the work of the Word of God made flesh, truth, and life.
- It is a place where religious and lay people share the same mission, establishing in that way a partnership in the spirit of the Assumption.