

# AA News of the Assumption



**THREE 20-YEAR MISSIONS**

**THE AUGUSTINIAN FAMILY**

**A MALAGASY  
MISSIONARY IN BRAZIL**

# Agenda

## Plenary General Council

- n° 6 : **June 1-10, 2026** (Romania).

## Ordinary General Council

- n° 20 : **April 7-10.**
- n° 21 : **May 4-8.**
- n° 22 : **June 11-12.**
- n° 23 : **September 7-23.**

## Fr. Ngoa

### Canonical visits in the Province of Europe :

- **March 2-29** : Spain and Southern France (Montpellier, Nîmes, Layrac).
- **May 10-26** : Philippines.
- **June 13-July 4** : Mission of the Orient (Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece).

## Fr. Benoît

- **March 3-27** : Kenya.

## Fr. João

- **June 17-July 6** : Tanzania (missionary meetings).

## Fr. Thierry

- **March 20-22** : Netherlands (Fimcap).
- **July** : Madrid (priestly jubilees).

## Fr. Étienne

- **March 31-April 5** : Sicily.
- **June 17-July 6** : Tanzania (missionary meetings).

### On the cover

From January 20 to 31, 2026, a group of 35 pilgrims from France and Belgium set out to explore Vietnam. This trip, led by Fr. Joseph Dũng and organized by Bipel (a subsidiary of Bayard), provided a profoundly memorable experience on both a human and spiritual level: a way to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Assumptionist mission in this country (see pages 5 and following).

# A gesture of hope from the General House Community



**T**o mark the jubilee year of 2025, Fr. Ngoa Ya Tshihemba, Superior General, encouraged each community of the Congregation to consider a gesture of hope that would be modest and local. To follow this call, the community of the General House in Rome (Due Pini) decided to make this a reality by going to Florence to celebrate with the aged Oblate Sisters in Pietriolo. They wanted to celebrate the birthday of their Founder.

This was also an opportunity to strengthen links with the brothers of the local community of Borgo Pinti, as well as the other Oblate sisters who came to join the event. The devoted welcome and the warmth of these two Oblate communities of Florence and of our brothers, permitted us to experience fraternal and wonderful visits in this “Museum City” under the leadership of Fr. Giuliano Riccadonna.

The brief note sent by our sisters clearly expresses the joy that was given and received:

*“Our community extends its profound gratitude for your visit among us. It was an honor for us. The Sisters thank you immensely.*

*Your presence brought a light of hope and love that touched the hearts of all the Sisters. Thank you so much. United in prayer. The Sisters of Petriolo”*

<https://www.assumptio.org/en/a-gesture-of-hope-towards-our-older-sisters/>

# “How Admirable Is This Ministry!”

In the first of seven additional meditations, Fr. d’Alzon speaks of the ministry of the Word: “How admirable is this ministry as Our Lord communicated it to his apostles through the all-powerful action of the Holy Spirit!”

Why return to this ministry in this editorial? I have been on a canonical visitation since March 2nd. I began in Spain, where we have three communities, each responsible for parishes (sometimes two for a single community). After Spain, I visited the community in Montpellier, also responsible for three churches that form a parish, and today I am in Nîmes where I celebrated the Eucharist in the Church of Saint Perpetua and Saint Felicity, entrusted to the Assumptionists.



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

Our brothers who serve in these various parishes were kind enough to invite those who work directly with them to share their experiences with me. It was during these discussions that I realized how admirably our brothers carry out their ministry of speaking and listening in a society that feels its need.

Speaking of accompanying the People of God, the 34th General Chapter offered some fairly clear guidelines: “*Our societies are increasingly fragmented; divisions, national isolationism, and conflicts are intensifying. Unfortunately, the Church is not immune to this reality. Therefore, wherever we are, we wish to redouble our efforts for unity, charity, and truth, both among peoples and within the Church and among the Churches.*” (Acts of the 34th General Chapter, no. 131). The same General Chapter invited us to cultivate a synodal spirit in accompanying the People of God: “*We will strive to strengthen close collaboration with the laity in all the places where we are on mission, in order to foster synodality in the leadership and governance of our parishes... Together, we work for the good of the community.*” (Acts of the 34th General Chapter, no. 134).

Love for the Church should be, according to Father d’Alzon, one of the first distinguishing characteristics when this admirable ministry is entrusted to the Assumptionists. “*Nothing*

*is more beautiful than dedicating oneself to the cause of God, of Jesus Christ, of the Church*” (E.S. pp. 616-617). While it is true that we must not fall into a kind of paranoia by seeing the enemies of the Church everywhere around us, it is also true that we must not be naive. To love the Church is also to take a stand to defend her. If this can be done through one’s life, all the better: a life centered on Christ and in which charity is the Golden Rule.

The ministry of the Word is becoming increasingly demanding. This is why Father d’Alzon insists on proper preparation: “*To rush into the fray without the necessary weapons would be supreme imprudence. Therefore, we must prepare ourselves. We must fight valiantly, but with a certain knowledge, and since this knowledge is not given to us directly as it was to the apostles, we must acquire it through study, and this is sanctification through work, so necessary for those who want to dedicate themselves to the fight of God*” (E.S. p. 617).

When it comes to undertaking actions in accompanying God’s people, we must be prepared for every eventuality: success or failure. We live in a time when failure is barely tolerated, especially since a new generation of brothers is serving communities that were once accustomed to a certain way of doing things. It takes time, patience, and courage for changes to be understood and accepted. In a conversation with brothers who felt this way, I urged them to redouble their confidence. Father d’Alzon says that when discouragement takes hold of us, that is precisely the moment to redouble our confidence. He speaks of “*the solemn hour of hope.*” Because at that moment, we learn to trust in others and in the master of the task: the Lord. Is this not the meaning of Paul’s words to the Corinthians: “*For when I am weak, then I am strong*” (2 Cor 12:9)? The ministry of the word and of accompanying God’s people—that is, evangelization—is admirable but increasingly demanding. It requires that virtue which our Founder described as indispensable to every Assumptionist: humility. ■

# Calls, nominations, agreements...

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

## ■ TO DIACONAL ORDINATION

**Dominique Savio TRINH VIET Công**

(Europe) (02/23/2026)

**Paul NGUYEN VAN Duc**

(Europe) (02/23/2026)

## ■ TO PRIESTLY ORDINATION

**Paul THAI VAN Thành**

(Europe) (02/23/2026)



## ■ PROCESS OF INCARDINATION

The Holy See (Dicastery for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life) have accepted the request of **Fr. Ricky CAÑET MONTAÑEZ**, religious-priest of the **North American Province**, to carry out a trial period with hopes of incardination in the diocese of Cubao (Philippines), decreed on January 27, 2026.

## ■ RETURN TO THE INSTITUTE

-**Br. Ryan CARLSEN**, of the **North American Province**, concluded his trial period with the Congregation of Canons Regular of the Immaculate Conception in January 2026. As a result, he will assume all his rights and responsibilities as a religious of the Assumption.

-**Fr. Manuel Alejandro GODOY VÁSQUEZ**, of the **Andean Province**, concluded his trial period for incardination in the diocese of Villarrica (Chile). He will assume his rights and responsibilities in his religious state.

## AN ENTIRELY NEW WEB SITE!

At all levels, the Church is engaged in a “Mission in the digital environment”. In its capacity, our congregation pursues this mission in different ways. We often speak of a necessary presence in social media, but communication via the Internet is complementary and of a different nature.

A web site functions more in the manner of institutional communication, as a reference, and above all, in the form of a stable digital library.

The aim, of course, was to respond to the rapid obsolescence of all forms of communication, but, above all, to profit from the occasion of adjusting the services that a website can offer and ensure better continuity and technical security for the site by working with Bayard-Service.

The following three principals are highlighted:

- News of the congregation and of the universal Church;
- Life of the provinces
- An on-line library

They are supplemented by thirty static pages, some photo albums, some links regarding our social networks, and other practical pages.

You will note several new additions: more documents (already 600), with access to several rubrics and categories; a page for on-line donations; news that updates automatically from Vatican News or provincial websites (when they are compatible and functional); a new YouTube page (accessible at the bottom of the page); networking with on-line resources from our Sisters. . .

What is to come : a catalog of the library at the General House; regular access to new documents and articles; networking with other ecclesiastical resources; monitoring of the site by several brothers; a newsletter to keep the site active (the first will give codes to access the Intranet), etc.

You can discover the rest on your own:

<https://www.assumptio.org>



**Fr. Benoît BIGARD**  
(Vicar General, Rome)

# 20 years : the prime years for three foundations

2006 was a fertile year for the Assumption, which launched three official foundations in three countries: Vietnam, the Philippines, and Togo. The future Vicariates of Asia-Oceania and West Africa were set in motion.

## In VIETNAM, humble beginnings and strong belief

Next March will mark the 20th anniversary of the first Assumptionist community in Vietnam, installed in Saigon. Archbishop Jean-Baptiste Pham Minh Man blessed the first house (the community of Tran Van Ky), during the visit of the Asian coordination team (consisting of Frs. André Brombart, Benoît Grière, Bernard Holzer, and Frans Desmet) in 2007.

It was nine months following the Mass of sending forth to mission, celebrated in January 2006 at the Religious of the Assumption in Paris, that three Vietnamese Assumptionists took this grand mission to Vietnam: Pierre Tran Van Khue (a young priest), Pierre Tran Van Huyen (deacon), and Francois-Marie Le Van Khai (perpetually professed, who later left the community). The house was situated in the parish of Gia Dinh, under the direction of Fr. Ignace Ho Van Xuan, Vicar General and pastor of the cathedral.

Finally, the gift of the Holy Spirit that embodies this foundation came back in 1997, when Fr. André Antoni and Br. Didier Remiot, accompanied by Francois-Xavier Nguyen Tien Dung ("looking" at Kachan) and Sr. Marie-Paulette Thanh Khanh (OA), came to visit Vietnam for the first time. They



Annual Assumptionist Conference in Vietnam, August 2024 in Vung Tau.

met up with Fr. Bosco Nguyen Van Dinh, a Franciscan, who had the insight to support Vietnamese vocations through our student residences in France. This is how the first Vietnamese arrived in France at the beginning of 1998 (I was one of them).

### *Origins of the foundation*

The Province of France did not initially consider bringing Vietnamese over to train them as religious and then establish a community in the country. The initial goal was to provide an intellectual formation for Vietnamese in hopes of serving the Church in Vietnam. The foundation was somewhat prophetic in favorable times (kairos), inspired by the Spirit: *for the cause of God and of man*, as cited in our Rule of life

(n.4), in order to promote Christian formation (understanding of the faith), human dignity (solidarity with the poor), and pastoral care (love for the Church), when there were already several Vietnamese Assumptionists at Assumption. This motivation was so strong and significant at a time when existential questions were being posed: poverty, inequality of rights and the dignity of human beings, religious liberty, the role of the Church in society, social engagement, and education...

The religious founders began humbly from the very beginning: accompaniment of houses of study, work in the orphanage Hoa Hue, welcoming of candidates with a view toward Assumptionist vocational discernment, and other instruction. ▶

**The actual communities and their missions**

Today there are seven Vietnamese Assumptionist communities, and another ready to open in September at Vinh to focus specifically on student ministry and healthcare. There are currently about 100 Vietnamese religious, half of whom are engaged in apostolic work or in formation in the country and the other half out of Vietnam, in 13 countries in the European Province or in North America.

Many activities and apostolic initiatives ascribe to the Assumption charism: teaching (theological institutions), Christian formation (catechism), education (orphanages), accompanying the people of God (parish work), works of charity (projects for the poor, worker houses, restaurants of the heart), pilgrimages, working with youth and vocations (7 houses), Bayard, health ministry and scholarships.

**The program for the 20th anniversary**

- A historical collection has been prepared by a group of Vietnamese brothers, with testimony from initiators and facilitators of the Assumption in Vietnam.
  - A forum on Asia will take place July 28-30.
  - Several sessions : for our young priests and deacons (with Msgr. Benoît Gschwind); for accompaniment of children and the prevention of abuse (Fr. Benoît Grière); on Augustinian education (Fr. Iulian Dancă).
  - A large celebration of thanksgiving for the 20 years of the foundation, August 1 in the Church of Fatima (Saigon).
- We are also expecting a visit from several French clergymen who have witnessed the development of this foundation over the years.

**Opportunities**

Among the strong points of our mission in Vietnam:

- The foundation had been carefully planned.
- Accompaniment and support from the Province of France from the beginning
- Interaction and interdependence within the Province of Europe and the Vicariate
- The opportunity to have several places of formation at all levels, in Europe and in Asia.
- Sessions on the charism animated during the 20 years by brothers coming from Europe and elsewhere
- A generation was formed from the outset in light of leadership
- The existence of varied institutes of intellectual and religious formation in Saigon
- Works and apostolates aligning with the charism of the Assumption
- Vocations are still stable, despite an eventual decline
- The dynamism of the young
- The benefits of the Province’s training programs
- The creation of the Vicariate gives the religious the opportunity to orient themselves toward French-speaking or English-speaking worlds
- A number of clergy become familiar with the Assumption while studying in France or elsewhere.

**The challenges**

Among the weaknesses or areas requiring improvement:

- Internationality and interculturality in the communities
- Vietnamese is the only language used daily, and the level of the congregation’s languages is not sufficient.
- We don’t currently have specialists on Augustine, Fr. d’Alzon, and the history of the congregation.

- The absence of formators
- Few brothers are moving forward in specific areas of study, such as teaching and education, interreligious dialogue, JPIC, Bayard, economic management...
- Accompaniment of young priests in their missions
- A lack of fundamental reflection to renew our apostolates

**What is the vision for the future?**

The Assumption in Vietnam is now situated within a broader ecclesial and social context in Vietnam, as well as within the Assumptionist presence in Asia. To bear its contribution to the Church and to society, and for its proper growth, it needs to continue without hesitation to cultivate its proper values: evangelical interculturality, Augustinian fraternity, and d’Alzonian apostolic boldness. The main question is not what we should do, but how to do it, with a breath of spirituality and religious conviction. We should not worry about the number of religious needed for our organization, but rather the manner of how we respond to the needs of the times. This is why it is important to have “experts” who can serve as points of reference when addressing issues facing our Church and society.

Next, the brothers need to learn how to become autonomous. It is not merely a matter of financial independence, but also of the ability to take charge of the future with courage and apostolic creativity. Times change, as does the world. We need to give proof of maturity and become men of our time.

**Fr. Pierre TRAN VAN Khuê**  
(Vicar of Asia-Oceania, Saigon)



Mission sending ceremony in the Philippines by the North American Province, in 2006 in Worcester.

## In the PHILIPPINES, a crossroad of opportunity and challenge

### *Origins and motivations*

This foundation began by a three-fold appeal from the Philippines : the Religious of the Assumption, teachers in their schools influenced by the charism of the Assumption, and the encouragement of the local hierarchy. The Religious were associated with our brothers who came from the United States to animate their retreats. They insisted that they meet with some young people. That is how the first group of young men ended up in Worcester for a period of discernment and formation.

At the same time, it was necessary to form the first team for the foundation: Frs. Gilles Blouin (Québec) and Jean-Marie Aduangho Chuvi (DR Cong), two Filipino brothers in formation in Worcester, Alex Castro and Clem Boleche, and myself from France, completing my second mandate as Assistant General. We met in Manila and moved into a rented house on January 25, 2006, on

the feast of the conversion of St. Paul.

Fr. Richard Lamoureux, Superior General, participated in the first Local Chapter. Our project was made definite: “Construct an international and inter-Asiatic Assumptionist community, with Christ at its center, while sharing our charism with the Filipino people---being attentive to their needs, especially among the very poor.” And we added: “Our apostolate will take shape gradually, as we remain attentive to the needs of the Filipino people and become increasingly involved in their lives. Beyond the promotion of vocations and formation, we imagine ourselves being engaged in the world of education and communication, with a particular attention to the poor.”

From the beginning, some youth came to live with five founders in a program “Come and See”. The first three years of this foundation have been recounted in twelve “Chronicles of Manila” and on a website in our three languages and later in Chinese.

### **20 religious in three communities**

As of March 15, 2026, the Assumptionist count in the Philippines: 21 (7 Filipinos, 7 Vietnamese, 2 Indonesians, 2 Congolese, 1 person from Benin, 1 person from Burkina Faso and 1 Frenchman), 1 novice (Korea) and 3 postulants (Filipino, Indonesian, and Timorese).

They are in three communities, two of which are in Manila: Adveniat House (house of formation) and Pavel (a community that animates a school for languages), and one in Digos, south of the archipelago.

The congregation oversees three apostolic works: Bayard Philippines, Kaloob and Assumption Language College (ALC), as well as one parish in Digos, in front of the Diocesan Shrine of Divine Mercy on April 12, 2026. The Digos community animates 20 ecclesiastical communities at the base of the mountains and next to the ocean; it also accompanies the postulants.

In addition, there are 11 Filipino religious outside of the Philippines: 4 in the USA, 3 in France, 1 in Rome, 1 in Athens, 1 in Vietnam, and 1 in Bulgaria.



Celebration of the 20th anniversary of the mission in the Philippines, in January 2006 in Manila, with the first Assumptionists from that country.

### ***The situation of the Assumption in the country***

Twenty years after the foundation, the Assumption in the Philippines remains fragile. Up until then, it was basically in a situation of formation, with few religious engaged full-time in apostolic activities reflecting our charism. These activities were animated by religious and volunteers. Today, the baton is being passed, but the transition is not always easy. There is a lack of leadership and of the transmission of the charism and the fundamentals of consecrated life in new cultures, as we face the new challenges of digital technology and artificial intelligence, as well as the older challenges of individualism, secularism, and ever-resurgent clericalism. I regret a lack of interest in research, particularly in anthropology, sociology, and history, as well as in the study of international and Asian languages.

The internationality characteristic of this mission is both an opportunity and a challenge. When the natives are few in numbers, incarnation and inculturation are

difficult. Our communities are international but not yet intercultural, so timid and so inexperienced in engaging with other religions, cultures, the poor, and nature (the four priorities of the Asian bishops).

How can we pull « from the new and from the old » from the treasure of our charism, of our history and of experiences to build the Kingdom on Asian soil? How can we move beyond our insular circles and a model of the Church and religious life that is all too often rigid and stereotypical, so that we may listen to and learn from others, from the younger generations, and from those on the “peripheries,” and thus become a sign of a prophetic consecrated life? Manila is a unique crossroad of inter-Asiatic and intercultural formation to explore these questions.

### ***My personal testimony***

The mission is eye-opening. At 58 years old, it was the first time I had moved abroad for an extended period to the other side of the world...At first, everything is new, everything is beautiful. .

.it all looks easy! Little by little, discretely or violently, we discover that the codes of conduct, the way of relationships and the visions of the world conflicts, the resistance, scandals... Dialogue doesn't come naturally in a country where 85% of the population is Catholic and most people speak English! This is a time of setbacks, frustrations, and grief—a time to discover oneself through serving a mission that is beyond us, with surprising and unexpected achievements. What kept me going: the mission entrusted to me, the trust, encouragement, and prayers of brothers, sisters, and friends, the support of my family... and, deep in my heart, the grace of God who called me.

If God and my superiors give me the time, I would like to devote myself to three projects: a history of our mission in Asia, a reflection on the opportunities and conditions of interculturality, an Alsatian's perspective on the Philippines with his questions after 20 years of presence and engagement...

**Fr. Bernard HOLZER**  
(Manila)

## In TOGO, it has been 20 years, and I was there!

The Burkinabe historian Joseph Ki-Zerbo wrote: *“To feel a stake in the future, one must feel like an heir to the past.”* This overview of the foundation’s work in West Africa highlights the key milestones, the challenges and the opportunities which were presented to the Augustinians of the Assumption. I will conclude by sharing my personal experience.

### *The « gesture » of the jubilee in 2000*

To mark the jubilee of 2000, the Augustinians of the Assumption had wanted to make a “prophetic gesture” with a foundation in West Africa. This project was a response to the invitation of Msgr. Ambrose Djoliba, bishop of Sokodé (Togo) who had discovered our charism during a stay in Strasbourg. It was a refoundation for the Assumption in the region.

A mission had been established in the Ivory Coast in 1957, with the creation of the Collège Notre-Dame of Africa in Abidjan. Despite an intense pastoral effort, various difficulties forced its closure in 1989.

17 years after leaving the Ivory Coast, the Assumptionists made their return to West Africa, this time with Togo as the anchor point. The mission was the object of many exploratory trips between 2000 and 2006, led by the officials from the Province of France in partnership with the Provinces of Africa and Madagascar. A preparation committee was established by Fr. Benoît Grière, comprised of many of the future members of the first community.



Fathers Jean-Baptiste, René, and Roger on their departure for Togo in 2006.

### *Sokodé, an international adventure*

The adventure began in September 2006 with the installation of a community in the region of Komah, in Sokodé, in the center of Togo. It was characterized by strong interculturality and a pioneering spirit and composed of Fr. Jean-Paul Sagadou (from Burkina Faso), Frs. René Mihigo and Jean-Baptiste Katembo (Congolese), and Fr. Roger Randriari-nala (from Madagascar), and later Fr. Bernard Jouanno (France). The parish of Notre-Dame de l’Assomption was erected in 2007 and entrusted to the religious.

Over the years, the community has become a genuine crossroad of nationalities, marked by many arrivals and departures. On August 28, 2010, seven young Togolese entered the novitiate at Sokodé, under the guidance of

Fr. Mihigo. Initially installed in a location in the area of Zongo near the cathedral, the novitiate moved into its proper location in January 2012, near the college of the Religious of the Assumption.

### *The adventure of Burkina Faso*

On September 1, 2011, a community of ten religious established themselves in Ouagadougou, with Fr. Jean Paul Sagadou as superior, three formators, and six young professed. In accordance with the diocese of Burkinabé, they were committed to the study of faith (philosophy and theology with the Fathers and at the grand seminary), media (collaboration with Bayard-Africa) and the care of youth (chaplaincy, interreligious trips and intercultural integration...).

## West Africa in numbers

In February 2026, the Vicariate of West Africa consisted of:

- Five communities : 3 in Togo, 1 in Burkina, and 1 in the Ivory Coast;
- 37 religious in the Vicariate + 8 novices and 7 postulants;
- 35 religious from the country but living outside of the country
- Since the foundation, 14 professed religious have left the Congregation.

**The foundation at Lomé**

Twelve years after the first Togolese foundation, a house was opened in the capital, Lomé, to put into place communities more typically apostolic.

The community was established on September 1, 2019, in the Wognomè neighborhood, but it soon moved to the Athiémé neighborhood to take over the quasi-parish of Notre-Dame de la Paix.

**The adventure in the Ivory Coast**

32 years after they left the Ivory Coast, the Assumptionists returned, from “the call” of Bayard-Africa, to bring together its titles in Africa. Arriving in September and October of 2021, Frs. Jean Claude Diwediga (Togolese), Jean-Paul Sagadou (Burkinabè), and Deacon Yvon Akpabie (Togolese) formed the first group. They stayed in the Marianist Scholasticate in the neighborhood of Riviera III; they moved to their proper house in December 2024 in the neighborhood M’Pouto in Riviera IV.

**Challenges and opportunities**

Coming from the three provinces that joined together for this founding, the pioneers had to balance fidelity to the founding charism with the need for inculturation. Their mission consisted of building solid intercultural communities, to integrate harmoniously into the local ecclesial and civil fabric—particularly through agreements with bishops and governments—and to lay the groundwork for future growth by fostering vocations and establishing a solid spiritual and apostolic life: the parish of Notre Dame de l’Assomption, Cultural Center Saint-Augustin de Sokodé, etc.

In twenty years, the mission was marked by a large movement of missionaries: for example, the parish of Sokodé has had seven pastors in less than two decades—a tenure too short to build a solid pastoral plan. This lack of continuity is due to different factors: health reasons, difficulty with relationships in the community where coherence was lacking in light of religious obligations.

**The large challenges to come**

If one were to ask me to state the priorities for the future, I would say: formation of the brothers and the unification of the body of the Assumption in West Africa.

To form, meaning to put the young men who join us in a position of creating, and imagining a religious life that re-envision our charism on African soil. To do this, the young brothers need to become involved in the history of the Assumption like a family history. Additionally, personal ownership of the charism is indispensable for an authentic Assumptionist life in West Africa. Next, we must, in the words of Frantz Fanon, “work together with all our might,” banishing from our ranks the fruitless distractions of nationality, ethnicity, and tribalism. The Assumption leads us out of tribalism. And finally, before transforming our grand “discussions” under the tree into concrete action, we must take reflection seriously, particularly forward-thinking reflection.

**Fr. Jean-Paul SAGADOU**  
(Abidjan, Ivory Coast)



Forum of the Vicariate of West Africa, with Fr. Fabien Lejeusne, Provincial of Europe (Sokodé-Komah, 2024).

# An Action Plan for the Entire Assumptionist Family

Last January, a meeting of the International Secretariat of the JPIC (Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation) of our religious family updated the program designed to mobilize our congregations in four directions for the next three years.

*“Wherever we are, let us walk together in the same direction”* (Philippians 3:16)

Hosted by the Assumptionist Provincial House in Paris, the International Secretariat of the JPIC of the Assumption family met from January 23 to 25 to update its “Action Plan” and thus continue working together for a culture of care, where a simple, reconciled, peaceful, and supportive way of life, committed to systemic transformation, is on the agenda of every religious man and woman and their respective communities.

It may seem very ambitious to want to transform the system and not simply to want to change it. Moreover, one might ask what is truly possible to do to contribute to this. Indeed, as the late Pope Francis reminded us, our renewed existence in the spirit of Jesus Christ is fundamentally a mission: *“I am a mission on this earth, and that is why I am in this world”* (Evangeliu Gaudium 273).

The very fact of existing in a cosmos where *“everything is connected”* (Laudato Si’ 91) reflects the grandeur of our vocation and also our responsibility within creation: to fully realize our humanity. Our likeness to the Creator brings with it the spiritual dynamism that impels us to care for, nurture, and multiply life so that it may *“abound for all”* (Jn 10:10), as Jesus Christ revealed through his ministry in the ex-

istential and geographical peripheries of Galilee. Without this clear identity, it is impossible to hear, in our hearts and minds, the ethical and spiritual imperative to transform these realities *“where God is threatened in man and where man is threatened as the image of God”* (RV 4). It is precisely here that our Assumptionist charism calls us to position ourselves.

It is equally ambitious to desire that the Kingdom of God come within us and around us. Yet this is precisely how our baptismal (and religious) consecration expresses this impulse of the Holy Spirit within us. Through our conscious commitment, we acknowledge that the coming of the Kingdom transforms our personal reality, our relationships, the society in which we live, and the system in which we inhabit. The Kingdom of God is not of this world (Jn 18:36), but it was inaugurated here with the Incarnation of the Divine Word, like a grain of wheat fallen into the soil of humanity’s heart. Since then, there has been no doubt: *“This earth is the place for the glory of God”* (Saint Marie Eugénie).

The meeting of the International Secretariat reminds us that we are not alone and that the effectiveness of our work depends on the conscious commitment of each individual, in a process of ongoing, patient, and historical integral conversion, remind-

ing us that *“time is greater than space”* (EG 222-225). Planning together means understanding the nature of this ministry that permeates all our pastoral work. This ministry is carried out through networks, by leveraging human, spiritual, political, economic, and institutional resources for more effective action in support of a culture of peace, social justice, and integral ecology.

Without allowing ourselves to be enslaved by the troubles of social anxiety and the need for isolated protagonism, we will invest our energies in four fundamental aspects over the next three years:

- 1) Ecological dimension: integral ecology and ecological conversion;
- 2) Spiritual dimension: our relationship with God;
- 3) Preserving the life and dignity of the poor and marginalized;
- 4) Mobilization for peace and reconciliation.

To achieve these specific objectives and carry out the planned activities, we will rely on the support of lay people who share our charism and are sensitive to these calls from the Spirit and the Church, signs of the times. Let us be, together, in a spirit of family, builders of a new era.

**Fr. João GOMES DA SILVA**  
(Assistant General, Rome)

# Deepening Our Belonging to the Augustinian Family

An unexpected effect of the election of Leo XIV is that welcoming a Pope from the Augustinian family encourages us to deepen our spiritual roots.

As we approach the first anniversary of the election of Pope Leo XIV, his message in the first *Urbi et Orbi* blessing on May 8, 2025, still resonates. His declaration, “I am a son of Saint Augustine, an Augustinian,” did not go unnoticed. Added to this is his motto, “*In illo uno unum*,” which can be translated as “One in him who is one.” The theological, spiritual, and pastoral richness of the Bishop of Hippo will undoubtedly mark his pontificate. It is no surprise to hear him frequently quote Saint Augustine. How was this event received in the Assumption? Let us recall a few examples to refresh our memories.

Father Benoît Grière, in his article “A Profoundly Augustinian Augustinian” (*Osservatore Romano*, May 14, 2025, reprinted in AA Info No. 9), expresses his joy at seeing a religious of the Order of Saint Augustine elected successor of the Apostle Peter. He remembers the fraternal welcome Father Robert Francis Prevost received within the Union of Superiors General. Father Ngoa Ya Tshihemba, in his letter to Leo XIV after the conclave, speaks of “*intense joy*” at his election, adding that a particular happiness was added by virtue of our shared membership in the great Augustinian family (cf. *Documents Assomption* No. 50).

For his part, Father Patrick Zago, in his article “From the Same Family as Pope Leo XIV”



The Augustinian family gathered in Rome on January 31 and February 1.

(*L'Assomption & ses œuvres* no. 783), revisits the history of the link between the Order of Saint Augustine and our congregation. The examples cited reflect the welcome marked by joy and pride that the Pope-elect comes from the Augustinian family. Behind this joy lies the hope of seeing the Church benefit more fully from the heritage inherited from an incomparable man, Saint Augustine.

## Our Belonging to the Augustinian Family

The Assumptionists experience this joy and hope within the Augustinian family. It should be noted that this belonging is primarily expressed through our relationship with the Order of Saint Augustine (OSA). This order originated in the 13th cen-

tury when Pope Alexander IV, through the bull *Licet Ecclesiae Catholicae* of April 9, 1256, united and organized the numerous Augustinian hermits into a single entity. Officially approved at the Second Council of Lyon (1274), the order currently has approximately 3,000 members in some fifty countries. Last September, its 188th General Chapter elected Father Joseph Lawrence Farrell as its 98th Prior General (and thus the second successor to Father Robert Prevost in this role).

Our connection with the Order of Saint Augustine dates back to the very beginning of our foundation. Out of love for Saint Augustine and wishing to take solemn vows for his congregation, Father d'Alzon obtained from Father Giovanni Belluomini,

then Prior General of the “Great Augustinians,” the indult of incorporation for his congregation on November 27, 1866—a status that allows for a spiritual rapprochement without creating structural dependence. The testimonies of Father d’Alzon’s two most recent successors, whom we quoted above, reflect the quality of this bond.

### Augustinian “Family Gatherings”

The pontificate of Leo XIV thus inspired a deeper understanding of the Assumption’s sense of belonging to the Augustinian family, in accordance with Father Ngoa’s wish in his letter to the newly elected Pope: *“I pray that your election will strengthen the bonds within our common religious family.”* “That is how our Superior General was invited to the opening of the OSA general chapter last September; Fr. Ngoa was then struck by the words of the prior general to introduce him to the pope: *“He is the superior general of our Assumptionist brothers”* (cf. editorial of AA Info n°10).

On a broader level, the Assumption participated in the meeting of the General and Provincial Councils of the Augustinian Family, held in Rome on January 31 and February 1. Forty members of the councils of about ten institutes gathered at the General House of the Institute of Divine Love to develop their mutual understanding, strengthen their bonds, and support one another in promoting the shared spiritual heritage received from Saint Augustine. It was also an opportunity to experience, during the meeting, and to encourage one another to live it daily, according to what is said in the Rule of Saint Augustine (n. 2): *“Above all, live in harmony at home, having*



The Councils of the Augustinian Institutes, gathered in Rome

*one soul and one heart turned toward God. Is this not the very reason for your gathering?”* “Even before talking about works and activities, the Augustinian family already contributes to the mission of the Church through its witness of evangelical fraternal life, in service, forgiveness and fraternal charity, which it has to build every day.

This meeting provided an opportunity for the Augustinian family to reflect on how to journey together, united in diversity. The motto of Leo XIV, *“In Illo uno unum”* (To Him, one, one), served as the guiding thread for the activities and reflections. Through what gestures, words, and language can we express unity to meet the challenges of our time? In its efforts to adapt to the present, the Augustinian family does not forget that Christ is the source of unity: Augustinian spirituality is Christocentric.

### Deepening the meaning of this belonging

*“In the school of our Founder and that of our Patriarch, Saint*

*Augustine, we have an abundant spiritual heritage to discover, assimilate, and deepen throughout our lives,”* says our 34th General Chapter (n. 156). Augustinians of the Assumption, we are heirs to a great spiritual wealth! This chapter article calls us to continually cultivate this heritage. The spiritual heritage received from Augustine places us within a broader spiritual and religious tradition, to be lived and promoted within the Augustinian family.

Within such a religious family, we thus have the opportunity to explore the Augustinian heritage more fully and to place it more effectively at the service of the life and mission of our Congregation, for the good of the whole Church. Through the activities of our communities and through various forms of outreach in our respective territories, are we not called to deepen our belonging to the Augustinian family?

Fr. Etienne Ratalata  
RAFANAMBINTSOA  
(Assistant General, Rome)

# The discovery of a young Malagasy missionary in Brazil

A young priest, Fr. Jean-Félix Tongaso, was sent on a mission from Madagascar to Brazil. He recounts his “profoundly transformative experience.”



**M**y story in Brazil began with a call from God and a huge leap of faith. Two brothers in mission came with me, Br. Olivier and Br. Jean Claude. We arrived in Brazil on October 8, 2024, full of hope, but also conscious that many challenges awaited us.

## Our arrival was our first challenge

Our biggest challenge was the Portuguese language. None of us spoke Portuguese. Everything was new: the words, the sounds, the method of communicating and even the outfits of the people. We often did not want to talk, for fear of saying the wrong thing.

To communicate, we relied on the help of our brothers and the Brazilian Christians, who welcomed us with patience, tenderness, and a spirit of fraternity. Artificial Intelligence became our biggest ally for conversations, celebrations, pastoral meetings and even simple daily tasks. Even with the limits of technology, love and faith spoke

more than words.

One week after our arrival, we began our official study of the language. It was an intense and demanding time but also incredibly beautiful. With each unfamiliar word learned, a new world was opening before us. To learn Portuguese was not simply to learn a language but to learn a culture and a way of thinking and living in faith.

We made many mistakes. We mixed up words from French to Malagasy and to Portuguese---but, we didn't give up. On the contrary, each mistake became an opportunity for learning.

The Brazilians were always encouraging, correcting us with respect and joy. That is what gave us courage to continue.

## The culture of greeting

Another thing we learned is how to greet others. There are some specific cultures in Madagascar: it is customary for a man to greet another man by touching his head, which is a sign of respect and fraternity. Among women, it is customary to ten-



Fathers Jean-Félix, Jean-Claude, and Olivier, missionaries in Brazil, are learning Portuguese.

derly touch the cheek. In Brazil, hugging is a frequent greeting, both among men and women, especially in the environment of the church. At first, this was surprising to us, especially since we were not used to such closeness. We soon learned that hugging for the Brazilian people is a sign of welcome, love, and tenderness.

Learning how to adapt to this custom was an exercise in openness to the culture and to pastoral love. We now understand that each sign of greeting carries with it a story, a culture, and a manner of expressing respect and fraternity. We are gradually combining the cultures of Madagascar and Brazil, with common sense, respect, and a missionary spirit.

### Flavors that bring people together and a lasting sense of nostalgia

Another aspect, quite unique, is the adaptation of foods. The Brazilian cuisine has many similarities to the Malagasy cuisine: the basic daily fare is rice with vegetables and some meat. This helped us a great deal at the beginning because it was not strange to us. The seasoning, the cooking meth-

ods, and the combinations varied, which gave a unique flavor. The Brazilian cuisine is good, savory, and prepared with love, especially when we are invited to the homes of the faithful.

It is impossible, though, not to reminisce with nostalgia the foods of Madagascar: simple preparation, seasoning from the earth, and dishes that remind us of our families and of our culture. The foods carry with them memories of affection and identity. Little by little, we are learning to appreciate the Brazilian cuisine without giving up the love and nostalgia for flavors of Madagascar. Our mission becomes an acceptance of culture, even at the table.

### Life of prayer and participation of the lay

Our missionary experience in Brazil is especially marked by the people's life of prayer, particularly their devotion to the saints. The people pray with much faith, affection, and confidence, often turning to the saints for intercession. This popular devotion is lively and visible in the daily life of the Church.

In Southern Madagascar, where I come from, it is mostly the young people and children who participate in prayer; the elderly don't pray as much. In Brazil, we have noted the opposite: those who participate most actively in prayer and celebrations are the aged, but there are many youth who join in this life of faith.

Despite its differences, we are profoundly touched by the participation of the lay in the Brazilian church. There is always someone who can offer his time, his gifts, and even his very life in the service of the Church. Men and women assume responsibilities with generosity, love, and engagement.

The organization of the church has impressed us: each district has its own chapel, and there are many parishes in each town, which makes it helpful for the church and its people. This reinforces community life and makes it possible for faith to flourish in the daily lives of the people. This makes us realize that the religious and lay walk together in faith, each one contributing his part for the building of the Kingdom of God.

### Joy, camaraderie, and sports

Something else we are aware of is the people's love of fun, camaraderie, and joy. Brazilians love to chat, make friends, and try to make connections. It is not unusual for a person to say: "Which team are you rooting for?" a simple question that opens the door to friendship and enjoyable conversation.

Soccer is practically a way of life. Many people follow the games ▶

with passion. They know the teams and the players. They live soccer! There is a soccer field in almost all the neighborhoods. Soccer is played: in the streets, in the neighborhoods and even on the beach. Soccer is everywhere.

Personal wellness and health are valued. Each district has its own gym, and many do physical exercises daily. They are active people who live with joy and live life to its fullest.

This joy, spirit of conviviality, and love for sport helps us in our mission, because it provides points of interest in which we can approach the people and facilitate dialogue. We are learning that evangelizing in Brazil comes through friendship, smiles and partaking of the daily lives of the people.



car, this shows us that work, combined with knowledge and technology can create satisfactory results when it is well-organized. At the same time, we have seen the efforts of many workers in the fields, who give of their lives to produce food sources.

Beyond agriculture, Brazil has many industries in different regions, contributing to employment and urban growth. The contrast between agriculture that is mechanized and large industrial centers shows a diversity and richness in the country. This experience helps us to better understand the people and invites us to pray for development that it may always lead to social justice, the respect and dignity of the people, and the care of creation.

## Climate, green space, and care of Creation

Another aspect that we have noted is the people's emphasis on green space and the environment. Brazil has a varied climate, but it is humid and hot during many periods of the year. Coming from Madagascar, this was a definite change, especially the extremely hot days and the times of frequent rain.

We were surprised by the many areas of green space, in particular in the towns. Parks and gardens are important meeting places for resting and gathering with families, the young and the aged. The people walk, engage in sports, and enjoy nature as part of their daily lives.

We have seen a real preoccupation with the environment and

the care of creation. Despite its challenges, there is an initiative for preserving and raising an awareness of nature. This is a Christian responsibility to care for God's creation, which is a gift from God given to our care. The mission involves caring for our common home, valuing life, valuing nature, and all that God has created.

## Agriculture and industrial development

We have also been impressed by the development of agriculture and industry. Brazilian agriculture is advanced and organized, with a large usage of machines, modern technology, and technology of production. Many areas are cultivated with efficiency, which promotes nourishment for families and for other countries. For us, coming from Madagas-

## Mission, faith, and gratitude

To be a missionary in Brazil is a profoundly transformative experience. Despite our initial difficulties, we have discovered that the mission is built on encounters, on listening and being humble to learn from others. Language, which seemed a major obstacle, has become a bridge that brings us closer to the people.

We are extremely grateful to God for this mission and to the Brazilian people for their warm and generous welcome. We follow our path with determination, learning each day, certain that God walks with us and transforms our challenges into blessings.

**Fr. Jean-Félix Sambevoatse  
TONGASOA  
(from Minas, Brazil)**

# Fr. Vincent Machozi: The Living Memory of a Justice Activist

In the United States, a symposium was recently held to mark the 10th anniversary of the death of our Congolese brother, who was murdered because of his commitment to human rights.

It is a great joy for me to share some thoughts from attending the Colloquium on “Ecologies of Peacemaking,” a reflection on the life of Father Vincent Machozi, AA. The Colloquium took place at the Boston University (BU) from February 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup>. People all over the world came to attend to this Colloquium.

Fr Vincent Machozi is a martyr because of his defense of truth, justice, and the environment. He was brutally killed on Palm Sunday, March 16, 2016. As recounted by the keynote speaker, Dr. Dana Robert, he died for defending people suffering political oppression and for speaking the truth about the unjust exploitation of mineral resources, primarily the mining of coltan in the Kivu region. Fr Machozi studied at Boston University, founded in 1839 by Methodists. He dropped his doctoral studies because he felt the calling of God’s children waiting for him. In her deeply moving testimony, Dr. Robert said that he was a man of deep listening, close to the poor, not very talkative, and one who offered encouragement to those who sought his advice.

During the Colloquium, the important educational work of the Congregation of the Augustinians of the Assumption, especially in the Congo, became much better known through presentations and many informal discussions

during meal breaks and receptions. Indeed, Fr Machozi taught us peace through his preachings and our recollections of his influential life as a member of the Congregation of the Augustinians of the Assumption.

Another significant presentation was by Fr Emmanuel Katongole, a catholic priest from Uganda, who reflected on ways to restore the environment as a way to protect the “common home” according to the Encyclical *Laudato si’* written by Pope Francis. The East African environment is now profoundly degraded. Fr Katongole emphasized the need to restore the land through tree planting and other restorative means. We should not wait until we gather sufficient money before taking action, but rather: “Start small, start well, start now. We can’t do everything, but do what we can.” Very often, people wait for something big before they act. That mindset is not right; we must begin small. I think that this is exactly what the Gospel says: “The person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great...” (Luke 16:10).

Conference participants also recounted their works in Brazil, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, and South Africa with regard to mineral exploitation, deforestation, and national and com-



munity efforts to establish peace and reconciliation while resisting forces of environmental destruction.

The question that often comes to my mind during this Colloquium is this: how many Assumptionists are ready to stand up and shed their blood, as Fr Vincent Machozi did, in the face of the many injustices spreading in the places where they live? Defending justice and truth truly requires courage - it cannot be achieved by fine words alone.

Father Vincent Machozi, pray for us, that we may stand up to defend truth and justice as you did and may we be peacemakers!!!

Fr Richard  
ANDRIAMAHENINARIVO  
(Brighton, USA)

See: <https://assumption.us/aa-news/>  
(February 27 & 28, 2026)

# The Extraordinary Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Pie Neveu

One hundred years ago, on April 21, 1926, Father Pie Eugène Neveu was consecrated bishop in Moscow, in complete secrecy. Father Bernard Le Léannec, who was parish priest of Saint-Louis-des-Français in the Russian capital, reflects on this event.

Who was this religious man who, one hundred years ago, became a Catholic bishop in Moscow? Eugène Neveu, born in Gien (Loiret) on February 23, 1877, was the second Assumptionist called to the episcopate out of the 16 that the Assumptionists have had to date. The eldest of eight children of a potter, his mother died when he was only 12 years old. From a second marriage, his father had eight more children. Speaking of his family, Eugène wrote: “We were ordinary people, poor among the poorest, helped by the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.”<sup>1</sup> After attending the Saint-Joseph boarding school in Gien and then the minor seminary in Orléans (where he distributed the newspaper *La Croix*), he entered the major seminary in Orléans but was already determined to become an Assumptionist. Entering the novitiate in Livry on December 8, 1895, he pronounced his first vows the following year in Phanaraki under the name Brother Pius<sup>2</sup>, then his perpetual profession in Jerusalem on Christmas night 1897. He returned to Turkey in 1901 as a professor at the Slavic seminary in Karagatch.

Ordained a priest on March 18, 1905, he was appointed to the college in Varna, Bulgaria, where he learned Bulgarian and Russian. Father Emmanuel Bailly designated him for Saint Petersburg just as



Bishop Pie Neveu, a.a., Apostolic Administrator of Moscow (1877–1946).

the 1905 revolution was breaking out. He wrote to the Superior General: “*The capital R, the initial letter of the country where I will have to work for the Kingdom of God, made my heart beat faster.*” (3) Arriving in Saint Petersburg on October 13, 1906, he succeeded Canon Cieplak, the future Archbishop of Mohilev, as chaplain of the Good Shepherd convent. (4) But Father Neveu barely had time to settle into the capital before, a year later, he moved to the south of the country to found the parish of Saint Joseph in Makievka, in the land of the Don Cossacks. In the heart of

the Donets Valley, he found a large French-speaking community working in the mines. It was there that Neveu witnessed the events and transformations that would mark Russia during the First World War and culminate in the October Revolution of 1917. The fall of the Tsarist empire and the rise to power of the Mensheviks and then the Bolsheviks formalized the separation of Church and State. In 1926, Father Neveu was the only one of the original Assumptionist pioneers to have remained in Russia: Father Auguste Maniglier, who arrived in Odessa in October 1905, had been repatriated in February 1920, and Father Evrard Evrard, who arrived in Kyiv in 1907, was mobilized on the Macedonian front in August 1914.

Throughout his years in Makievka, Neveu—joined in October 1917 by Fr. David Mailland—sought to foster a renewed relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the new Russian government through the establishment of diplomatic relations. He made numerous efforts in this direction, notably with the People’s Commissar Rakovsky in Kharkiv. 1923 marked a turning point. While the Vatican’s aid mission continued, the trial of Bishop Cieplak and other Catholic priests took place in Moscow, resulting in

convictions.

By early 1926, the situation for Catholics had only worsened. Rome took notice. Thus, in November 1925, Fr. Romuald Souarn, procurator of the Assumptionists, was consulted, and then Pope Pius XI questioned Fr. Gervais Quenard, the Superior General, about the possible appointment of Fr. Neveu as Apostolic Administrator of Moscow. When Pius Neveu heard of it, the prospect troubled him. He wrote to a colleague: *"A certain Ignatian [Jesuit] was supposed to go to Moscow around the Feast of the Annunciation (March 25) to tell him about an extraordinary project by Papa Ratti... The Annunciation has long since passed, and there is no news of the traveler. It is beyond comprehension... God! What wouldn't I give to see a friend. I hardly dare hope for this happiness, life being nothing but a series of disappointments."*

Pius XI decided to take action. The Jesuit Michel d'Herbigny, director of the Institute of Oriental Studies in Rome, would be the one to carry it out. The plan of the Pope and his Secretary of State, Gasparri, was to consecrate clandestine bishops. There would be no papal bull, but simply a written order from Cardinal Gasparri. France, which had just established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, seemed the obvious choice to act as an intermediary: its ambassador in Moscow, Jean Herbette, was informed.

On March 10, 1926, Pius XI signed the *motu proprio Plenitudine potestatis*, giving Father d'Herbigny full powers to implement this project. The emissary left Paris on March 28, Palm Sunday, and stopped in Berlin where he went to the nunciature to receive episcopal ordination from the hands of Monsignor Eugène Pacelli (the future Pope Pius XII) on Holy Monday, March 29. He

then took the train to Riga and Moscow, where he arrived on Wednesday evening to lead the Easter Triduum at the Church of Saint-Louis des Français.

For his part, Ambassador Herbette had summoned Father Neveu to Moscow. When the summons went unanswered, a telegram followed. Neveu took the express train from Kharkiv on the evening of April 20th but had to get off at a small station for a check that lasted over three hours. The express train left without him. He was to take the next train to Moscow, as his paperwork was in order. It was already 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, April 21st, when he arrived at Saint Louis-des-Français. D'Herbigny was waiting for him there, as well as the church manager, Alice Ott, and the military attaché from the Italian embassy, Colonel Bergera: *"I arrive fresh and sprightly in trousers and a leather overcoat,"* he would later write to a friend, *"to say my Mass for the patronage of Saint Joseph, and I am told that I will not leave here except as a bishop."* It was then that I truly felt like *'jumentum coram Domino'*, like a beast of burden before the Lord."

Father Quenard (5) recounts that the two priests went to the sacristy, the church doors being closed. Neveu, apologizing for his lateness and not knowing why he was being summoned from so far away, heard D'Herbigny reply abruptly: *"I am returning as bishop, and you yourself are appointed bishop and apostolic administrator of Moscow. I will consecrate you right now, by*

*starting the Mass again."* He then read him his appointment, and throughout the ceremony, Neveu wondered whether it was a dream or reality. *"The consecrator himself handled his pontifical, the holy oils, and all the accessories of the consecration. Among those present were two witnesses: the Italian Colonel Bergera and Mrs. Alice Ott."* After being guests of the French ambassador in the evening, the two bishops left on the morning of the 23rd by express from Kharkiv and went together to Makievka, where Bishop d'Herbigny presided over the procession of Saint Mark on Sunday, April 25.

It was only in September that Pius Neveu, back in Moscow, officially presented himself as bishop at the still-open Polish church of Saints Peter and Paul, declaring in Russian: *"In your midst, we will only do God's work. We do not serve, nor do we wish to serve, any earthly power, because, like Saint Paul, we act as ambassadors for Christ. But since we live among the great Russian people who have given us hospitality, we must be grateful to them, and we wish them peace, prosperity, and glory."* As titular bishop of Citrus, he adopted the motto "Peace to all."

After ten years in Moscow, Bishop Neveu returned to France. He died in Paris in October 1946, without ever having seen his beloved Russia again. Initially buried in Paris, his body was transferred to the Church of Saint Joan of Arc in Gien on May 16, 1954.

**Fr. Bernard LE LEANNEC**  
(Lyon)

(1) Letter to Father Merklen, November 21, 1932.

(2) *"It is in memory of Saint Pius V and Cardinal Pie, that great prelate, enemy of liberalism, a prominent papal figure, that I took my religious name"* (Letter to Bishop d'Herbigny, March 30, 1930).

(3) Letter to Father Emmanuel Bailly, August 31, 1906.

(4) Letter to Father Emmanuel Bailly, August 31, 1906.

(5) Died February 17, 1926, in Passaic, USA.

# The Assumptionist Houses in Rome

In the late 1870s, Father d'Alzon dreamed of establishing a procuratorship and a house of studies in Rome. He sent a petition to this effect to the Congregation for Bishops and Religious on August 1, 1877. However, nothing came of it during his lifetime. It was Father François Picard who brought the project to fruition a few years after the Founder's death.

The current  
General House,  
on Via San Pio V



*“Have I thanked God with sufficient gratitude for having made me a son of the Catholic Church?” (Directory, Chapter 1)*

Love for the Church and its visible head permeated Father d'Alzon's entire life. He shared it with everyone around him and bequeathed it to those he guided, having made it the very foundation of his apostolate. He visited the Eternal City many times: staying there as a student, as a young priest, visiting Popes Pius IX and Leo XIII, or participating with his bishop in the First Vatican Council. As early as 1855, he considered founding a house in Rome and made numerous attempts to do so.

After the Vatican Council, this idea gained strength, and in his correspondence with Mother Marie-Eugénie de Jésus, he expressed the desire to establish a residence in Rome: *“I believe, for example, that as soon as I have a penny to my name, I would do well to have a house in Rome. This is clearer to me than day, for either I am greatly mistaken, or we must undoubtedly maintain French life here and at the same time the Roman spirit.”* (December 4, 1869) The Franco-Prussian War put an end to this project. It was not until the end of hostilities, in 1871, that a community of three Assumptionist religious was formed and



The Filippini Palace on the right and the Church of Saint Venance

settled at the French Seminary in Rome.

On March 10, 1878, Emmanuel d'Alzon wrote to Father Picard: *"Cardinals are urging me to have a house in Rome." [...] In any case, I would like to find a house with three or four spare rooms, to use as an office for future pilgrimages. By establishing a suitable partition, this could have the advantage of making us known.*" This project would not come to fruition during his lifetime either. It was not until the generalate of Father François Picard that the Founder's dream was realized.

Upon the death of Father d'Alzon, Father Picard was elected Superior General (1880-1903). He established the General House in Paris, on Rue François 1er. But on August 12, 1893, he acquired a residence in the Eternal City. He purchased the Palazzo Filippini at the foot of the Capitoline Hill, near the Ara Caeli. The Assumptionists moved in on September 24, the feast of Our Lady of Mercy.

The house, which served both as the Procurator's Office and as student housing, is associated with

a significant event: the meeting in June 1846 between Cardinal Mastai-Ferretti, Bishop of Imola, the future Pius IX, a friend of the Filippini, and his successor, Cardinal Pecci, the future Leo XIII, then Archbishop of Perugia. Both popes had shown great interest in the life and works of the Augustinians of the Assumption.

Father Emmanuel Bailly, who succeeded Father Picard in 1903, made the Palazzo Filippini the permanent residence of the General Curia after it had been expelled from France by the anti-clerical laws. He nevertheless maintained a residence in Paris, on Rue du Général-Camou in the 7th arrondissement.

In 1923, a vast renovation project for the historic heart of Rome was initiated by the Governorate. The Palazzo Filippini was included in this systematization project, and the Assumptionists were soon to be expropriated. Father Gervais Quenard, then Superior General, sought a new location to house the Curia and the college. After a long search, in 1927 he acquired a plot of land along the

Tiber River, on Via di Tor di Nona, opposite Castel Sant'Angelo, and began the construction of a new convent. It was only after the General Chapter of 1929 that the new Roman Curia began to move.

September 1, 1939, marked the beginning of the Second World War, which divided France in two. Unable to remain in Italy, the members of the General Curia split into two groups and were forced to stay in France for the duration of the war, while the services of the General Works experienced profound disruption. After the war, one community resettled on Rue François 1er, and in 1945, the General Curia returned to its pre-expulsion residence there. This relocation was short-lived, however, as the community returned to Rome after the General Chapter of 1946.

The desire to provide the central government of the congregation with more spacious premises to accommodate the student brothers led Fr. Wilfrid Dufault, who became Superior General in 1952, to search for a new location. An unexpected but providential encounter resulted in the discovery of an austere, half-built palace, guarded by two ancient pine trees. Work began in 1955, and in 1958 Fr. Wilfrid was delighted to move the General Curia to the newly renovated and enlarged house, named "Due Pini" (the two pine trees), at Via Madonna del Riposo (now Via San Pio V), No. 55.

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# The Institute of Augustinian Studies Celebrates its 70th Anniversary

Founded by Assumptionist scholars, this leading center for Augustinian research brings together top specialists for work unparalleled in the world. A symposium celebrated the event in Paris in March. We are publishing here excerpts from its opening address.<sup>(1)</sup>



The Institute of Augustinian Studies was founded in 1956 to promote “the study of the history of the Late Roman Empire and the Early Middle Ages, more specifically of Christian writers, in particular Saint Augustine.” We are therefore celebrating its 70th anniversary with this symposium dedicated to “Augustine as Commentator on the Psalms.” This is an opportunity to recall the origins and development of the Institute of Augustinian Studies, to highlight the originality of its operation, and to emphasize its significant contribution to international research on Augustine.

## The Origins: From 1867 to 1956

The Congregation of the Augustinians of the Assumption was the driving force behind the Institute of Augustinian Studies. (2) While the University of Saint Augustine, envisioned as early as 1867 by Father Emmanuel d’Alzon, never materialized, the *Revue augustiniennne* (Augustinian Review) was founded in March 1902 and published monthly until 1910. It was during this period that the first collection of works devoted to Saint Augustine was assembled.

After an interruption due to the

Modernist crisis and the war, Father Fulbert Cayré was appointed to teach patristics at the scholasticate in Louvain. He was the one asked to direct the collection of studies and texts then known collectively as the Augustinian Library, the first works of which were published in 1933. In 1940, Father Cayré added a new journal, entitled *\*L’Année théologique augustiniennne\** (The Augustinian Theological Year), which was published until 1954.

In 1943, Father Quenard, Superior General of the Assumptionists, established the Center for Augustinian Studies in Lormoy, near Corbeil, entrusting its direction to Father Cayré, who was assisted by several religious to ensure its operation. The development of publications and the creation of a specialized library provided opportunities for contact with scholars from many countries.

The major *International Augustinian Congress*, held at the Catholic Institute of Paris from September 21 to 24, 1954, on the occasion of the 16th centenary of Augustine’s birth, brought to light the vitality and influence of the Center for Augustinian Studies. It resulted in over 110 presentations by French and international

scholars and in rich discussions, which were published in 1954-1955 in the first three volumes of the Collection des Études Augustiniennes, entitled *Augustinus Magister*.

The scholarly success of this congress led to the relocation of the Center for Augustinian Studies from Lormoy to Paris, on rue François Ier, in 1955. The Centre for Augustinian Studies became the Institute of Augustinian Studies (IEA) association, whose statutes, in accordance with the law of 1901, were published in the *Official Journal* on September 13, 1956. Father Georges Folliet succeeded Father Fulbert Cayré and directed the Institute from 1954 to 1990.

## The Institute’s Development from 1956 to 1978

The new statutes of the IEA allowed the Assumptionists to be associated with academics and researchers, as well as professors from the Catholic Institute of Paris; they also enabled the Institute to seek support from the CNRS (National Center for Scientific Research) and the CNL (National Book Center) for publications.

The publication of the *Works of Saint Augustine* in the Augustin-



“Saint Augustine Dictating,” illumination from a 9th-century manuscript of the *Enarrationes in Psalmos* (Orléans Media Library).

ian Library series was already well underway, since the 12 volumes of the first series devoted to the *Opuscles* – according to the general plan of the complete edition, which can be found in the first volume of the series – had all appeared at a rapid pace before 1952. The translation of *De Trinitate* (BA 15-16) was also published as early as 1955. Under the impetus of Father Folliet, these publications continued at a good pace and gradually took on a more scholarly character: the five volumes of *The City of God* (BA 33-37) appeared in 1959-1960; in 1962, it was the turn of the *Confessions* (BA 13-14), etc.

The Collection of Augustinian Studies was also enriched by numerous volumes between 1955 and 1978: 78 volumes in the “Antiquity” Series; 7 volumes in the “Middle Ages and Modern Times” Series. Many works are devoted

to Augustine, but Hilary, Tertullian, and Ambrose also have their place; philosophy is well represented, with volumes dealing in particular with Neoplatonism; there are also works devoted to Manichaeism or Gnosticism, etc.

*The Revue des études augustiniennes* (Journal of Augustinian Studies) took over, in 1955, from the *Année théologique augustiniennne* (Augustinian Theological Yearbook) “by adopting a more specific program of literary and doctrinal history of early Christianity, in accordance with the statutes of the Association (3)”: while publishing articles on Augustine and the *Bulletin augustinien* each year, whose analytical and critical reviews (long overseen by Goulven Madec) are of considerable service to researchers, it gradually began to include more articles devoted to the history of early Christianity and to Greek

and Latin patristics. The publication of *Recherches augustiniennes* complemented the *Revue* from 1958 onwards, allowing for the publication of longer or more specialized articles.

This research and these publications entailed a considerable enrichment of the library’s holdings. As Goulven Madec and Pierre Petitmengin noted in 1978, this library, “of exceptional quality, has no equivalent in France, nor probably in Europe: it is a scientific and cultural treasure of unique value”; thanks to the tenacity of Father Folliet, who spared no effort in searching for and purchasing the old and sometimes rare volumes important to the IEA, it brings together “the almost complete series of the *Opera omnia S. Augustini*, from 1489 to the present day. (4) This “first-rate research tool” has made possible discoveries such as those of François Dolbeau.

### Agreements with the Catholic Institute and the University of Paris-Sorbonne

The year 1978 marked a turning point: it signified the culmination of numerous efforts undertaken by the Augustinians of the Assumption to ensure the continued development and sustainability of the Institute of Augustinian Studies; the Congregation no longer had the resources to guarantee its future.

The diary kept by Father Folliet between 1973 and 1978 recounts the difficult negotiations that had taken place: first with the Catholic Institute of Paris (particularly with Bishop Poupard from 1974 onward), but also with the Catholic University of Louvain (now Leuven), in case the negotiations with the Catholic Institute of Paris had not been successful. However, Bishop Poupard could not bring himself to let the IEA move to Louvain: in March 1974, ▶

he reported on his meeting with Cardinal Marty and the bishops who were protectors of the Catholic Institute, all of whom unanimously supported and promoted the project to keep the Institute in Paris. At the same time, he contacted Father Rogues, parish priest of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, with a view to establishing the Institute in the Abbey Palace, which the Catholic Institute had previously purchased or rented for this purpose. In the following months, Jacques Fontaine, president of the IEA, and Georges Folliet requested a definitive commitment from Bishop Poupard to the Association for the implementation of this project...

These steps materialized in agreements signed in 1978, on the one hand, between the Catholic Institute of Paris and the Congregation of the Augustinians of the Assumption, on the other hand, between the Catholic Institute of Paris and the IEA Association: the IEA is associated with the Catholic Institute as an autonomous research and publishing center, intended to promote the development of Augustinian, patristic and medieval studies; the library received from the Assumptionists cannot be moved or alienated without the agreement of the IEA, and the ICP undertakes to preserve the individuality of the stock as it exists at the time.

After the premises were installed, the IEA moved from rue François 1er to rue de l'Abbaye at the end of March 1979.

Concurrently, numerous efforts undertaken with the University of Paris-Sorbonne and the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) led to the establishment of agreements in 1980 and 1981, thanks to the efforts of Jacques Fontaine, then Professor of Latin Language and Literature



**The symposium marking the 70th anniversary of the Institute of Augustinian Studies (on the right, Fr. Nicolas Potteau, Provincial of Europe).**

at the Sorbonne. The IEA was thus affiliated with the University of Paris-IV, and the public authorities became involved in the IEA's operations, through a Scientific Exchange Protocol signed on November 30, 1979: the IEA made available to the University of Paris-Sorbonne the library and documentary materials owned in bare ownership by the Catholic Institute of Paris; and the University of Paris-Sorbonne, in close collaboration with the CNRS, contributes to the smooth operation of the IEA and its library to the fullest extent of its available staff and funding. This agreement culminated in the decree of April 3, 1980, which formally attached the Institute of Augustinian Studies to the University of Paris-Sorbonne (Paris-IV).

At the same time, efforts with the CNRS (French National Centre for Scientific Research) led to an agreement establishing the

Information and Documentation Centre "Augustinian Studies," with the aim of stabilizing the CNRS's contributions to the IEA (Institute for Augustinian Studies).

Thus were laid the foundations of the Institute for Augustinian Studies, formally affiliated by agreement with both the Catholic Institute of Paris and the public institutions of the University of Paris-Sorbonne and the CNRS. The originality and complexity of such a structure are evident, but so too are they crucial to the IEA's richness and productivity.

## Some Key Events

### *A. Publications*

In 1981, Johannes Divjak published thirty previously unknown letters of Augustine or his correspondents in volume 38 of the Vienna Corpus. This discovery led to a colloquium,



organized by the IEA (5), which was held at the Abbey Palace of Saint-Germain-des-Prés. These new *Letters* were subsequently published in a new edition by J. Divjak, accompanied by a French translation and detailed notes, mostly written by IEA researchers, in the *Augustinian Library* (BA 46/B) in 1987.

The publication of the volume of printed catalogues of manuscripts in the Mainz Municipal Library in the summer of 1990 led to a major discovery by François Dolbeau: that of twenty-six sermons by Augustine, of which Dolbeau very quickly produced preliminary editions between 1991 and 1994; these were collected in a single volume of the *Collection des Études Augustiniennes* (6) in 1996. An international colloquium organized by the IEA in Chantilly under the direction of Goulven Madec and published in 1998 (7) did justice to this extraordinary discovery and generated a large number of papers that highlighted the considerable contribution of these new sermons to Augustine studies. These sermons have now been translated into numerous languages. Supplemented by six other newly discovered sermons, also unearthed by F. Dolbeau, they were published in French translation with introductions and notes in the *Bibliothèque Augustinienne* (BA 77/A and B; BA 78/A and B) between 2020 and 2025. This



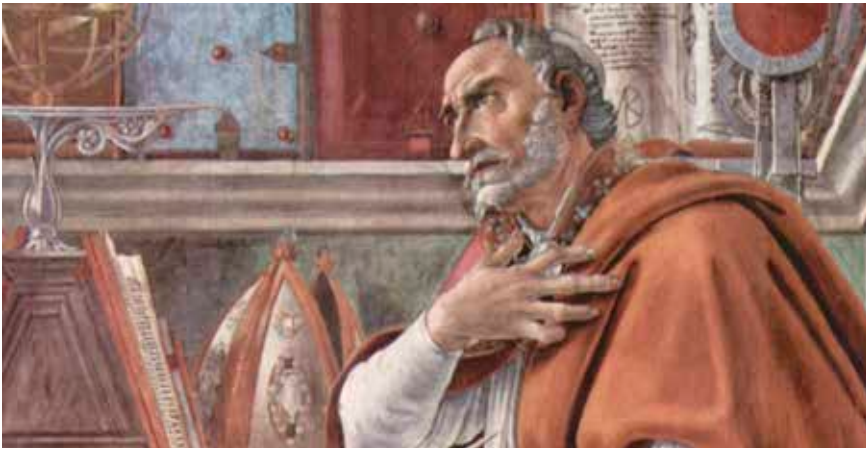
**Two leading Assumptionist figures from the Institute of Augustinian Studies: Frs. Goulven Madec (1930–2008) and Georges Folliet (1920–2011).**

recent publication is the result of the work of a team of researchers under the direction of F. Dolbeau and M. Dulaey.

In addition to these volumes, the *Bibliothèque Augustinienne* has been enriched by a significant number of other works. Some treatises, already published in the very early years, have been re-edited and annotated in translation. Other works have been published for the first time. And several

volumes are in preparation. This demonstrates the intensive work of publishing Augustine's works taking place at the Institute of Augustinian Studies, thanks to a highly dedicated and active scholarly team.

As for the *Collection des Études Augustiniennes*, currently directed by Frédéric Chapot, since 1978, 138 volumes have been added to the "Antiquity Series" and 50 to the "Middle Ages and Modern Times Series." Among the international conferences organized and published by the IEA, we should mention the 1990 conference dedicated to the *Third Centenary of the Maurist edition of Saint Augustine*; the 1996 conference, organized in Chantilly following the discovery and publication of the new sermons discovered by François Dolbeau and entitled *Augustine the Preacher (395-411)*; and the 2011 conference organized at the Abbey Palace of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, in homage to Goulven Madec. Special mention must be made of the colloquium of November 20, 2004, organised at the Sorbonne on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the *Revue*, entitled *Half a century of research on Augustine and Augustinianism* and published in the *Review of Augustinian and Patristic Studies*<sup>11</sup> (according to the new name adopted on this occasion for the review). ▶



Saint Augustine in his study, fresco by S. Botticelli, c. 1480 (Florence, Church of Ognissanti).

### **B. Library Relocation**

Thanks to grants from Sorbonne University and the CNRS, and the invaluable work of the librarians, the library continues to grow each year with the acquisition of scholarly works relating to the study of Augustine and the Augustinian and patristic tradition, thus ensuring the preservation and enhancement of the library's rare book collection. It now comprises approximately 38,000 volumes.

At the request of the Catholic Institute of Paris, which wished to use the premises of the Abbey Palace for other purposes, the Institute of Augustinian Studies had to be relocated in February 2015 to the buildings of the Congregation of the Mission (95 rue de Sèvres), which generously agreed to host it at the request of the Catholic Institute. However, the Congregation of the Mission wishes to regain access to these premises, which requires the Institute of Augustinian Studies to consider another relocation. The IEA sincerely hopes that the Catholic Institute will very quickly find a new location to accommodate it, in accordance with the agreement signed with it, as the future of the IEA depends directly on it.

### **Vitality of the Institute**

Considering the sheer number of publications and the number of young research professors as-

sociated with the Institute for Augustinian Studies (IEA) in various capacities, one cannot help but marvel at the current interest in research on Augustine and the Augustinian tradition. The very organization of this conference, which brings together Augustinian scholars from very different generations, testifies to this. It also demonstrates the bonds of friendship and research that have been forged over the years between the IEA and foreign institutes and international researchers dedicated to the study of Augustine.

The Institute for Augustinian Studies, as it exists today, with its complex structure and richness, is the fruit of these 70 years of history: it required considerable initiative to create it, develop it, and secure its future through agreements with the Catholic Institute of Paris, Sorbonne University, and the CNRS (French National Centre for Scientific Research). At a time when its future accommodation remains partly uncertain, let us hope that the various partners will once again demonstrate inventiveness and determination to secure its future.

**Archbishop Philippe Curbélié**  
**Under-Secretary of the Dicastery**  
**for the Doctrine of the Faith**  
**(Rome)**

1) The full text of this presentation by Archbishop Curbélié will appear later in the proceedings of the colloquium.

2) On these origins, see G. FOLLINET, G. MADEC, P. PETITMENGIN, and J. FONTAINE, "The Institute of Augustinian Studies: History, Achievements, Future Prospects," *Nouvelles de l'Institut Catholique de Paris*, no. 3, October 1978, pp. 1–11.

3) Cf. G. FOLLINET, "The Institute of Augustinian Studies: History, Achievements, Future Prospects," *Nouvelles de l'Institut Catholique de Paris*, no. 3, October 1978, p. 4.

4) G. MADEC, P. PETITMENGIN, "The Institute of Augustinian Studies: History, Achievements, Future Prospects," *Nouvelles de l'Institut Catholique de Paris*, no. 3, October 1978, p. 6.

5) Cf. The Letters of Saint Augustine discovered by Johannes Divjak. Papers presented at the colloquium of September 20 and 21, 1982, Paris, 1983.

6) AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, *Twenty-Six Sermons to the People of Africa*, edited and annotated by F. Dolbeau, Paris, 1996; reprint with updated bibliography, 2001; 2nd revised and corrected edition, 2009.

7) Cf. G. MADEC (ed.), *Augustine the Preacher (395-411)*. Proceedings of the International Colloquium of Chantilly (September 5-7, 1996), Paris, 1998.

8) *Third Centenary of the Maurist Edition of Saint Augustine*, Papers presented at the colloquium of April 19 and 20, 1990, Paris, 1990.

9) G. MADEC (ed.), *Augustine the Preacher (395-411)*, Proceedings of the International Colloquium of Chantilly (September 5-7, 1996), Paris, 1998.

10) I. BOCHET (ed.), *Augustine the Philosopher and Preacher: A Tribute to Goulven Madec*, Proceedings of the International Colloquium held in Paris on September 8 and 9, 2011, Paris, 2012.

11) *RÉAug* 50, 2004, pp. 251-391.

# Ubuntu, a principle of life for Africa... and beyond!

Father Jean-Paul Sagadou, a journalist at Bayard Afrique and an advocate for African integration, has published a new book on this major philosophy, which he believes could “allow Africa to envision its future for itself, while remaining open to the world.” Excerpts from an interview given to the Burkina24 website in December 2025.

## Ba Burkina24: What led you to write this new book?

**Jean-Paul Sagadou:** Originally from Burkina Faso, I am an Assumptionist priest and a journalist with the Bayard Group in Abidjan. In 2009, I launched the African Integration Journeys (V.I.A.), and then, in 2020, the Ubuntu Workshops to offer young people a space for reflection based on African cultures. Since 2024, I have also been the editor of *La Revue Ubuntu*, which I founded.

My starting point is a long-standing concern: to transmit essential values to African youth, such as living together, non-violence, solidarity, and the common good. Nourished by Emmanuel Mounier’s communitarian personalism and by a deep attachment to Africa, I found in the Ubuntu philosophy a relevant framework for thinking about our realities from our own cultural perspectives. Today there is a real intellectual and social urgency to rehabilitate African imaginaries, in order to allow Africa to think about its future for itself, while remaining open to the world.

## B24: How do you redefine the concept of Ubuntu?

**JPS:** The phrase “*I am because we are*” remains one of the most accurate translations. It echoes the idea, dear to Souleymane Bachir Diagne, of “*creating hu-*

*manity together.*” Ubuntu reminds us that we never become ourselves alone: our humanity is built in our relationships with others and with all living things.

## B24: Why speak of a “paradigm of possibilities”?

**JPS:** This expression aims to restore hope and combat fatalistic narratives about Africa. To think about what is possible is to affirm that history remains open and that human creativity can transform realities. Ubuntu allows us to rethink politics, economics, democracy, and ecology based on solidarity and the primacy of human relationships over the logic of profit. It invites us to move beyond individualism to build a broader human community.

## B24: How is it an alternative to dominant models?

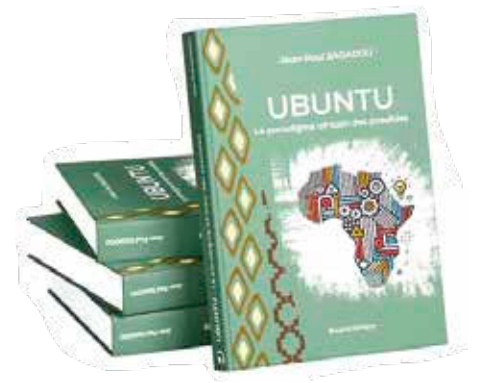
**JPS:** Ubuntu places relationships, human dignity, and solidarity at the heart of governance. It calls for a break with the logics of domination, exclusion, and violence inherited from the post-colonial state, in favor of policies of inclusion and human security. Economically, it values reciprocity, redistribution, and exchange, making the economy a space for producing relationships as much as goods. Socially, Ubuntu fosters cohesion, reconciliation, and the recognition of differences, thus

outlining an African humanism capable of responding to contemporary crises.

## B24: What role should African youth play?

**JPS:** They must first learn from Africa, encounter its knowledge and its collective imagination. They must then appropriate, explore, and transform these in order to put them at the service of the continent’s renaissance. Ubuntu can also inspire the world beyond Africa. This is African knowledge with universal reach, capable of nourishing a humanity in search of meaning and connection.

Collected by Jules KABORE,  
“Burkina 24”



Jean-Paul SAGADOU  
Ubuntu: The African Paradigm of Possibilities  
Bayard Afrique, 155 p., 15,50 euros

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... and the help of DeepL

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Loredana Giannetti

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# Our deceased brothers



† Brother **Faustin-Jérôme TEMBO MUGHONGO**, of the Gervais-Quenard community (African Province), died on January 22, 2026, in Butembo (D-R Congo). His funeral was celebrated on January 26th at the church in Kitatumba, followed by interment at the Assumptionist Cemetery of Mahamba. He was 67.

† Fr. **Pierre-Emmanuel ROSPIDE**, of the Layrac community (European Province), died on March 19, 2026, in Layrac, France. His funeral was celebrated on March 25th in the Church of St. Martin of Layrac, followed by interment in the local cemetery. He was 90.

† Fr. **Nicolas Angello RANDRIANARISON**, of the Ejeda community (Province of Madagascar), died on March 24, 2026, in Antananarivo, Madagascar. His funeral was celebrated on March 27th in the Notre-Dame de l'Assumption Church of Sanfily, in Tuléar, followed by interment in the provincial cemetery of Belemboka. He was 54.