

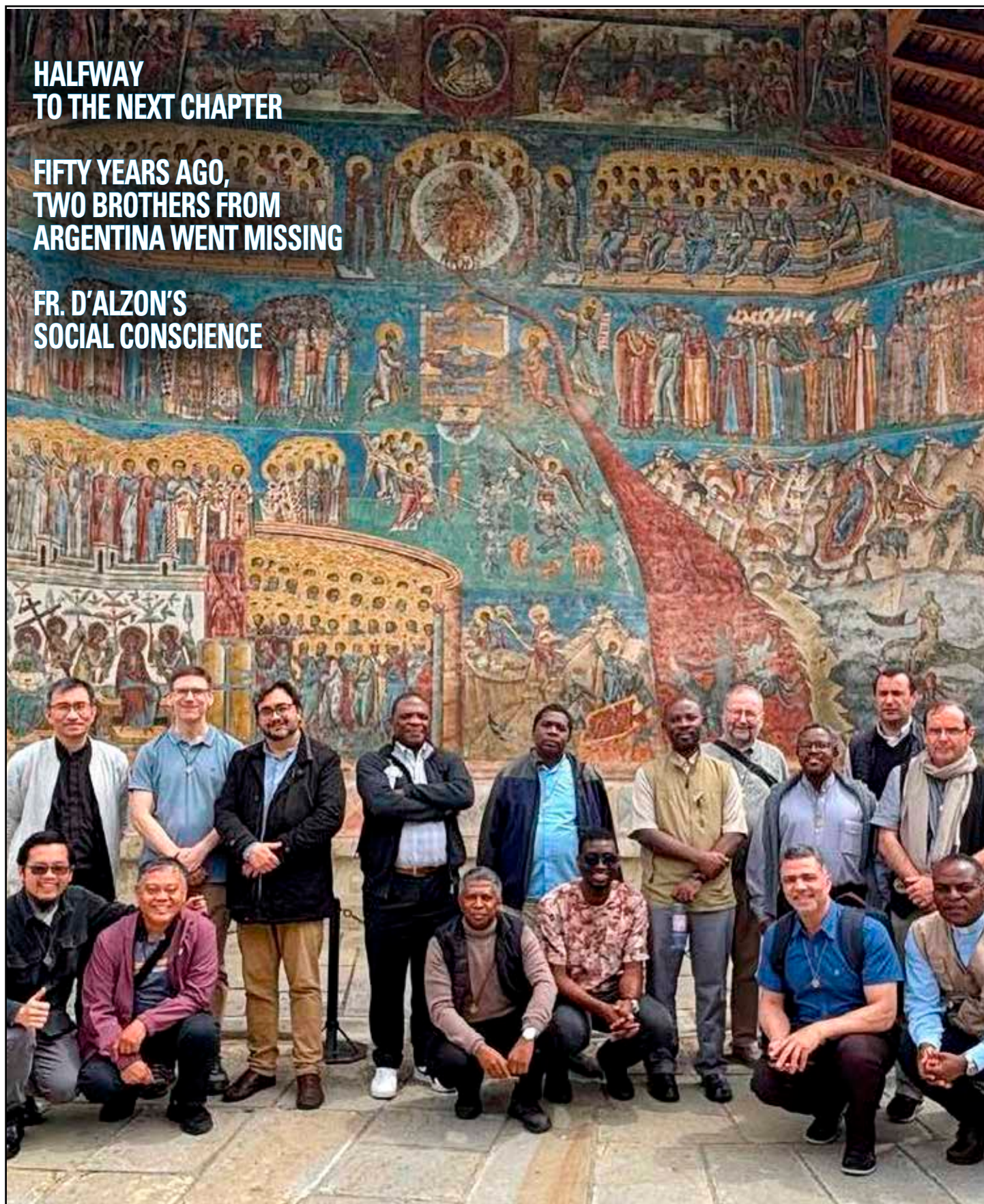
AA News of the Assumption



**HALFWAY
TO THE NEXT CHAPTER**

**FIFTY YEARS AGO,
TWO BROTHERS FROM
ARGENTINA WENT MISSING**

**FR. D'ALZON'S
SOCIAL CONSCIENCE**



Agenda

Plenary General Council

- n° 7 : **November 20-Dec. 9** (Rome).
 n° 8 **May 31-June 9, 2027** (Tuléar, Madagascar).

Ordinary General Council

- n° 23 : **September 7-23, 2026.**
 n° 24 : **October 26-30**
 n° 25 : **December 10-11**
 n° 26 : **February 22-26, 2027.**

Fr. Ngoa

- **June 13-July 4** : Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece (canonical visits).
- **September 30-October 24** : Mexico and USA (canonical visits).

Fr. Benoît

- **June 27-August 2** : France (vacation and annual retreat).
- **August 5-21: Québec** (conducting a retreat).
- **September 30-October 24** : Mexico and USA (canonical visit).

Fr. João

- **June 17-July 7** : Tanzania (missionary period).

Fr. Thierry

- **August 6-9** : Belgium (Fimcap).
- **August** : Madrid.

Fr. Étienne

- **June 17-July 7** : Tanzania (missionary period).
- **July 8-August 16** : North Kivu.
- **August 7-31**: Madagascar.

On the cover

During its 6th session, held in Iași (Romania) from June 1 to 10 (see pages 6–10), the Plenary General Council was able to visit two of the famous Orthodox monasteries of Bukovina, renowned for their exterior as well as interior frescoes: here, at Voroneț.

A sign of hope

At Ouagadougou, a visit to “the soul eaters”



During the local chapter, the CIFA of Ouagadougou decided, along with their lay members in Alliance, to propose an action of hope during Advent in response to the call of the Superior General. The choice fell on the Delwendé Center in Sakoula, which takes in women accused of witchcraft, locally called “the soul eaters”. On December 14, Sunday of joy, the Alliance community honored this day with a celebration led by the brothers and the women. The group, composed of six student Brothers, two priests and six lay members of the Alliance, gave them bags of rice and soap: a simple gesture but very symbolic.

After the Mass, Sister Germaine, the deputy director, gave us a presentation on the center and its realities. Some 182 women sought refuge there after finding themselves destitute and cast out by their community. Many of these women were elderly who engaged in various activities—such as gardening, spinning cotton, and preparing soubala (a spice made from seeds)—to keep themselves busy and provide for their needs.

Established by the city government in 1966. The Center was entrusted to the Missionary Sisters of Africa in 1983. For the past seven years, It recorded 42 reintegrations (with support from the Ministry of Human Rights and the Justice and Peace Commission), 52 new arrivals, and, unfortunately, 88 deaths. The challenges of taking care of these women are enormous and important, especially due to a lack of financial support and a substantial grant from City Hall.

Sister thanked us for our visit, and we could sense the joy from the faces of the inhabitants, all Christians. In fact, having been rejected by their own families, communities, and religions, and then welcomed into a center run by “Christians,” they feel indebted to and grateful toward the Church. This has resulted in some conversions: among them there are 47 catechumens.

Br. Jules Vianney ANKOU

“One sees clearly only with the heart”

You may recall this expression: “One sees clearly only with the heart. What is essential is invisible to the eyes.” It comes from Saint-Exupéry in *The Little Prince*. After the General Council held in Iași (Romania), I remained in this part of the world for the canonical visitation to Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, and Greece. The place occupied by the Mission of the East in our capitular texts, commissions, and on the list of mobilizing works is unequivocal. The intervention of the Holy See to prevent the possible closure of the community in Plovdiv only reinforced the importance of this mission. A mission that had received the blessing of Pope Pius IX: “*I bless your works in the East and in the West,*” even though the Assumptionists did not yet have a work in the East. A prophetic blessing?



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

The Catholic Church represents a very small minority in these countries of the Eastern Mission, sometimes comprising less than 1% of the population. Consequently, we do not even enjoy certain rights we would be entitled to if Catholics represented at least 5% of the population. Despite these conditions, the small Catholic Church holds firm and resists. This admirable perseverance is supported by the entire congregation: the presence of the brothers who come from the new foundations is a testament to this.

Father D’Alzon, intimately familiar with the reality of the Catholic Church in the East, saw the hand of God in the perseverance of those sent there. Their presence remains humble, yet sustained by a bold faith and hope. We can then understand Father Emmanuel d’Alzon’s expression: “*In the East itself, God has left witnesses. Blessed are those who remain faithful witnesses to the end!*” (E.S. p. 565)

As I write this, a session is taking place in Arusha. Here is an excerpt from the message I sent to the participants of this session on missionary reflection in the Assumption: “*This session is the fruit of a profound conviction, one that is undeniable in light of reality*

itself: the future of our Congregation will be commensurate with the authentic missionary passion that we will cultivate within ourselves and around us. You are gathered here to share your experiences. This is also a time for reflection that will help us progress in how we stimulate, prepare, support, and evaluate missionary experiences within the Congregation. We want to do better tomorrow. May each of your interventions, suggestions, and contributions be driven by this desire to improve the quality of our responses to the various missions entrusted to us.”

I therefore wish to thank all those who, from the bottom of their hearts, aspire to or accept to live this very particular mission, taking into account the realities on the ground and, above all, the spiritual qualities that must be possessed or developed to find happiness in this mission, for goodwill alone is not enough. Time can be an asset in achieving this: “*It is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important.*” (*The Little Prince*, Chapter 21)

“One sees clearly only with the heart.” I give thanks to God who has allowed my heart to see and witness his work through our brothers who believed in the Mission of the East and also through those who still believe in it today. I feel immense joy at having walked on some of the lands that Father d’Alzon himself traversed and where our religious family continues its mission today. The words of the psalmist resonate deeply in my heart: “*How can I repay the Lord for all his goodness to me?*” “There is nothing better than the inner attitudes that the psalmist lists as the answer to his own question: ‘*I will lift up the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord. I will fulfill my vows to the Lord. I will offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving.*’ (Psalm 115:12-14) Yes, this is not about a transaction with God. God’s gifts are too great, too freely given, to be repaid with human means. All that remains for me is to abide in thanksgiving, faithfulness, and trusting obedience.” ■

Calls, nominations, agreements...

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

■ TO PERPETUAL PROFESSION

JOSEPH Francis

(Africa) (04/07/2026)

KASEREKA WAHINGAHI Merveille

(Africa) (04/07/2026)

KATEMBO SIVITSOMANWA

Bienvenu

(Africa) (04/07/2026)

LUZOLO N'ZINGA Jean-Bolvie

(Africa) (04/07/2026)

MUMBERE KYUNGULO Grâce

(Africa) (04/07/2026)

MUMBERE SANGALA Jean-Claude

(Africa) (04/07/2026)

RANDRIAMAMPIONONA

MIANDRISOA Saturné

(Africa) (04/08/2026)

Revocatus BARAKA CHILEBO

(North America) (05/04/2026)

KAMBALE BARAKA Mawano

(Africa) (05/04/2026)

KAMBALE KILUMBI Honoré

(Africa) (05/04/2026)

KASEREKA MASHAURI Tuzinde

(Africa) (05/04/2026)

Jean Claude RANDRIANANTENAINA

(Brazil) (05/04/2026)

Olivier Patrice RANDRIAMALALA

(Brazil) (05/04/2026)

Barthélemy ZOUNGRANA

(Europe) (05/04/2026)

Collins MWENJE OFFULA

(East Africa) (05/04/2026)

Gervé LIASOA

(Madagascar) (05/04/2026)

Jean Louis RAZAFIMANDIMBY

(Madagascar) (05/04/2026)

Jean Raymond RAHAJANIANA

(Madagascar) (05/05/2026)

Emmanuel BARAKA MACHA

(East Africa) (05/05/2026)

Engelbertus (Albert) KABOSU

(Europe) (06/12/2026)

Nguyễn THANH HỌC Joseph

(Europe) (06/12/2026)

■ ORDINATION TO THE DIACONATE

Noël Rekougne TOMFEÏ

(Europe) (04/08/2026)

Exedit N'DRI KOUAMÉ

(Europe) (04/08/2026)

Antoine TRAN VAN Hung

(Europe) (04/08/2026)

KAKULE KAMAVU Hilaire

(Africa) (04/08/2026)

MBUSA KAMITSYE Gédéon

(Africa) (04/08/2026)

MUHINDO MATINA Roland

(Africa) (04/09/2026)

MUHINDO MWENDAPEKE

MUSAKIRWA Jean-Paul

(Africa) (04/09/2026)

MUHINDO VARONDI Germain

(Africa) (04/09/2026)

OUEDRAOGO Gérémié

(Africa) (04/09/2026)

PATCHANA Emmanuel

(Africa) (04/09/2026)

RAZAFIMAHATRADRAIBE André

(Africa) (04/09/2026)

THASENYA SIKO Étienne

(Africa) (04/10/2026)

Guilherme FRANZINI BARBOSA

(Brazil) (05/05/2026)

Vincent VU QUANG Thinh

(Europe) (05/05/2026)

NGUYỄN VAN Ngoc

(Europe) (05/05/2026)

■ TO PRIESTLY ORDINATION

Romel BAUTISTA

(Europe) (04/10/2026)

KAKULE MBAFUMOJA Justin

(Africa) (05/05/2026)

KAKULE TASI Gabriel

(Africa) (05/05/2026)

KAKULE TEGHEKA Grâce

(Africa) (05/05/2026)

KAMBALE BALEWA Mutumishi

(Africa) (05/05/2026)

KAMBALE MUSONGORA Hervé

(Africa) (05/06/2026)

KAMBERE MUSEYA Gervais

(Africa) (05/06/2026)

KASEREKA MBAGA Muhungamuvi

(Africa) (05/06/2026)

KISIKISI WOYITA Joël

(Africa) (05/06/2026)

MUHINDO KAHAMBA Justin

(Africa) (05/06/2026)

MUHINDO KISOMO Emmanuel

(Africa) (05/06/2026)

NKOY BAKOLANA André-Teddy

(Africa) (05/06/2026)

Romarc ABLOUKA

(Europe) (05/06/2026)

Jean NGUYỄN ĐỨC Huyen

(Europe) (05/06/2026)

Boniface John MUINDI

(East Africa) (05/06/2026)

MUMBERE MATANDA Wasingya

(Africa) (05/07/2026)

PALUKU VATSURANA Grâce

(Africa) (05/07/2026)

Mark Vincent MADRONERO

(Europe) (05/07/2026)

Francis Emile RAZAFIMANDIMBY

(Madagascar) (05/07/2026)

Videlis Mulandi MUSEMBI

(East Africa) (05/07/2026)

Evans Elkanah MACHUMA

(East Africa) (05/07/2026)

KATEMBO KABWANA Charles

(Africa) (06/12/2026)

NZIAVAKE KATEKE Magloire

(Africa) (06/12/2026)

■ NOMINATION OF A PROVINCIAL SUPERIOR

Fr. Ngoa Ya Tshihemba, Superior General, with the consent of his Ordinary General Council, has named Fr. **Chi Ai NGUYEN Provincial of North America**, for a 2nd mandate beginning July 15, 2026.

■ OPENING OF A HOUSE

Fr. Ngoa Ya Tshihemba, Superior General, with the consent of his Plenary General Council, has given his approval for the **opening of the community in the parish of Saint James of Kamtonga (Kenya, Vice-Province of East Africa)**. Read page 9.

■ AGREEMENT FOR THE NOMINATION OF FORMATORS

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

- of **Fr. José Miguel DÍAZ AYLLÓN** as **Secretary General of Formation** (*read opposite*);

- of **Fr. KATEMBO KAMERA Dalmon** as **Provincial Formator of Madagascar** ;

- of **Fr. Louis Martin RAKOTOARILALA** as **Superior of CIFA of Nairobi (Vice-Province of East Africa)** for a 2nd mandate;

- of **Fr. Jean-Pierre RADIMILAHY** as **Master of Novices in Tuléar (Province of Madagascar)** ;

- of **Fr. Bernard HOLZER** as **Master of Novices in Manila (Philippines, Province of Europe)** ;

- of **Fr. Régis NDRIAMAMONJY** as **Master of Novices in Saint-Lambert-des-Bois (France, Province of Europe)**.

■ EXTENSION OF TEMPORARY VOWS

Fr. Ngoa Yi Tshihemba, Superior General, with the consent of his Ordinary General Council, has granted an extension of temporary vows, for one year, to **Brother Jean-Thomas de LA ROCHE SAINT-ANDRÉ**, of the Province of Europe.

■ READMISSION TO THE CONGREGATION

Fr. Ngoa Yi Tshihemba, Superior General, with the consent of his Ordinary General Council, has granted **readmission to the congregation** to **Gilbert RAJAONARISON**, a former temporarily professed from the Province of Madagascar.

Fr. José Miguel Díaz Ayllón, the new Secretary General of Formation



Fr. Ngoa Ya Tshihemba, Superior General, with the approval of his Ordinary General Council, named Fr. José Díaz Ayllón as Secretary General of Formation (SGF), for three years, beginning August 1, 2026. This religious from the Province of North America succeeds Fr. Vincent Leclercq (Province of Europe), who held the position since 2018 and who nears the end of his mandate.

Born on October 25, 1959, in Mexico, Fr. Miguel pronounced his first vows in 1987, following his novitiate in Chile. He completed his formation in Mexico, where he made his perpetual profession in 1992 and was ordained in 1995. His apostolate was devoted to formation: local formator and superior since 1994; coordinator of the department of formation of the Conference of Major Superiors of Mexico (1996-1999); administrator of the Institute of Theological Formation (Iflim, organizing 13 religious organizations) from 1997 to 2007. This was followed by a period of service to the administration of the Congregation: Regional Superior of Mexico (while at the same time working in a parish) from 2006 to 2011; Provincial of the North American Province from 2011 to 2017; and Assistant General in Rome from 2017 to 2023.

Since his return to Mexico, he was Provincial Formator, while in community at the Parish of Emperatriz of Mexico. Becoming SGF, he will continue residence primarily in his Province.

The mission of the "SGF"

The Secretary General of Formation was created by the 33rd General Chapter (2017) to help integrate the system of formation in the Congregation. Comprised of those responsible for formation of the Provinces, Vice-Provinces, and Vicariates, it is animated by the SGF who meets with them at least twice a year through videoconferencing, assuring regular communication with him throughout the year.

The SGF collaborates equally with the superiors of CIFA and with the large houses of formation, whom he meets with every two years, as well as with local formators when needed. He is available as a point of contact for all these trainers to help and support them in re-examining their mission, assessing their needs, offering facilitation tools or even sessions, and following up on international training-related sessions. SGF is often in contact with the Assistant General responsible for following up on questions of formation—namely, Fr. Benoît Bigard. He presents a yearly report to the CGP, and he might be assigned specific assignments from the Superior General for the following year. ■

Halfway through the next General Chapter

It was in the heart of the Mission to the East that the General Plenary Council held its 6th session, from June 1st to 10th in Iași, Romania, as the General Curia reached the halfway point of its term.



▲
A working session
of the Council in
Iași.

Few members of the CGP were already familiar with Romania: the new Provincial of Europe himself had not yet had the opportunity to visit this country, whose reputation in the West was disastrous due to the severity of the communist regime in place until the end of 1989. It was therefore a pleasant surprise for them to discover this country, its culture (the Council took a wonderful excursion to explore the Orthodox monasteries of Bucovina)... and the Assumption of Romania!

This country is indeed the only one of the six that make up the Mission to the East to have two houses. The first is well-known, as the St. Peter – St. Andrew Centre in Bucharest is a key gathering point for the Congregation. Unfortunately, logisti-

cal problems prevented the entire Council from meeting there, but most participants stopped by, receiving a very warm welcome before heading to the new house in Iași! Founded in 2024 after the closure of Mărgineni, in the same province of Moldavia (northeast of the country), this house comprises four religious of as many nationalities. By hosting the CGP, it magnificently honored the legendary reputation for hospitality of the Romanian people!

The Council session was preceded by two days of introductory sessions led by the General Curia for the three most recently appointed Major Superiors (Europe, Andean Province, and East Africa). It was the first time in a long time that all members of the Council were able to be physically

present at the meeting, further enhancing the atmosphere of fellowship.

Among the topics on the agenda for this 6th session¹ were:

* **A general overview of the Congregation** is provided at each meeting through news from all the Provinces. In June, these are supplemented by the annual reports of the Superior General, the Secretary General, and the Procurator: valuable summaries for taking the pulse of the religious family. The first point to note was the excellent collaboration between the General Government and the provincial levels, as well as the sense of a genuine commitment among the religious to bear witness everywhere to their Gospel of fraternal life and apostolic zeal: Father General attests to this throughout his canonical visits to all regions of the Assumptionist world.

The Secretary General, for his part, highlighted the steady increase in the number of applications for admission to perpetual vows and calls to Holy Orders—more than 100 in the past year: this may be a record, and certainly represents an increased workload for the General Government, but above all, it is a blessing to see ever more brothers joining us!

This diagnosis does not preclude the identification of **isolation and vulnerabilities**. The Council devoted time to reflection on these issues, beginning with the numerous communities lacking resources or neighbors: of the 33 countries where our congregation is currently present, 15 have only one house! The Council also examined leadership challenges at all levels, from communities to Provinces: we lack qualified

Our Two “Families”



A meeting of the General Councils of the Augustinian Family in Rome.

We may not always think about it, but our Congregation belongs to two large families! The first and most familiar is that of the Assumption, and this General Conference has allowed us to highlight several initiatives shared with our Sisters, for example, in terms of formation and sharing resources. This synergy could also be developed at the level of each Province: we will discuss this further.

Our belonging to the other family was undoubtedly much less conscious and active until a certain May 8, 2025: this is, of course, the Augustinian family,

to which the election of Pope Leo XIV brought unprecedented renown... even within our own ranks! And it is with happy surprise that we witness and participate, at the level of the entire Congregation and undoubtedly in many of our communities, in reunions with the other religious institutes whose spirituality we share! The CGP has undertaken an in-depth reflection on this “Augustinian momentum” that we are experiencing with the whole Church and which could materialize for us in various ways.

leaders, and those who do are not always prepared for their responsibilities.

This vulnerability is one of the reasons why the General Council examined the extensive synodal work undertaken by the Province of Europe regarding the transition of its **Vicariates in West Africa and Asia-Oceania** to the status of Vice-Provinces (see pages 12-13 for the resulting decision of the Superior General). As for the Vice-Province of East Africa, its roadmap towards full provincial status is now set, and the steps are being taken gradu-

ally within the initially planned timeframe.

Formation is a mandatory component of each session of the CGP, if only to validate the “First Apostolic Appointments” of the brothers who have reached the diaconate (see page 11 for appointments for those ordained priests during the past twelve months), as well as the preparation of sessions related to formation.

The Iași meeting will be remembered, in this area, for the succession of Fr. Vincent Leclercq, the first holder of this position since ►



In May, the Father General conducted the canonical visit to the Philippines.

2018, whose term is coming to an end. It was therefore necessary to prepare the appointment of a new Secretary General (SGF) and to clarify his mission in a letter from the Superior General (see page 5). Also noteworthy is the appointment of a number of new formators, whose nominations in various Provinces were approved by the CGP during this session. The Council also evaluated the CIFA - International Community of Assumptionist Formation - of Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso, Province of Europe), expressing satisfaction with this proven experience of interculturality in an appropriate environment.

* **Economic matters** always receive special attention from the Council. The June session reviewed the accounts for the past

year, presented by Fr. Alex Castro, Treasurer General, after they had been prepared by the Congregation's Economic Council (CEC). This provided an opportunity to share the costs of formation within the Congregation among the Provinces: one of the many financial equalizations that, better than words, express the solidarity that unites our body.

In this regard, the General Council expressed its gratitude to the communities, groups, and organizations that fund our solidarity campaign. However, the 2025 campaign, dedicated to the roof repair of the Kambali College in Butembo (Democratic Republic of Congo), is facing a funding shortfall of USD 14,000: we therefore expect increased fundraising efforts.

Finally, we should mention the work carried out by the CGP on several important documents: the revision of the congregation's norms for the protection of minors and vulnerable adults against abuse, the drafting of a charter for the proper use of digital technology, and the revised statutes of the Province of Africa.

Fr. Michel KUBLER (Rome)

¹ For a daily summary of the GCP sessions, see the "common thread" posted on the Congregation's website: <https://www.assumptio.org/actualites/> This time, it was provided by Fr. Thierry Kambale Kahongya.

A New Parish Community in Kenya

The CGP approved the request to open a house in Kamtonga, submitted by the Vice-Province of East Africa.



A group of the faithful and a celebration at St. James Parish in Kamtonga (Kenya).

As Fr. Benard Odhiambo Yala, Vice-Provincial of East Africa, reminded the Council, the Assumptionists have been present in Kamtonga since 2024, but until now it was an *ad experimentum* community with only one religious, attached to the community in Bura, 28 km away. It was, in fact, through our presence at the Bura shrine that the pastoral needs of this area became apparent to the local religious.

Kamtonga is an isolated village in the Taita-Taveta district, in the Diocese of Mombasa (south-

east Kenya, near the ocean). Located near a large nature reserve, Tsavo West National Park, with its abundant wildlife, the village has a population of around 1,000, of whom 250 to 300 are Catholic. The parish of Saint James has five branches within a 10 km radius. The main activities are livestock farming, subsistence agriculture heavily dependent on seasonal rainfall, and traditional mining. Nomadic pastoralism is widely practiced in the region.

The pastoral potential in this area is great. Our mission in Kamtonga is currently at the initial

evangelization stage, within a religiously diverse yet very generous population, many of whom thirst to know Christ. Hence the importance of having dedicated religious who are close to the people. The community will begin with two religious, Father Jacob Barasa and Deacon Evans Machuma: already present, they are providing invaluable services, including material support, to the population. It will likely be necessary to add a third religious to the team without delay. ■

“May God bless our trials”

On Wednesday, June 10, at the close of the 6th session of the General Plenary Council held in Iași, the Superior General delivered a closing address, the gist of which is as follows:

“My dear brothers,

(...) I would like these closing words to sound more like a commissioning than a simple conclusion to a session.

I am very happy to see that this time, we are all here. It has not been easy due to problems related to visa procedures. We give thanks to God. (...)

I remain convinced that this body of discernment and governance is a school. And as in any school, each person's contribution is taken into account. We are therefore returning to the field to live out what we have learned. (...)

We discussed the Augustinian Momentum. Among the words of our patriarch Saint Augustine, I would like to share one with you to conclude this session of the CGP:

“Let your brother prior not find his happiness in the subjugation of others under his authority, but in the services he renders them out of charity. Out of honor before you, let him be at your head; out of fear before God, let him stand at your feet. Let him be for all a model of good works, striving to correct the unstable, to revive those who lack courage, to uplift the weak, and to exercise patience toward all. Let him observe these rules willingly and command respect for them. And, although both are necessary, he will seek to



win your affection rather than to arouse your fear, always mindful of the account he will have to render to God on your behalf.” (Rule of Saint Augustine, 7, 3)

In discussing the role of the Provincial, we may have focused too much on the administrative and leadership aspects. But perhaps we should also emphasize the aspect of witness. (...) We all want to bear witness. But how? In what style? Jesus acted with much more gentleness, through persuasion. And he entrusted to his Church the mission of being like the hidden leaven that works in simplicity. Or like the seed that germinates silently in the earth.

This should be the style of our witness in the world: courageous, but not spectacular; determined, but not provocative; clear-sighted in the face of the idols of our time, but without theatrical or triumphalist dis-

plays. It is perhaps the humble yet effective style of salt that gives flavor, of light that illuminates without making a sound.

The transmission of charism and ways of life generally requires that certain individuals assume this role within a given group or community. Thank you to everyone for the efforts we renew each day to avoid the risk of a disconnect between what we ask of others and what we do. Yes, today, as many say, choosing God is not a cultural reflex, but a courageous act. And in this sense, believing becomes resisting. (...)

Let us simply ask God to bless our efforts to always remain committed to doing good, as our founder, Father d'Alzon, so aptly put it in this phrase I love: “May God bless our trials.”

Thank you.

First Apostolic Appointments

The “first apostolic appointment” received by every religious upon completion of their formation is determined within the framework of the General Conference of the Priests (CGP) and published at the time of priestly ordination (for religious brothers: at Perpetual Profession). Here are the appointments of religious ordained priests during the last twelve months:

• AFRICA

- **KABAMBA MUKENDI Marcel:** Bibwa, as director of the “Emmanuel d’Alzon 2” school complex and member of the Postulancy formation team.
- **KALINDA Bertin:** Goma-Notre-Dame de la Paix, for service to the community, with pastoral placement in the parish and training in Justice & Peace.
- **KAMBALE MUVAKULI Jean-Baptiste:** Kayna, for parish ministry.
- **KAMBALE NDAMBUKO Gervais:** Teaching at the Kambali Institute in Butembo, residing at the Provincial House.
- **MALIDRALE MOKILI Crispin:** Youth ministry at the Emmanuel Parish in Beni.
- **KAMBALE MBOGHA Georges:** St. Charles-Lwanga Novitiate, attached to the local bursar’s office, with local pastoral support.
- **MUHINDO ISUNGU Vianney:** Beni-Mupanda, serving at the Museke school complex, with pastoral placement in Butsili.
- **MUHINDO LUTSUMBI Paulin:** Ngaliema, to pursue studies in Civil Engineering and Public Works at the IBTP in Kinshasa.
- **MUHINDO MUHASA Angélu:** Butembo-Kitatumba for three years of psychology studies at the UAC (University of Abomey-Calavi) with the aim of supporting people in difficult situations and/or providing training.
- **MUMBERE NDAKASI Jérémie:** Emmanuel Parish in Goma, for youth ministry.

- **PALUKU KICHEMBO Dieu-Merci:** Kayna, for youth ministry in the parish.

• EAST AFRICA

- **Boniface John MUINDI:** Njiru, for management studies at Tangaza University (Nairobi) to support Vice-Province projects.
- **Videlis Mulandi MUSEMBI:** Emmanuel House, for specialized studies in systematic theology at Hekima College (Nairobi).
- **Evans Elkanah MACHUMA:** Kamtonga, for parish ministry.

• BRAZIL

- **Yan PIRES DA SILVA:** Pinhal, serving in the Provincial Bursar’s Office and administrator of St. John the Baptist Parish.
- **Dênis Geraldo MARTINS RAMALHO:** São Paulo, for parish ministry.

• EUROPE

- **Joseph NGUYỄN VAN Phúc:** Saigon-Dông Quang (Nhi Binh), serving at the orphanage.
- **Jean-Baptiste NGUYEN VAN The:** New Manila-Cubao, for monitoring Vietnamese students at the ALC (language school) and serving Vietnamese immigrants.
- **Maurice Billy HONZOUNNON:** Valpré, pursuing a doctorate on Saint Augustine, after a first year of pastoral placement.
- **Maurice WOMBARAGUEMA:** Sokodé-Komah (Togo), for the Finance Office of the Vicariate of West Africa.

- **Ariel VIDANES:** Manila-Adveniat, for Bayard-Philippines.
- **Paul THAI VAN Thành:** To the new foundation in Vinh, dedicated to pastoral care in health.
- **Romel BAUTISTA:** Paris-François 1er, responsible for youth ministry in the Province, while undertaking a specialization in pastoral theology or ecclesiology after his first year of priestly ministry.
- **Romeric ABLOUKA:** London-Hitchin, for parish ministry.
- **Jean NGUYỄN ĐỨC Huyen:** Provincial House (Paris-Denfert), to serve in the bursar’s office and receive training.
- **Mark Vincent MADRONERO:** Provincial House (Paris-Denfert), for the Province’s digital communications department.

• MADAGASCAR

- **Christien Fabrice ANDRIAMALALARSON:** Rome for studies in canon law, with a view to serving the Province.

• ANDEAN PROVINCE

- **Daniel MAGIN SAMBONY:** Riobamba (Ecuador), for parish ministry.

The Advancement of the Vicariates of Europe Towards Vice-Province Status

Following the discernment of the Province of Europe and with the agreement of its Ordinary General Council, the Superior General announces an extension of the process initiated by the 34th General Chapter. We publish here the letter he addressed to the entire Congregation on this matter.



Installation of the new parish priest, Fr. Augustin Bernardin Kantchiré, at the Notre Dame de l'Assomption Parish in Sokodé-Komah, in January 2026.

Iași, Romania, June 12, 2026

Letter from the Superior General to the Congregation regarding the Two Vicariates of the Province of Europe

In 2023, the 34th General Chapter requested that the two Vicariates of the Province of Europe, West Africa and Asia-Oceania, be accompanied “towards greater autonomy so that they may be

erected as Vice-Provinces within the next six years and participate as Vice-Provinces in the next General Chapter” (n. 81). One of the main concerns, expressed at the time in the chapter assembly, was the excessive size of the Province of Europe, which made its governance and management difficult.

A Synodal Process

To support these two territories, the Province of Europe launched

a synodal process, led by a commission composed of religious from the Vicariates and the European continent. This process began with broad consultation with the religious of the Vicariates (and those originally from them but serving on mission abroad). The brothers were invited to evaluate the first five years of operation of the current structure to determine whether transitioning to the status of Vice-Provinces

before 2029 was appropriate. This was in no way intended to oppose a request from the General Chapter, but rather to examine whether it was expedient to implement it as is now. By virtue of the powers delegated to him by the General Chapter, the Superior General, in his Ordinary General Council, has the power to interpret the texts and their application (cf. CG n. 294).

The responses from consultations with religious and communities were analyzed and enriched by the Vicariate Councils, the Vicars, the Provincial Council, then the Provincial Council for Europe, the Provincial Superior, and finally the General Plenary Council, which met in Iași, Romania, from June 1 to 10, 2026. The various assessments generally recommended postponing the implementation of the 2023 General Chapter decision. I warmly thank all those who participated in this consultation phase and contributed to its success.

The General Plenary Council's Assessment

Based on these various assessments, the General Plenary Council highlighted the efforts undertaken in the Vicariates since their creation in 2020. These efforts have resulted in a bountiful harvest of vocations, a dynamic apostolate, a clear strengthening of fraternal life, and a genuine commitment to deepening the charism. Both Vicariates have each established a comprehensive formation program, and typically Assumptionist apostolates are gradually taking shape within them. Progress is also evident in the areas of community development, governance, and leadership.

Nevertheless, the CGP noted that some significant challenges remain. It is still necessary to

“As Assumptionists, we are religious who live in apostolic community. Faithful to our founder, Father d’Alzon, we choose before all else to work, out of love for Jesus Christ, for the coming of the Reign of God in ourselves and around us.”

strengthen leadership, implement self-financing mechanisms, encourage the creation of specific apostolic works, and foster unity within each Vicariate.

At the conclusion of the discernment process, it therefore appeared premature to establish the two Vicariates as Vice-Provinces before the 2029 General Chapter.

Next Steps

Taking note of the conclusions of the synodal process and the recommendations of the CGP, in my Ordinary General Council, I have therefore decided to allow us more time and extend the autonomy process.

For this autonomy to be established under the best possible conditions, both the Province and the Vicariates will need to continue their efforts. The Province will ensure that more powers are delegated to the Vicariates so that they can grow in responsibility. The aim is to consolidate existing structures and address weaknesses, while also focusing on providing better support to man-

agers. The objective is for them to eventually be able to respond to the challenges and difficulties they face themselves.

The work will take place both at the level of the Mother Province and at the level of the territories. The religious of the Vicariates will also have to play an active part in this process to make the Vice-Province effective. Collaboration must be mutual. The Vicariate forums, planned for this summer, will be an excellent opportunity to explore in greater depth the responses to the specific challenges of each Vicariate.

The General Chapter of 2029 will be a crucial step for evaluating the process and will determine whether it is possible and desirable to transform the Vicariates into Vice-Provinces in 2032, midway between the next two General Chapters, as we are currently considering.

Dear brothers,

While continuing to work in a synodal spirit, each at our own level, let us continue this collaboration together for the successful completion of this process. I remain convinced that beyond meeting deadlines, it is the satisfactory result that is most important. I thank you again for what has been done and for what remains to be done.

May God bless our intentions and efforts.

Faternally,

**Ngoa Ya Tshihemba, a.a.
Superior General**

“Missionaries of the Assumption, Apostles for the Kingdom”

This was the theme of the second session for reflecting on our missionary experience, which brought together 16 religious from June 23 to July 3 in Arusha, Tanzania, including a shared time with Oblates of the Assumption.

“**T**o love Jesus Christ and extend his Kingdom,” according to the last sentence of our *Rule of Life*, is the foundation of all our Assumptionist activities. It was with this perspective in mind that a session for reflecting on our missionary experience was recently held at Austin House, the East African Philosophy Center in Arusha, Tanzania. The session was led by Fathers João Gomes and Etienne Ratalata, Assistants General, and Vincent Leclercq, Secretary General for Formation. A first meeting of this kind, in Rome in 2019, had explored the challenges of the Assumption mission in great depth.

This second edition, bringing together 16 Assumptionists, was marked by diversity. In addition to the 12 nationalities represented, the participants came from very varied missionary commitments: apostolates in parishes and sanctuaries, responsibility for houses of studies and youth hostels... but also several religious in formation.

A Missionary Approach to Reality

Opening the session, Fr. Vincent Leclercq emphasized that the Congregation's leaders were not expecting grand lectures with lofty general ideas, but rather proposals to “help them energize

the missionary zeal.” There were certainly some masterful contributions related to reflecting on our missionary experience. Fr. João reminded everyone that the community was missionary in its own right and that it was necessary to have a missionary approach to reality, a truly missionary stance, in order to transform anxieties into prophecies. He testified to having always been impressed by the example of our French and Dutch missionaries in Brazil, by the interest so many of them showed in immersing themselves in the lives of the local people, with boundless generosity.

Another testimony came from Fr. Etienne Ratalata, who shared his life as Provincial of Madagascar, his personal experience of mission and of being responsible for the missionary life of a Province. The first Malagasy to be in charge of the Assumptionists in Madagascar, he specifically mentioned the two major challenges in this role: maintaining the international character of the Province by welcoming and supporting Brothers from other Provinces, and strengthening the Province's international reach within the Congregation by sending and supporting Malagasy Brothers on missions outside the Province. He concluded by expressing his joy in reaping the fruits of the CIFA and

the joy of mission: “*It is also the joy of the Provincials, both in the Province of origin and the Province of transfer, to have Brothers flourishing in their mission.*”

Mission, a Focus of Formation

An important dimension of the missionary experience highlighted at this session was that of formation. Fr. Dieusé Kaghoma, Master of Novices at the Kizito House Novitiate in Arusha, addressed this topic in particular by presenting the theme on the mission of the Assumption according to the 34th General Chapter and the Chapter of his Vice-Province. His conviction as a formator is to make young brothers aware of the mission and the calls and challenges of an Assumptionist missionary in the current context of East Africa.

A female voice was added to this discussion by Sr. Marlyn Nganzali, Oblate of the Assumption, superior and formator of the community in Nairobi (Kenya), who reflected on the challenges of mission formation and the practices that could foster the implementation of a truly missionary charism. She gave concrete examples of the entire formation process of an Oblate Sister: from her initial formation (postulancy, novitiate and juniorate) to ongoing formation, especially during preparation for Perpetual Profes-



sion. With her, 23 Oblates from four continents, superiors and formators, also in session in Arusha, had then joined the Assumptionists of the session.

A source of joy!

An outside voice came from the Tanzanian Capuchin friar Innocent Bahati, who emphasized in his address the joy that fills the hearts and lives of those who have encountered Jesus. Following Christ radically constitutes the foundation of our mission and our vocation to proclaim the Gospel to the poorest, amidst the economic challenges of East Africa, but also for “Generation Z,” which he describes as a new challenge for our society today.

The Secretary General for Formation, Fr. Vincent Leclercq, closed the session by returning to the theme of “Formation and

Mission.” He stressed the need for a thorough understanding of the Congregation and its needs, questioning in passing the link between our current formation system and the new needs of formation, and mentioning the challenges we must face as missionary disciples, particularly the challenge of the digital age. His conclusion: *“Reflecting on our apostolic experience is important for preparing for mission. And it will be the same throughout the mission as we ourselves experienced during this session.”*

The Challenge and the Grace

Personally, I can say that the review session of our missionary experience in Arusha was an important moment of sharing and fellowship. It allowed us to delve deeper into the missionary challenges facing our Congregation, especially by listening to the testi-

monies of the participants, which demonstrate the richness of our diversity. Sharing our different experiences shows that our Congregation is truly missionary.

That is why, in concluding my own testimony during the session, I affirm that I am happy to be a missionary and to carry out the mission that the Congregation entrusts to me outside my country of origin. Certainly, it is always a challenge, but above all, a grace: wherever we are sent, we have but one heart and one soul, because we belong to one body called the “Augustinians of the Assumption,” and we have but one missionary motivation, which is the expansion of the Kingdom of God.

P. Louis Martin RAKOTOARILALA
Missionary at CIFA in Nairobi (Kenya)

In Manila, the language school continues its journey

Founded 16 years ago, this Assumptionist institution in the Philippines is changing leadership but not its mission: its new director attests to this.



The ceremony marking the change of director at the Language School

Sixteen years of existence represent a significant milestone of which we can be proud, marked by successes, challenges, and transitions. Throughout its history, the Assumption Language College (ALC) has encountered both opposition and appreciation from those who have witnessed its simplicity, dedication, and distinctive style.

Founded 17 years ago as a language program at the Augustinians of the Assumption's Adveniat House in Loyola Heights, ALC

aimed to help Chinese religious and missionaries cope with their own "martyrdom" in China and to deepen the faith of their Christian communities. ALC has undergone numerous transformations that have strengthened its resilience, even in the face of the pandemic and various other trials. Fr. Ricky Montañez and Fr. Bernard Holzer, assisted by other Assumptionist brothers, responded to this need and worked to establish practical, educational, and theological language programs.

ALC has welcomed many religious brothers and sisters, lay people, and teachers. It has served as a meeting place, not only to foster friendship, but also to explore the mystery of languages through numerous opportunities for self-discovery, internationality, and intercultural exchange. Learning a language is not simply about grammar, syntax, or dialectics; it is much more than that. It is about experiencing the language, understanding its context, its history, its idioms, and its expressions.

The transfer of responsibilities: a sign of continuity of the mission

From its humble beginnings, ALC has become a more welcoming language college where all languages are taught. More than just a place of learning, it has become a home for people from all over the world who wish to explore the wonderful world of language learning as a mission.

Like any other mission, leadership and service roles change according to God's will. On October 2, 2025, Fr. Bernard transferred to me the responsibility of serving the mission of ALC, as well as to the members of the Pavel community, during a simple yet solemn ceremony attended by students, staff, superiors, formators, and the Assumptionist brothers. This marks a new spirit and a new horizon for the mission, while preserving its vision, mission, and the spirituality of the Assumptionists.

Developing the present while strengthening the future

ALC's language programs are created and evaluated based on their effectiveness and suitability to the changing and demanding needs of learners from diverse cultures, backgrounds, and study goals. This is not an easy task. It requires ongoing evaluation, training, and dialogue with both teachers and learners.

ALC is neither a second-rate school nor a tutoring or academic support center. Many consider language schools inferior to formal colleges and universities that award bachelor's degrees. However, language schools like ALC hold numerous accreditations from local and international organizations

such as the Technical Education and Skill Development Authority (TESDA), the Bureau of Immigration (for issuing short-term student visas), the British English Council Philippines, and others.

The many successes of our students prove that language learning is not easy. It requires serious concentration, practice, and many late-night study sessions. Those who have not yet reached their desired level of proficiency must continue to be patient. And ALC is here to help them. In the months and years to come, ALC aims to further develop and strengthen its language programs and supplementary activities (see box).

All these projects can only be accomplished through the combined efforts of the school administration, staff, AA Brothers, instructors, and the parents of our students. We dedicate this mission to our Lord Jesus Christ, through our Blessed Mother, Saint Joseph, and with the help of the prayers of our beloved founder, the Venerable Fr. D'Alzon, our Bulgarian martyrs, and all the saints. We are the instruments of this mission, and we will carry out God's will.

Adveniat Regnum Tuum!

Fr. Ethiel Roxas
(Manila – Philippines)

- Article published in Vicariate News No. 29, January 2026

A Two-Year Plan

Here are some elements of Assumption Language College's development plan for 2026-2028:

- Accreditation of English programs by the British English Council: all programs and assessments/exams will be aligned with the BEC to provide a more integrative, up-to-date, and globally recognized curriculum.
- In accordance with international standards, all educational programs will follow the "Integrative Language Plan, Assessment, Pre-tests, and Final Tests" classification for each level (A1-A2, B1-B2, C1-C2).
- Programs will include themes related to internationality, interculturality, protection, and the mission of integration, contributing to the formation of missionaries for the Church in a rapidly changing world.
- Creation of an Academic Council to develop, study, evaluate, and recommend measures related to the student learning plan.
- Enhanced hybrid learning, due to the unpredictable weather conditions in the Philippines, ensuring continuity of instruction in case of cancellation.
- Integration of oral communication skills.
- Transparency of the centralized grading system, enabling dialogue on how to improve learners' learning plans.
- Strengthen networks with universities and other language schools in the Philippines and abroad. Sharing resources, advice, and best practices will ensure good results and high productivity in the workplace.

It has been 50 years since two Assumptionists disappeared in Argentina

The kidnapping of Brothers Carlos Antonio De Pietro and Raúl Rodrigues, June 4, 1976, in Buenos Aires, symbolizes the tragedy inflicted on this country during its military dictatorship. Fr. Luis Ramón Randón lived with them. He recounts their story.

I was asked to share a few words regarding what we are commemorating: the 50th anniversary of the events that happened to Carlos Antonio and Raúl. During this time, in the Assumption in Argentina, there was a house of formation, called Olivos, where we were students. The oldest among us asked if we could form a smaller community in a poor area, since the religious life should be amidst the poor. That is how three of us left for a new area: Carlos Antonio, Paul Smolders (who was Belgian) and me. We lived for a year in a modest area called Villa Tesei.

It wasn't a shantytown, but a place that was very popular, very modest. We rented a house, and we started working in the pastoral apostolate, in the chapel, and we were introduced to the locals. We stayed there for a year and a half, but the bishop asked us to leave because there were no priests in the community: we were all professed, some of us having pronounced final vows, others not. We left there and, without asking permission, went to another area called La Manuelita. We were near the Colegio Máx-



imo, a theological facility of the Jesuits. Carlos Antonio and Raúl were students, and during this time, Fr. Bergoglio was the provincial; the Jesuits were just a few blocks away.

We worked with the Jesuits since the pastoral care belonged to them. We never took any pastoral responsibilities, but we collaborated with them at the chapel. At this time, Fr. Jorge Adur and Br. Raúl joined us and we became a community of four. Paul Smolders¹ had retired and later became a Jesuit. The idea was to « be among the poor. »

The social and political context was that of a dictatorship. In the 1970's, Argentina experienced a wave of intense violence, among both the left and the right. On one side the Revolutionary Army of the people, a violent Trotskyist communist group was operating in the north of the country. The Monteneros, the other strong guerilla group, was closest to the people, very numerous, very active, but was waging an urban guerrilla war. The whole scene was politicized—that's just how it was!

The dictatorship, which had been in process, arrived in March 1976. It reversed the constitutional government and took power. It unleashed a wave of severe repression against anything that "smelled of communism." The Church, which had some members in this popular area, was considered Communist. That was what they were looking for. The regime started taking prisoners, of kidnapping and making people disappear. That was their approach: kidnapping followed by disappearance. People didn't go to prison; they were made to disappear immediately. There were already many cases of this.

In 1975, at the sanctuary of Lourdes, Carlos Antonio and Raúl pronounced their

1) SMOLDERS, Paul (1938), a Belgian who joined the Assumptionists in Argentina, Buenos Aires (1971), left in 1975.



perpetual vows and I was ordained a deacon. We returned to La Manuelita. We were there until March 1976 when the military coup began. They began persecuting members of the Church, in particular those who were in popular areas, the shanty towns, etc. There were also nuns and priests, and they began kidnapping Jesuits, who later reappeared.

On June 4 of that year, at La Manuelita, a group of civilians—though they were actually soldiers, as could be seen from their uniforms—appeared, surrounded the entire block and our house, and entered the house. Only Carlos Antonio and Raúl were there. From what the neighbors said, they were taken and put into a car. We never saw them again.

What happened to me? Several days before, I had visited my family; my village was lo-

cated only 300 kilometers away. On that June 4th, I was returning in a van with a friend. As we neared Buenos Aires, we got into a car accident. This set us back until almost ten o'clock at night, or perhaps midnight. When I arrived, a car was waiting for me and was flashing his headlights. I thought to myself, "What's going on?" It was one of my brothers who heard the news. He had come to get me not sure of when I would be returning. He said, "No, come on, come on, come on..."

I had no idea what had happened. There were no cell phones back then. It was then that I heard what had taken place with Carlos and Raúl. Jorge Adur was not at the house either. He was the one who was wanted, so he knew he couldn't stay home for long. Up until that time, I was living in hiding for about

two months with different friends and family members. I had found Fr. Roberto Favre—somewhere, in a bar or a church—we'd talk, and then we'd go our separate ways. That's how it was, until I found out I wasn't wanted.

I was then sent to Chile, at the time of the dictatorship of Pinochet. Ironically, I was protected under Pinochet's dictatorship. I was in the community that we had with Miguel Fuentealba, Ramón Gutiérrez and Julio Navarro; Ricardo Tong arrived at this time. I stayed there until I returned to Argentina to be ordained. Three years passed and I was ordained at Lourdes (Santos Lugares) in 1978. We always kept the memories of Carlos and Raúl.

Once democracy was re-established in Argentina, the government created the National Commission for Miss- ►



Celebration marking the 50th anniversary of the death of the two Brothers, held on June 4 in Buenos Aires and presided over by Fr. Luis Ramón Rendón.

ing Persons, who had recently disappeared---about 8,000. These numbers are an object of political manipulation : they say there are 30,000 missing, but that isn't the case. 8,000 people were kidnapped and have disappeared. I say this today: they haven't simply disappeared; they were kidnapped, disappeared, and were killed.

Such is probably the case with Carlos and Raúl, based on what we know, but we have never heard any further talk about them. Their bodies were never discovered. They were taken to the Naval School of Mechanical Engineering, located very close to San Román. This is where the "death flights" took off: planes loaded the prisoners, took them to the ocean, and threw them into the water. Some bodies were found on the beaches, eaten by sharks. There were two French religious who were identified thanks to their DNA and who

were buried. Their remains were found on the beach. Little by little, it became clear that there were mass graves. We have never had any news of Carlos and Raúl!

All that we have are indications that they might have been in this area. People who had been interrogated spoke of us. We asked them questions about us, about Fr. Adur, and about me. In other words, they knew everything about us. The news I heard was that by 1976 and 1980, all of them had been killed. In that era, there were many places like that where the kidnapped were made to disappear. In the end, our plan to establish a presence in the neighborhood was abandoned and never resumed by the Assumption. That's just how it is.

We Assumptionists continued to try to open houses for vocational ministry, since that was the original purpose of the house---to search for vocations. We have made different

attempts at establishing houses of formation; all these attempts have been squelched. Furthermore, the congregation was already shrinking. We left the parish and school, St. Martin of Tours. We left the Las Mercedes Parish but remained in San Román. The formation house of Olivos was also closed.

Today, we still have the Lourdes Shrine House, the CIFA, and the San Román and Notre-Dame de Lourdes schools. Those are the works we have. We hold Carlos and Raúl in memory. We will always remember them and go before the State and before justice to find some information pertaining to their disappearance. However, we have never heard anything.

For me, they are clearly martyrs: they died because of their generosity. Classically, the martyr is someone who dies for love of their faith because of someone who hates the Christian. That wasn't

the case here. All the military were Catholics. They were even supported by bishops and priests. . . , yet they killed people in this manner. So, what was it? It was a hatred of charity, a hatred of commitment, a hatred of giving oneself completely to another. Carlos and Raúl were never involved politically. Their involvement was strictly evangelical.

The case for Fr. Jorge Adur is different. Father Adur had been involved in the national leadership of the Montenero's, that guerrilla group, for some time. He had gone into hiding in a monastery, and thanks to the nunciature, he was able to leave there and go to France, where he was filmed one day wearing both clerical and military attire, in his capacity as a

military chaplain for the Monteneros organization. This created a huge problem for us. We had to explain to the State, to the government, that we had nothing to do with that. It was the truth, but all is somehow connected.

For many today, Fr. Adur is a hero and also a martyr, but we make the distinction. Carlos and Raúl are clearly martyrs. It is different with Fr. Adur. He never stopped being a religious; he never stopped being a priest. He didn't have a crisis with his vocation. He saw his commitment as stemming from his faith, as understood in that way. In 1980, he returned to Argentina illegally, and the military arrested him. After torturing him, they shot him very close to here. He, too, died in 1980.

That is the story. In short, we have Assumption martyrs in Argentina. For me, it is a source of enrichment. A kind of fertility in the eyes of God. We don't have vocations in the country. There are only two Argentinians in the Congregation. We can't regret that, but when Carlos and Raúl made their vows, there were 25--- now we are two! That was the Assumption in Argentina. We have hope that anything can change at any moment. I don't pray "for" Carlos and Raúl: I pray to them.

Fr. Luis Ramón RENDÓN
(Buenos Aires)

"The truth will set you free." (Jn 8:32)

VENGA TU REINO
Religiosos
Agustinos de la Asunción

50 AÑOS

Hermano Raúl Rodríguez A.A. Hermano Carlos Antonio di P.

cuestrados desaparecidos el 4 de junio de 1976. Barrio Manuelita. San M

"La Verdad los hará libres..." (JN8,32)

es 4 de junio, 19,00 h: Misa en su memoria y bendición espacio de la memoria. Santuario d

Sábado 6 de junio, 12,00 h: Misa en Capilla San Francisco Javier. Barrio Manuelita. San M

Acto frente a la casa de la desaparición.

Father d'Alzon's Social Commitment: A Legacy Not to Be Forgotten

If our Founder embarked on the adventure of journalism and pilgrimages, it was to live and share the Gospel. Father d'Alzon's faith could not exist without encountering others. Even through his many commitments, he always remained a man of faith.

Declaration of
Virginia (USA), June
12, 1776



• Charity Comes First

Charity always came first in Father d'Alzon's mind. For him, the love of God—understood here as his love for God—preceded the justice owed to humankind. Surprisingly, his love for God even seemed to take precedence over human rights:

"You have often been told that the character of the Assumption is love for Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin, and the Church. But to see in what direction this love should develop, I borrow a word from the recommendations that Saint Paul made to Timothy. [...] Since justice is a virtue by which we render to each what is due to them, it is quite simple, it is right, that we seek to render to God His rights. This is an essential disposition in our time, when we speak only of human rights and pay little attention to the rights of God." (1)

• God's Rights versus Human Rights?

The human rights to which D'Alzon refers are those of the Declaration that introduced the French Constitution of 1789 and sets forth the "*natural, inalienable, and sacred rights of Man*." Through simple and undeniable principles, its aim is to establish the basis for any potential claims by citizens and to frame the Constitution. But above all, it is written under the auspices of the "Supreme Being."

This expression is ambiguous. It can refer to the God of Christians, as the American Declaration of May 12, 1776, in Virginia still does. But in France in 1789, the reference is primarily deist or even already atheist. The paradox lies in the fact that the idea of basing human rights on a transcendent order clearly comes from Christianity, since man was created in the image of



Declaration of 1789 by the French National Assembly (August 1789).

God. However, these rights were affirmed in 1789 in the name of a subjective and autonomous rationalism, stemming from the spirit of the Enlightenment. This could only irritate Father d'Alzon, a man of faith.

Social Commitment for the Consistency of Faith

The Assumptionist charism arose to address a lack of faith characteristic of post-revolutionary France. Certainly, our Founder sought to respond to the needs of the men and women of his time. And he played his full role in building a more just and united society. But he always conceived and implemented this with the aim of restoring faith and serving the Church. Today, the social dimension of our charism is still marked by this founding principle. Whether in the areas of education, solidarity, or development, our charism is first and foremost about faith. It does not proceed solely from justice but primarily from faith and charity.

Justice consists of giving each person their due, something precisely the 19th century failed to do. In Father d'Alzon's time, scandalous inequalities between the richest and the poorest were tolerated. French Catholics only gradually became aware of this. In this context, alongside other leading figures of social Catholicism, D'Alzon emerges as a pioneer. Unlike most of his contemporaries, he did not practice condescending charity. Nor did he succumb to the illusion of a clear conscience quickly acquired through a distracted act of alms taken from surpluses. Beyond benevolence, charity for him meant communion with God and with all people, particularly the poorest, the most vulnerable, and the most marginalized, to the point of wanting to change their lives and his own understanding of the Gospel through them.

This very sure way of articulating justice and charity would be taken up again in the social teaching of the Church. However, it was already at work at the beginning

of our Congregation through Father d'Alzon's commitment to the poor, and that of the very first Assumptionists, whose leading figure was undoubtedly the Venerable Claude Etienne Pernet (1824-1899).

D'Alzon and Social Catholicism

The name of D'Alzon is inseparable from the turbulent, post-revolutionary context of 19th-century France. Both the Church and society were then traversed by opposing currents. This context was marked by new initiatives and the birth of "social Catholicism." We find numerous encounters and correspondence between our Founder and those who initiated or shaped what would later become the centrist party of Christian democracy.

The first among them was, of course, Lamennais, owner of the newspaper *L'Avenir* and known as "the witness of the poor." In his work *Modern Slavery*, Lamennais laments this: "Among the ►

ancients, the slave could be freed, and often was: here, no emancipation is possible."

We also find Cardinal Louis-Jacques-Maurice de Bonald (1787-1870), Archbishop of Lyon. His monarchist and traditionalist father had been the young D'Alzon's favorite author during his studies. And the son supported our Founder in his initiatives for freedom of education. Both ultramontanes, they defended the authority of the Pope together. Finally, they shared a common interest in social issues. Although a monarchist, Bonald had supported the 1848 revolution.

Montalembert, Lacordaire, and Ozanam

To our list, we must add Montalembert and Lacordaire. D'Alzon fully understood their cry of alarm when they described the misery of the people. And we must mention the blessed Frédéric Ozanam, co-founder of the Saint Vincent de Paul Conferences (1833), whom Louis Veuillot dared to mock in the Assembly by calling him "leader of the party of love" - quite a compliment, in fact...

"If we want to avoid a popular revolt—a people who don't have enough rights—we must give them a greater share in public affairs... The people need rights more than duties," said Ozanam. (2)

Ozanam was particularly affected by the death of Archbishop Affre of Paris, killed near the barricades of 1848 while trying to obtain a ceasefire. He was terribly disappointed by the failure of the 1848 revolution, which had raised hopes of seeing the Republic reconciled with the Church and the Church move closer to

Christian democracy. One of his last articles is pessimistic about the future:

"The question that divides people today is not a question of political forms, it is a social question... There are many people who have too much and who want even more; There are many who don't have enough, who have nothing, and who want to take if they aren't given anything. A struggle is brewing between these two classes of men, and this struggle threatens to be terrible: on one side, the power of gold; on the other, the power of despair." (3)

In 1848, the fear of social revolution swayed the undecided toward the party of order. From then on, Christian democracy was under attack on two fronts: by revolutionary socialism on the one hand and by conservative Catholicism on the other. D'Alzon belonged to neither and prioritized concrete action on the ground and fidelity to the Gospel.

D'Alzon, a figure of charity

This reminder of history invites us to consider the "figure" of D'Alzon, a charity open to the plight of the most vulnerable. Father d'Alzon did not die a "legitimist," faithful like his father to the Bourbon monarchy. He evolved in his thinking and directed his congregation toward the care of the poorest, and no longer solely toward the education of the elite.

His legacy also asks us to discover how his first disciples were able to bear very concrete witness to God's love for humanity and promote the conditions for "integral development," that is, of the whole man and of all men.

The Founder's social ambition is theologically grounded in the hospitality of the Kingdom, which shows no partiality. It rests on a God who neither favors nor ne-

glects any of his children, and the social dimension of our charism is based on the twofold divine commandment to love God and one's neighbor as oneself (Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18). It is also the most evident proof of our fidelity to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

A legacy to be lived in the present

This reciprocity of love, flowing from God to the poorest and then returning from the poorest to God, illustrates both the ethical responsibility and the spirituality of Emmanuel d'Alzon. It calls for justice lived through charity. The figure of Father d'Alzon remains invaluable to us today, helping us to reflect together on our social commitments and the strength of our Christian convictions.

More broadly, our Founder shows us how to root our apostolic action in our own love for Christ. Our motto, *Adveniat Regnum tuum*, invites everyone to embrace the logic of the Kingdom, to continue the ministry of Jesus by striving to do what he would do in our place if he were among us. Our commitment to the poorest among us already prepares for his return at the end of time. It builds, even today and here on earth, a world of justice and peace.

D'Alzon experienced a profound faith and a true spiritual trial that led him to dedicate himself to social issues. His primary goal was to extend the grace of Christ's love to a deeply wounded world, divided between rich and poor, polarized between conservatives and progressives, right and left... His life and holiness invite us today to bring greater coherence to our faith and to promote unity and the service of charity in a world searching for meaning and hope.



Being a Working-Class Child in the 19th Century

Our mission from the beginning

The 1848 revolution made Father d'Alzon realize that faith was then in sharp decline among the working masses. With the Industrial Revolution, the working class experienced considerable growth but also, alas, great economic and moral misery: *"France was then undergoing a tremendous upheaval. Alongside artisans and peasants, an industrial proletariat was developing and swelling the ranks of the cities and suburbs." We see immense fortunes side by side with unbearable misery. Financial power reigns supreme: the bourgeoisie, a minority but all-powerful, triumphs and uses those they have enriched practically like cattle. In these new cities, the worker has become a production machine, working twelve to fourteen hours a day for a wage that barely allows survival in veri-*

table slums. Factory regulations are inhumane, fines are rampant, the pace is infernal, the schedules draconian. Accidents are frequent, tuberculosis and epidemics wreak havoc. Women and children do not escape this hell, and their wages are even more insignificant. (4)

At the college in Nîmes, during the prize-giving ceremonies, D'Alzon repeatedly expressed his concern (1851, 1858, 1861) about the growing inequalities between rich and poor. Like Ozanam, he warned of the catastrophic consequences of a conflict that would ultimately pit *"those who lack the necessities"* against *"those who have more than enough."*

Thus, Father D'Alzon's role in helping the working class was carried out in the name of the Gospel. For him, all charitable work was first and foremost an apostolic work: *"Material alms-*

giving must go hand in hand with the spiritual almsgiving of proclaiming the faith," he often repeated.

A lay apostolate supported by that of religious orders

Lay people were quickly involved in this mission. Regarding them, D'Alzon readily speaks of a *"dependent apostolate"* (carried out by lay people) which he links to the *"superior apostolate of the hierarchy of the religious"*. The poor became a pastoral priority, capable of rallying the nascent forces of the Congregation and stimulating the dynamism of the lay people involved with the very first *"Fathers of the Assumption."* The best examples are undoubtedly the Fraternities of the Little Sisters of the Assumption, founded by Mother Antoinette Fage and Father Etienne Pernet, or the college in Nîmes, which D'Alzon ►

dreamed of transforming into “*an apostolic school of charity*.”

Not content with financially rescuing the city’s Saint Vincent de Paul Society, D’Alzon created a second one within the Assumption College itself. He brought together students and teachers and organized it into three sections: the first distributed clothing and food, the second collected medicines, and the third gathered books. From 1850 onward, the College also took on the responsibility of sponsoring the neighboring parish of Sainte-Perpétue. Teachers and students together provide leisure activities, reading, elementary instruction for the city’s poor children, as well as catechetical training and an introduction to sacramental life.

An innovative vision

Father d’Alzon encouraged the creation of orphanages for the children of Catholic parents, but also for those of Protestant parents, because ultimately, it mattered little to him... The doors of the Kingdom must be open to everyone. We should note the original creation of the “Little Apprentices’ Orphanage,” opened by the Saint Vincent de Paul Society of Nîmes, which testifies to what he wanted to do: not a welfare institution, but an undertaking that aimed at the autonomy of the most vulnerable. For this, their own participation was necessary, and today we would speak of “*integral development*” or “*empowerment*.” (5)

Visionary, bold, and selfless.

D’Alzon entrusted the care of this orphanage to Father Brun and five other religious. In doing so, he demonstrated a characteristic of his approach and left us with the mark of his leadership.



Mas Miraman, where Fr. d’Alzon established an agricultural colony.

He was a visionary. Through his attention to the most vulnerable, he acquired a remarkable clarity about the real needs of society and the Church of his time. A man of prayer and inner reflection, he took the time to meditate and contemplate. Creative, his reflections led him to launch innovative projects. Bold, he implemented his projects by taking unprecedented initiatives. Completely selfless, he ultimately entrusted their management to others.

Leadership in Service of the Poor

Examples abound... Observing the ravages of rural exodus, Emmanuel d’Alzon promoted “agricultural colonies” in rural areas, such as Servas near Alès and Mireman, allowing young people to remain in their communities. In 1843, he established a refuge with the teachers and students of the college “*for the rehabilitation of women victims of poverty as well as immorality*,” in which the soldiers of the Nîmes garrison actively collaborated. This reversal of fortune demonstrated a genuine conversion for them!

In 1851, Father d’Alzon participated in the creation of the Night Watchmen and Night Watchwomen for the sick and dying. A little later, he founded the Tabernacles project, with the dual objective of providing a source of income for the unemployed poor and also the liturgical decorum essential for worship and church furnishings. As a member of the diocese’s religious buildings commission, he thus killed two birds with one stone: a social commitment to the poorest and the beautification of the church, both in service of the faith.

Emmanuel d’Alzon’s leadership was characterized by listening to everyone, helping each individual pursue their own goals in order to better meet the needs of his contemporaries. To this end, he established networks where everyone contributed. A man of communion and solidarity with the poor, he was able to receive from the most vulnerable a new way of living and understanding the Gospel.



The typesetting workshop at La Croix, run by the Oblates of the Assumption (1890s).

From social apostolate to a journalistic sensibility:

The idea of Good Press was born from our Founder's close connection with the poorest members of society. Indeed, he began by launching "*the newspaper project*" in Nîmes. This involved distributing free subscriptions or organizing posters in places frequented by disadvantaged populations. For him, education and "good reading" were means of combating the vices, negative influences, and errors of the time.

He thus established public libraries in prisons, hospitals, barracks, and nearby factory workshops. Before Bonne Presse, there were what were then called "good works." And without these "good works," there would never have been Bonne Presse, the future Bayard.

After this description of Father d'Alzon's social commitment, a question arises: was he an activist? The answer is no. And the reason is important for Assumptionists or lay people in the Alliance today to understand. Father d'Alzon did not create works without securing the necessary

partnerships: he found a priest to continue the Argaud Work, solicited students from the college to expand the Saint Vincent de Paul Society... Sometimes, he even called upon another religious congregation. In other words, he knew how to surround himself with the right people and foster new vocations while avoiding taking on too much responsibility. Above all, his actions are consistent with his faith and deeply connected to his spirituality. This is the opposite of activism.

Conclusion

Father d'Alzon's social commitment is a legacy to be explored further by those of us who wish to make a difference in today's world, a world just as unequal, polarized, and de-Christianized as his. His charisma calls upon religious and lay people alike to be visionaries and pioneers, in order to transform the lives of the most vulnerable and to allow themselves to be evangelized by them.

Fr. Vincent Leclercq
Postulator General (Rome)



- 1) *Écrits spirituels* p. 711
- 2) Quoted by the Christian Democratic politician André Diligent in **The Plough and the Star** (Coprur, 2000, pp. 26-27), Ozanam also states: "Charity is the Samaritan pouring oil on the wounds of the attacked traveler, but it is justice's job to prevent attacks."
- 3) André Diligent, **The Plough and the Star**, p. 28.
- 4) André Diligent, *The Plough and the Star*, p. 15
- 5) "Instead of giving me a fish every day, teach me how to fish."

Editor

Michel KUBLER, General Secretary



Assunzione@mclink.it

Translator

Patricia Haggerty and
Gilles Blouin, English;

Michaël Kakule Tsongo
and Philippe Muhindo
Ndungo, Spanish
... and the help of DeepL

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† Father **Jesús DEL CAMPO**, of the Dulce Nombre de Maria community (Province of Europe), died on April 1, 2026, in Madrid, Spain. His funeral was celebrated on April 2 in the chapel of the residence of the Assumptionist Fathers of Madrid. He was 85.

† Fr. **Marcel HAVERALS**, of the Leuven community (Province of Europe), died on April 6, 2026, in Opwijk, Belgium. His funeral was celebrated on April 11 in the church of Saint Jozef d'Opwijk Droeshout. He was 88.

† Br. **Gwenaël PETTON**, of the Rio de Janeiro community (Province of Brazil), died on April 11, 2026, in Rio de Janeiro. His funeral was celebrated on April 13 in the chapel of the Assumptionist Seminary d'Espírito Santo do Pinhal, followed by burial in the local Assumptionist Cemetery. He was 92.

† Fr. **Alain MARCHADOUR**, of the Layrac community (Province of Europe), died on May 3, 2026, in Layrac, France. His funeral was celebrated on May 12 in the Chapel of the Layrac Priory, followed by burial in the vault of the Assumptionist Cemetery of Layrac. He was 88.

† Father **KASAVOLO MUTSAMBA Célestin**, of the Brussels-Woluwe community (Province of Europe), passed away on June 29, 2026, in Butembo (DR Congo). His funeral was celebrated on June 30 in Butembo-Kambali, followed by burial at the Assumptionist cemetery in Mahamba. He was 65 years old.