

AA News of the Assumption



**THE FORUMS OF THE VICARIATES OF
WEST AFRICA AND ASIA-OCEANIA**

**100 YEARS AGO, THE OBLATES OF NÎMES
AND PARIS UNITED**

DIARY OF A RETURN TO THE CONGO



Agenda

Plenary General Council

n° 7 : **Nov.30-Dec. 9, 2026** (Rome).
n° 8 : **May 31-June 9, 2027** (Tuléar, Madagascar).

Ordinary General Council

n° 24 : **October 26-30**
n° 25 : **December 10-11.**
n° 26 : **March 30-April 5.**

Fr. Ngoa

- **September 30-Oct. 23** : Mexico and USA (canonical visit).
- **November 13** : Meeting with the General Superiors of the Assumption.
- **November 16 - 23** : Québec (canonical visit and centenary).
- **November 25 - 27** : Union of Superiors General.
- **January 20 - March 15** : D. R. Congo.

Fr.. Benoît

- **September 30 – October 23** : Mexico and USA (canonical visit).
- **November 1-13** : Ouagadougou (formators meetings).

Fr. João

- **October 30 – November-27** : Latin America.

Fr. Thierry

- **October 31-November 27** : Madagascar.
- **December 27 to February 15** : D.R. Congo.

Fr. Étienne

- **January-February** : D.R. Congo.

On the cover

From August 25 to 29, 2026, the Vicariate of West Africa celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Assumption's return to the region. Seventy-five participants took part in discussions, celebrations, and reflections during this forum held in Sokodé (Togo).

The return to the General House



From left to right :

(1st row) Fr. Alex Castro (Philippines-USA), Fr. Etienne Ratalata Rafanambinantsoa (Madagascar), Fr. Zéphyrin Kasereka Mumbere (DR Congo), Fr. Ignace Akoule Aïssah (Togo), Fr. Sadiki Kambale Kyavumba (Congo) and Fr. Mickaël Hoàng Tâm (Vietnam).
(2nd row) Fr. Freddy Lukala Buru (DR Congo), Fr. Benoît Bigard (France), Fr. Paul Trinh Ngoc Lâm (Vietnam), VRF Ngoa Ya Tshihemba (DR Congo), Fr. Fabrice Andriamalalarson (Madagascar), Fr. Thierry Kambale Kahongya (DR Congo), Fr. Michel Kubler (France).
(3rd row) Fr. João Gomes da Silva (Brazil) and Fr. Julien Razanajatovo (Madagascar).

The 2026–2027 community year is beginning at the Generalate, just like nearly all previous “starts of the school year”: with a whole host of changes! This time, they affect not only the community but also its surroundings on our Due Pini property.

As we know, since the Oblates of the Assumption left a year ago, their house has been occupied by the European novitiate of the Ursulines. The latest development concerns the other building located across from our house, named “Villino Dufault” by our university in Worcester, which had been renting it for its students’ European study trips since 2013. However, Assumption University has just discontinued this program, and the “Villino” will now be occupied... also by the Ursulines, this time housing the sisters in their “third year.” In total, about a dozen sisters will be living near us this year!

The Assumptionists lost a member this summer, since Fr. Vincent Leclerc took a teaching position at the Catholic Institute of Paris. Two new religious have joined us :

Fr. Sadiki Kambale Kyavumba, Congolese, the new General Archivist (this position had been vacant for many years), and Fr. Mickaël Hoàng Tâm, Vietnamese, who is studying in Rome, specializing in the Bible. Also, Fr. Celeste Panenze, an Italian, who was formerly in the General House, has been transferred to the community in Florence.

Fr. Fabrice Andriamalalarson, from Madagascar, remains to study canonical law. Our community has been blessed with 15 religious. They are shown in the photo below taken at the Local Chapter.

Fr. Michel KUBLER (Rome)

"Peace be with you." A Prayer and a Call



P. Ngoa Ya Tshihemba
Supérieur Général des
Augustins de l'Assomption

The Assumptionist community of Due Pini (Rome) held its local chapter a few weeks ago. One of the highlights of this chapter was the selection of a theme to guide our prayers, reflections, and activities throughout the year. We quickly agreed on the following theme: "Artisans of Fraternity and Peace with Saint Augustine." The choice of this theme was motivated by two main reasons:

the "Augustinian momentum" currently in the news with the pontificate of Pope Leo (of the Order of Saint Augustine), and the current situation in our societies, shaken by endless conflicts. The desire to live in peace is present in the hearts of many.

Since his first address after his election, Pope Leo has missed no opportunity to pray for peace and call on God's people to be builders of it. It is worth recalling that his first words as Pope were: "*Peace be with you.*" When reading news reports about the Pope's activities, it is striking to see that in almost every speech he gives to the groups and individuals he receives, he speaks constantly of peace. Recently, on the flight from Rome to Paris, the Pope told the journalists accompanying him: "*First and foremost, I am going to France, as everywhere else in the world, as a disciple of Jesus Christ to proclaim peace, the peace of Christ throughout the world. This is a message that, as we all know, is important at this time.*" (quoted by Vatican News)

Our community therefore joins in the Pope's prayer and appeal for world peace, a peace so many people yearn for, including our brothers and sisters in various communities. I believe that if we want to be peacemakers, we must first live it within our own communities. Remember the saying: "You can't give what you don't have." Let us hope that when we speak of this peace, of true peace, it will be a way of bearing witness to the peace we already experience. If not, then we would be playing a game that we cannot name.

Our local chapters are opportunities to return to the guidelines of the General Chapter. It

seems important to recall here number 61 of the Acts of the 34th General Chapter: "*Without forgetting the many other situations of violence and injustice, the Chapter wishes to identify some significant places which make us more aware and encourage us to commit ourselves to peace, justice, and fraternity, requirements of the Kingdom of God: - Kivu, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where the blood of the massacred and the suffering of the innocent who lose everything and are forced to leave their land cry out to heaven. - The desert frontiers in El Paso, Texas, and the maritime frontiers on the coasts of Greece, Italy, and Spain, places of suffering and death for thousands of migrants. - The Amazon, which in its tragedy represents all the violence perpetrated against our Mother Earth and against the peoples most closely connected to Nature.*" (Acts no. 61). But where to begin? In our communities, of course: "*The mission of the Assumption is to proclaim the Kingdom of God. Our first mission is fraternal life lived in community as followers of Saint Augustine.*" (Acts no. 99)

The challenges may seem overwhelming. But let us not underestimate the strength of those who feel weak when they unite for a just cause. I still remember the encouragement of Andrea Riccardi, founder of the Community of Sant'Egidio, who spoke to us at the 34th General Chapter about the urgent need to work for peace and fraternity, "*without being afraid to make history with the strength of the weak where violence reigns.*"

My prayer is that the personal and community initiatives launched at the beginning of this community year may draw us closer to the heart of Jesus Christ, who spent his life on earth defending the least and the excluded, those who are so often the first victims of violence, exclusion, and hatred in our societies. May this prayer of Father d'Alzon become our own and nourish our desire to work for peace. "*Lord, give me the prayer of apostolic men and grant that in this prayer, if I am not yet an apostle enough, I may become a little more so each day.*" (E.S. p. 626) ■

Calls, nominations, agreements...

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

■ PERPETUAL PROFESSION

Engelbert BRIA

(Europe) (09/08/2026)

Joseph DANG HUU Ngan

(Europe) (09/08/2026)

Jean-Baptiste NGUYỄN VAN Cuong

(Europe) (09/08/2026)

Pierre PHAN VAN Thong

(Europe) (09/08/2026)

Pierre BALA BALA

(Europe) (09/09/2026)

Pierre NGUYỄN VAN Nam

(Europe) (09/09/2026)

Joseph NGUYỄN HUU Chuc

(Europe) (09/16/2026)

■ TO ORDINATION TO THE DIACONATE

André NGUYỄN PHU Cường

(Europe) (09/08/2026)

Antoine NGUYỄN TRUNG Niên

(Europe) (09/08/2026)

Willian NUNES DA SILVA

(Brazil) (09/09/2026)

■ TO PRIESTLY ORDINATION

Pascal GABIAM

(Europe) (09/09/2026)

Leonardo DE ALMEIDA CASTRO

(Brazil) (09/09/2026)

■ EXTENSION OF TEMPORARY VOWS

Fr. Ngoa Ya Tshihemba, Superior General, with the approval of his Ordinary General Council, has agreed to an extension of temporary vows, for a period of one year, to Brother **Adan Louie GARCIA FLORES**, of the Province of Europe.

■ DEPARTURE FROM THE INSTITUTE

The Holy See (Dicastery for the Institute of Consecrated Life and the

Societies of Apostolic Life) confirms for Fr. **Venceslas Quentin KOLELA**, from the Province of Brazil, departure from the Institute based on can. 694 §1-3° from the Code of canonical laws, "for illegitimate absence from the religious house for a period of twelve months, taking into account the impossibility of locating said religious." (ordinance dated May 20, 2026).

2) The Holy See (Dicastery for the Clergy) has granted an indult of laicization to Fr. **Bernard KAMBALE MUSONDOLI**, of the North American Province, with a dispensing of his vows and a loss of his clerical state (written on June 19, 2026);
- to Fr. **Cătălin FLOREA**, from the European Province, was dispensed from his vows and lost his clerical state (dated June 19, 2026).



In memoriam Msgr. Louis-Armel Pelâtre (1940-2026)

In a letter to the Congregation on August 20, 2026, Father General gave homage to Msgr. Pelâtre, Apostolic Vicar Emeritus of Istanbul. (Excerpts).

Dear brothers and sisters,

Our brother, Msgr. Louis-Armel Pelâtre, passed away today, Thursday August 20th, in Istanbul (Turkey), at the age of 86 (. . .) We are in communion with our brothers of the European Province, and most particularly the community of Kadiköy, of which he was made a part of before his nomination as Apostolic Vicar of Istanbul by John-Paul II in 1992. He was welcomed again as the episcopal minister in 2016. (. . .) He was the 13th Assumptionist to become a bishop, which now counts 16 in our Congregation's history.

I would like to quote here the message

sent by the Turkish Bishops' Conference to the entire Church in that country: "Upon arriving in Turkey in 1970, Bishop Pelâtre made this land the place of his vocation and his service. He served the Church with a special love and the heart of a pastor, sharing in the joys and trials of the communities he faithfully served and sharing in the hope of the Gospel. (. . .) With discretion, perseverance and an evangelical spirit, he testified that the Church's mission is, above all, presence, listening, charity, and fraternity. His pastoral service, rendered with humility and devotion, continues to speak to the heart of our Church. It encourages us to walk in faith, hope, and love." (...) We give thanks for what the Lord has given to the Assumption and to the universal Church through Bishop Louis Armel. May his love for the Assumption and for the Church be a source of inspiration for all of us. May he rest in peace with his Creator.

Fr. Ngoa YA TSHIHEMBA

The next World Day of Youth will take place in Seoul (South Korea) from August 3rd to the 8th, 2027. The European Province is organizing this event and they propose several days with the Assumption family before the Youth Day: pre-registration is opened!

In route for World Youth Day 2027, in Seoul, with the Assumption !

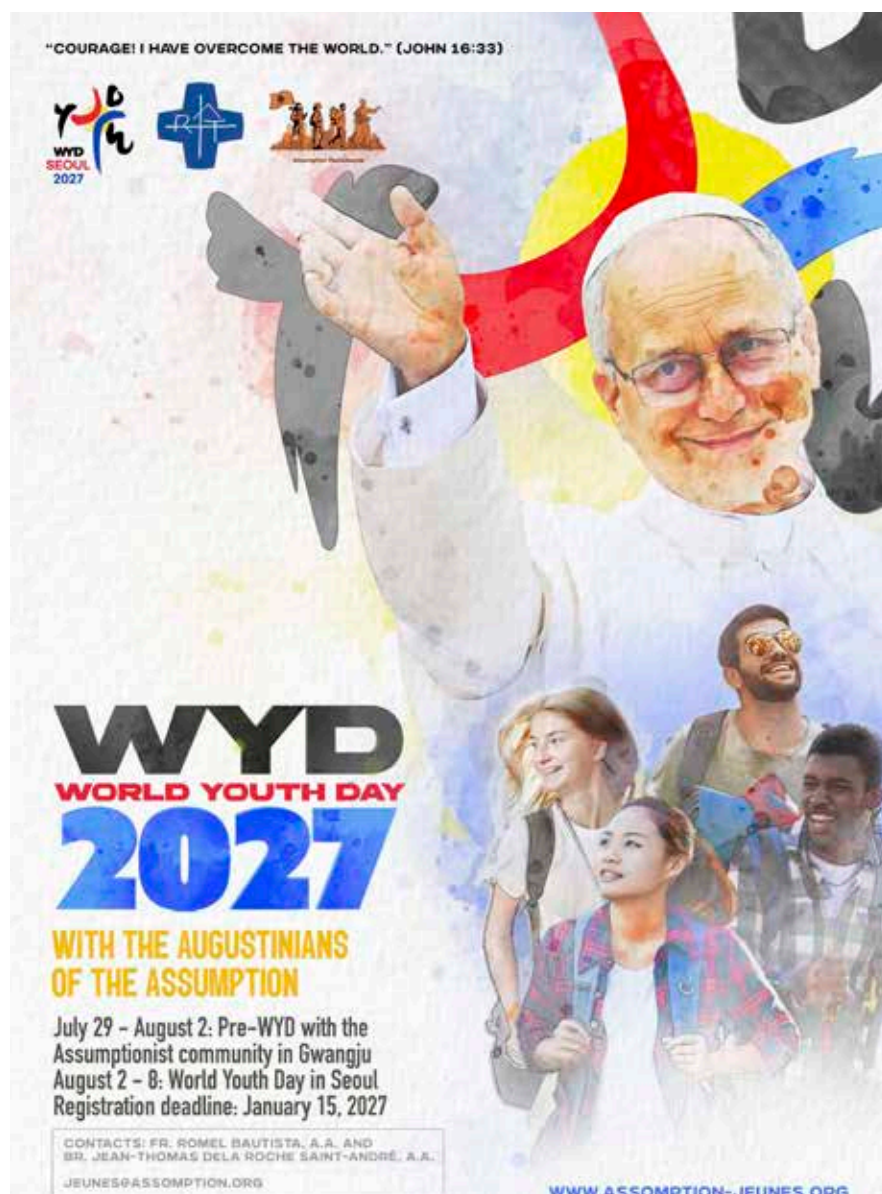
The sisters and brothers of the Assumption always want to walk with youth in pastoral projects, but also in important moments like the World Youth Day (JMJ) ! The delegation of the Assumption family in Lisbon in 2023 and for World Youth Day in Rome in 2025 is proof of this desire! International, intercultural, dynamic, and familial : we carry the Assumption charism with its love for Jesus-Christ, Mary, and the Church,

In 2027, the Assumption family again invites the youth to live this adventure with them in the same spirit, and to carry the witness to which the Church calls us---proclaim the Kingdom of God in all corners of the earth! Our delegation consists of youth coming from Europe, America, Asia, and Africa. The interesting thing is that in South Korea, we have brothers and Oblate Sisters who can welcome us into their country!

For practical purposes:

- Registrations opened on October 5 and will terminate on January 5, 2027.

- For the Province of Europe, contact: Fr. Romel Bautista and Br. Jean-Thomas de la Roche Saint-André. We can also be contacted by email at jeunes@assomption.org



- Dates in place: July 29 to August 8: initially in Gwanju; then to Seoul from August 2 to August 8.

- Registration cost: 2500 euros (approximately) for lodging, plane ticket, meals, pilgrim kit, local transport and insurance.

Please check our website for additional information:

<https://www.assomption-jeunes.org>

Fr. Romel BAUTISTA
(Paris-François 1er)

Coordinator of youth
for the Province of Europe

In West Africa, an Anniversary That Opens the Future

The 20th anniversary of the Vicariate's presence in this region provided an opportunity for a forward-looking reflection: a time of truth, communion, and hope.

“The bird cannot remain on the tree; it needs the whole sky!” wrote Camara Laye in *The African Child*. This image aptly describes a story that, after twenty years, cannot simply rest on its laurels. Twenty years after the arrival of the first religious in Togo in 2006, followed by the expansion of the mission to Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast, the Assumptionist Vicariate of West Africa celebrated an anniversary in Sokodé, looking towards the future. From August 24 to 30, 2026, religious, novices, lay people of the Alliance and mission collaborators came together to review the path traveled, discern the present challenges and consider the next steps, including the prospect of a future Vice-Province by 2032. More than a commemoration, the Forum was a time of truth, communion and hope.

A Memory That Gives Food for Thought

The Assumptionist story in West Africa began anew in Sokodé, in the Komah district, in 2006.⁽¹⁾ Since this initial foothold, the mission has expanded to Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, giving rise to diverse communities, works, and commitments. The choice of Sokodé for the 20th anniversary forum was therefore highly symbolic: returning to the place of origin to better move forward. As Fr. Nicolas Potteau, Provincial of Europe, reminded us, it was

not about cultivating nostalgia, but about “looking at the past with gratitude, living the present with passion, and envisioning the future with hope.”

The report presented at the forum revealed a substantial path already taken. The Vicariate now has five stable houses in Sokodé, Lomé, Ouagadougou, and Abidjan. The religious family includes many young brothers, and the formation program encompasses theology and philosophy as well as technical fields. Projects such as Bayard Afrique, Somblem/Agro Adveniat Production, the Sokodé Cultural Center, the African Integration Journeys, and the Soboua agro-pastoral farm demonstrate how we embody our charism in the West African context. Collaboration with local churches and lay members of the Alliance completes this picture of a mission that strives to be both Assumptionist and deeply rooted in local realities.

Forum Highlights

More than 75 participants from the Vicariate and Europe took part in the proceedings. The week alternated between celebrations, historical reflection, evaluations, and discussions about the future. The official opening on August 25 set the tone with speeches by Bishop Gaoua of Sokodé (Togo), Father Vivien Dokoui, Vicar, and Father Nicolas Potteau, Provincial. The presence of a

Kotokoli traditional dance troupe served as a reminder that mission cannot be conceived of apart from the peoples and cultures among whom it is called to take root. A roundtable discussion dedicated to the beginnings of the mission allowed lay people and several of the first young Togolese drawn to the Assumptionist presence to share their memories of this history.

On August 26, the discussion turned to the past and the future, drawing on the book **Will Africa Be Catholic?**, which stemmed from the International Meeting of the Assumption for Dialogue (RIAD) held in Nairobi in 2006. The presentation of the overall summary of the Vicariate's evaluation then opened a period of more concrete discernment. Participants worked on formation, mission, governance, fraternal life, empowerment, and the Alliance with the laity. The objective was not to simply list observations, but to identify directions that could guide the coming years.

The work of August 27th allowed for a review of the commissions and the Vicariate's main projects. It was not simply a matter of taking stock, but of asking a simple question: how can these initiatives continue to serve the mission and become stronger? The Forum highlighted the need to better integrate apostolate,



Religious and laypersons attending the Sokodé forum.

skills, management, and long-term vision.

August 28th emphasized the Alliance between religious and lay people. The roundtable discussion on the journey of lay people since 2006 was followed by a celebration of fraternity and reconciliation, inspired by Father d'Alzon's spiritual writings on the prodigal son. The sharing of the Paschal candle, the presentation of community candles to the leaders of the five houses, and the renewal of vows gave this evening a powerful spiritual dimension. The forum thus reminded itself that the institutional future only makes sense if it remains rooted in a truly lived fraternity.

The proceedings concluded on August 29, before a visit to the Soboua agro-pastoral estate. On Sunday, August 30,

the Eucharistic celebration of the 20th anniversary provided a particularly meaningful conclusion to the gathering with the profession of first vows by seven novices. The story begun by a few pioneers thus continues with a new generation called upon to bear its responsibility.

Challenges for the Vicariate

The Forum did not simply celebrate the fruits of the first twenty years. It highlighted challenges that must be addressed realistically. The first is that of **moving from strategic directions to concrete actions**. The discussions revealed the risk that some decisions might remain merely intentions. The future of the Vicariate will require concrete, monitored, and evaluable projects capable of translating broad strategic directions into concrete actions

within the communities and their various works.

Formation is a second major challenge. A mission called upon to assume greater responsibilities must form religious men who are strong in their spiritual, philosophical, and theological lives, but also capable of working in practical fields such as project management, education, media, and agribusiness. The aim is not to replace religious formation with professional skills, but to enable the brothers to take seriously the apostolic realities to which they are sent.

Financial self-sufficiency also appears to be a crucial issue. While external support has enabled the launch of numerous initiatives, it cannot, on its own, constitute a sustainable foundation. For the Vicariate's ►



The new Vicariate Council of West Africa (from left to right): Br. Maurice Wombaraguema (Vicariate Councilor and Treasurer), Fr. Nicolas Tarralle (First Councilor), Fr. Vivien Dokoui (Vicar), Fr. Fabrice Adzakli (Counselor and Vicarial Secretary), and Fr. Jean-Paul Sagadou (Counselor).

works to be sustainable over the long term, it is necessary to strengthen a culture of rigorous management, responsibility, and project planning. Existing initiatives can become true pillars of support, provided they are consolidated and driven by an internal dynamic of ownership. The challenge is less about possessing large sums of money than about being able to sustainably support the mission with the available resources.

Finally, the Forum emphasized that institutional autonomy will only be sustainable with a genuine **quality of fraternal life**. Cultural and generational differences, frustrations, and wounds do not simply disappear because a community shares the same habit or the same apostolate. Like the African palaver, which seeks to

restore bonds, communities are called to build a culture of peace and real co-responsibility with the Lay Alliance.

A challenge for the Province of Europe and the entire Congregation

The scope of the Sokodé Forum actually extends beyond the Vicariate's borders. The message from the Superior General, Fr. Ngoa Ya Tshihemba, and the presence of the Provincial of Europe served as reminders that West Africa is not an isolated periphery of the Assumptionist body. It belongs to a shared history and today contributes to the vitality of the entire Congregation.

The Vicariate thus offers an experience of youthful vocation, cultural diversity, and missionary

commitment. This reality can become a learning environment for the entire Congregation. It invites the older entities to reconsider questions of transmission, vocation, and mission. But this relationship cannot be one-sided. The real challenge lies in a reciprocal exchange of people, skills, and experiences, based on solidarity and interdependence. The future of the West African Assumption can thus help renew the entire body, while the experience of the other entities continues to support the Vicariate's growth.

This perspective aligns with the universal vision of Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon, for whom foreign missions were meant to broaden the heart of the Assumption and engage it in the service of the Church (*Spiritual Writings*, pp. 144-145). The transition to a

Vice-Province should therefore not be understood as a mere administrative change. It can become a stage in the maturation of a missionary responsibility called to be fully integrated into the life of the Congregation.

Not an end, but a new beginning.

In Sokodé, the twenty years since 2006 were received as both a gift and a responsibility. The Forum provided an opportunity to give thanks for the journey so far, without concealing the remaining vulnerabilities. Above all, it served as a reminder that maturity does not consist of believing that everything is finished, but of accepting to bear greater responsibilities.

Upon leaving Sokodé, the participants carried away more than just the memory of an anniversary. They departed with a shared question: what kind of Assumption do we want to build in West Africa in the coming years, and what contribution can this reality make to the entire Congregation? The prospect of 2032 provides a horizon, but the real work begins now, in the communities, in formation, in works, in the Alliance with the laity, and in the quality of fraternal relationships. After twenty years, the bird no longer simply remains on the tree. It needs the whole sky.

Fr. Romain Esso-Tina SIMTORO
(Montpellier, France)

1) It is worth recalling that the Congregation was already present in Ivory Coast from 1957 to 1990.

Among the houses of the Vicariate of West Africa (from left to right and top to bottom): the novitiate in Sokodé (Togo), the parish in Komah (Togo), the community in Abidjan (Ivory Coast), and the CIFA in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso).



In Asia-Oceania, an Assumption Rich in Great Expectations



The 20th anniversary of this mission, celebrated in Vietnam, provided an opportunity for extensive evaluation and proposals.

The Asia-Oceania Vicariate Forum was held from July 27 to 31, 2026, at the Marian pilgrimage site of Núi Cúi, halfway between Ho Chi Minh City and the east coast of Vietnam. Hosted in an impressive two-story building, it brought together 87 religious from the Vicariate (including brothers departing for and returning from the TIP), 8 originally from the Vicariate but serving on missions abroad, and eight European guests.

The African brothers serving on mission in the Philippines were unable to participate in the forum because their visas were denied. The Province of Europe generally holds a forum midway between two chapters, inviting all the brothers to share about their religious life, the life of the communities and the Province, and to submit topics for discussion at the next chapter. In a Vicariate, a forum serves the same purpose but is limited to the religious of the Vicariate, their life, and their missions within that geographical area.

This Asia-Oceania forum was also a step toward the transition to Vice-Province status: a process that began in September 2025 with an evaluation of the Vicariate's life and activities by the communities and

the Vicar, using a questionnaire addressing the following areas:

- Knowledge and transmission of charisma,
- Governance, facilitation, and leadership,
- Economic life,
- Formation,
- Communication,
- Mission.

The results of these evaluations were sent to the Provincial Council and the Council of the Province, and then, after incorporating the evaluations and opinions of these bodies, to the Ordinary General Council. In light of all these reviews, the Superior General, in his Ordinary General Council, deemed it premature to transition the Vicariate of Asia-Oceania to the status of Vice-Province before the 2029 General Chapter and entrusted the latter with the task of discerning whether the change in status could be implemented successfully in 2032. The July Forum had been prepared by the Vicariate's communities, who submitted proposals for improvement based on evaluations conducted at the end of 2025. All these suggestions were reviewed, with half a day dedicated to each theme. For each theme, two priority proposals were identified for

implementation, either due to their importance or their ease of implementation. However, all the communities' proposals will be studied by the next Vicariate team. A plenary assembly then provided an opportunity to review the summary of priorities and discuss them freely.

The evenings provided opportunities for meetings and discussions: introductions to the work and presentations of the religious, moments of relaxation, reminiscences of the events and decisions that led to the foundation in Vietnam 20 years ago, and so on. Those who had witnessed and participated in this foundation were invited to the forum. The figure of Father Bosco Dinh was evoked with great fervor and gratitude; it was an opportunity for the younger generation of Assumptionists to become aware of the vision and actions of this Franciscan, which led to the birth of the Vietnamese Assumption. The courage and boldness of the founding brothers (Father Pierre Trần Văn Khuê, Father Pierre Trần Văn Huyền, and Brother François Marie Lê Xuân Khai) and the leaders who sent them were also highlighted.

The forum continued with the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Assumption in Vietnam (2006-2026). The Eucharistic celebration on August 1st at the parish church of Our Lady of Fatima, which serves our Emmanuel d'Alzon Scholasticate, was presided over by Father Pierre Trần Văn Khuê, Vicar, who had completed two terms. The homily was given by Father Benoît Grière, Provincial Assistant for Europe; among the concelebrants was Father François Nguyễn Đình Hành, who became Vicar for Asia-Oceania on September 1st. The entire As-



New Council of the Vicariate of Asia-Oceania (2026)

From left to right: Ariel VIDANES (Ph), first councilor; François-Xavier NGUYỄN Tiến Dũng (Fax) (Vn), councilor; François NGUYỄN Đình Hành (Vn), Vicar for Asia-Oceania, François-Xavier CAO Minh Toàn (Vn), councilor and vicarial treasurer, Simon KIM Tae ho (Kr), councilor.

sumption family present in Vietnam was there, as well as priests, religious men and women close to the Assumption, and many lay people, including numerous benefactors of the Assumption.

Let us now return to some of the expectations of the Asian communities expressed during the forum.

Charism. In general, the religious expressed a desire to better understand the charism of the Assumption, its richness and depth, and its relevance for the Church in Asia. They wish for apostolic works and initiatives to be more directly connected to it and to express it more clearly. Finally, they want to better grasp the nuances between charism, spirituality, and spirit.

Governance, animation, leadership. The brothers felt that the Vicariate needed a superior fully

dedicated to his task, with the time to regularly visit the communities, meet with and personally encourage the brothers, support and inspire the communities in their missions, and communicate more effectively to everyone a shared vision, both for the future prospects of the Vicariate and for the type of leadership to prioritize in Asia today, as well as for working methods.

In general, the religious expect greater dynamism and creativity from their leaders, to help them implement a mission with a stronger Assumptionist character. Furthermore, the need for a common language of communication is becoming increasingly evident. However, numerous challenges remain, as the Vicariate's communities are embedded in very different human, social, and ecclesial realities, and the numerical imbalance between Viet- ►



A group of religious present at the Núi Cúi forum.

nam, the Philippines, and Korea continues to widen.

Economic autonomy. Long generously supported by the Province, the communities in Asia have begun to consider their own financial resources. The forum highlighted various levels of need: the personal life of each brother, the communal and apostolic life of each community, and the general needs of the Vicariate (recreation, formation, healthcare). The vow of poverty implies specific attitudes (sobriety, sharing of resources, combating waste, cultivating community gardens, etc.). The brothers emphasized the importance of engaging in paid work to contribute financially to the life of the community; this also requires appropriate professional training.

Furthermore, the religious want to be better trained in matters of finance and management, and some are requesting advanced training in these areas to better prepare the Vicariate for the future, ideally in collaboration with

competent lay people. A revenue-generating project was launched several years ago in Vietnam (rubber trees): although it can still be improved, it is beginning to generate income and supports youth ministry and vocations activities. Other resources need to be found and developed. The network of benefactors still needs to be expanded, especially in the Philippines. The benefactors' activities should be revitalized with younger brothers. The economic councils are encouraged to move forward, develop action plans, and communicate more effectively on economic matters.

Formation. The forum expressed a desire for a better understanding of the objectives and pedagogy underpinning formation at the Assumption, and for more coherent and unified training programs across the Vicariate's territories. They want formation that allows for a thorough integration of the basic principles of religious life, enabling individuals to build a solid human foundation and to engage with the advantages

and illusions of modernity with clarity. Formation should be more clearly defined by the mission and better evaluated. Many hope that the congregation will pay greater attention to the ongoing formation of formators and those in positions of responsibility. In general, the Vicariate should quickly define its common language of communication and encourage all the brothers to master it. Finally, training in management and governance in certain areas of pastoral work would enhance the effectiveness of the brothers in charge of these missions.

Communications. We hope that religious brothers will receive training in this area, in order to improve existing tools and even create new ones for communication and evangelization. Many have expressed a desire for the creation of a vicariate website, as currently we have separate sites for each territory: South Korea, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

Mission. There has been a desire to better coordinate ap-

ostolic initiatives, so that they become more clearly joint initiatives (community, territorial, and vicariate). In this way, pastoral initiatives will be more deeply marked by the Assumptionist charism and will increasingly become community missions undertaken by the entire body. We hope for territorial and vicariate commissions to facilitate the sharing of activities among brothers engaged in the same mission and to develop broader pastoral projects at the territorial, interterritorial, and vicariate levels. To achieve this, we will need to review past experience, as several vicariate commissions established at the beginning of the Vicariate have produced few results. The territorial commissions generally worked better.

Furthermore, the brothers desire a general review of our apostolates to restructure them around clear and unifying apostolic themes. They would like a reflective body to propose new foundations and new types of missions: digital apostolate, interreligious dialogue, and foundations in new Asian countries.

With this process of evaluation and proposal, the Vicariate of Asia-Oceania now has many possible courses of action. The new vicariate team, formed around Fr. François Hành, will surely be able to prepare the brothers to embrace the transition to the status of Vice-Province and to be, on this continent, convincing workers in service of the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Fr. Jean-Claude ERHART
(Saigon-Fatima, Vietnam)

■ THE COMMUNITIES IN VIETNAM HAVE CHANGED ADDRESSES, LOOK AT THE NAMES!

The Vietnamese administration has put into place this year a redistricting that modifies the manner of localizing certain towns and this has affected many of our houses. In accord with the Vicariate of Asia-Oceania, this list will serve as a future reference, and for future editions of our "Distribution of religious"; we must get used to the this, for example, not to speak of our Vietnamese novitiate of Ba Rìa, but of Lang Cat!

In the list below, the names that were in use, are listed in italics, in parentheses, in the order of the Distribution.

Remember, as indicated in the Distribution of Religious, all messages that have been mailed should always bear the name of the religious.

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The postulants placed in Chile and Argentina

The Andean Province has put into place a time of immersion to reveal new realities.



In the context of their time of formation and vocational discernment, the postulants of the Andean Province have left Bogota, in Columbia, to live a significant experience of insertion in the various Assumptionist communities of Chile and Argentina. The goal: to leave the house of formation for a period, and to live more closely the life within the communities and to discover that the life of the Assumption within the Province constitutes a reality that is more inclusive and real than the daily life that they lived in their formation.

The postulants---James, Sebastian, Hernando, and Carlos---lived this experience in Chile, while spending one week in each community that welcomed them. Ronnie and Josfred lived this experience in Buenos Aires, specifically at CIFA.

Beyond experiencing a specific pastoral activity, the main objective was to share in the daily life of the religious: pray with them, share meals, participate in community and apostolic activities, listen to the histories of each brother and learn about them, as they represent different generations and share in myriad responsibilities, marking each day in the life of the Andean Province.

Discovering a diverse Province

This experience allowed the candidates to discover different ways of living out the same Assumptionist vocation. Each community has its own history, challenges, way of life, and specific mission. Parishes, shrines, educational institutions, and various pastoral initiatives enabled them to discover the richness and diversity of the Assumptionist mission.

The young people were respectful, approachable, and attentive. They asked questions, listened, and took the time to learn about the lives of the brothers and the communities. They also participated wholeheartedly in daily services and blended naturally into community life.

The welcoming spirit of the communities was a basic element. The religious took the time to be with the postulants, and to share their various experiences, especially those that related to their religious lives and their missions. These gatherings enabled the postulants to gradually comprehend what it means to enter into the Assumption, to enter into the history of a religious family that extends beyond the borders of a country.

A vocational experience

One of the significant fruits of the experience in Chile was the opportunity of participating in vocation meetings and to contribute to their animation.

In Valparaíso and in Santiago, the postulants had the opportunity to meet youth who were discerning vocations. They assumed a lot of responsibility for the animation of these meetings. They shared their histories, their searching, their questions, and the path that led to their postulancies.

For those who participated in these gatherings, listening to the testimonies of young people, who are currently discerning their vocation, allowed them to discover God's call from a personal approach. At the same time, for the postulants, it was a time to discuss the motivations behind their choices and to take advantage of

the paths they are in the process of following.

The experience of insertion not only permitted the postulants to better understand the Province, but also to collaborate in the apostolate of vocations.

Learning about daily life

An important feature of this experience was precisely its simplicity. It was not a matter of preparing communities specifically to welcome the applicants or of presenting them with an idealized image of religious life. The goal was for them to encounter the real life of our communities—with their riches, their daily rhythms, their ministries, and also their challenges.

This dimension is particularly important in the process of formation. The Assumptionist vocation is not only learned through study in a house of formation. It is understood also in the encounters with brothers. In the sharing of prayer, in the mission, in service, and in the little things that constitute community life.

The experience also highlighted the importance of continuing to strengthen communication and coordination among our communities, so that future experiences can offer to the youth a much larger understanding of the different pastoral and educational realities of the Province.

A Province that forms

The presence of the postulants provided a richness to the communities that welcomed them. Their youth, their questions, and their enthusiasm challenged those who have the advantage of many years in religious life and

who realize that the formation of new generations is a responsibility for the entire Province.

Welcoming a postulant does not simply mean providing him lodging for several days. It means opening him up to a new life, sharing a history of the community with him, helping him understand the mission, to listen to his questions and to offer him a simple, everyday witness to our vocation.

The experience lived in Chile and Argentina attests to the importance of providing, throughout the process of formation, the space for the youth to discover the different realities of the Andean Province. It will be important for them to learn about communities and missions of other countries that it comprises.

The postulants returned from this experience with new perspectives, new stories, and new communities that are now woven into their own journeys. And perhaps this is one of the most important outcomes: the realization that the vocation they are discerning leads them not only to a community or a country, but to a religious and missionary family called to spread the Kingdom of God wherever it is sent.

The Andean Province continues to accompany, with hope, the paths of these youth, in thanking the communities that welcomed them, and in asking the Lord that this experience will assist them in growing in freedom, fraternity, and availability for the mission.

Fr. Jonathan RUIZ RIVERA
Responsible for vocation ministry

The “Pastoral Immersion Time” (PIT): A Missionary Adventure

Created by the Province of Europe, the Pastoral Immersion Time is a major step in formation, marked by an initial missionary assignment and commitment to apostolic work. More than twenty brothers have been participating in the PIT since 2024. What conclusions can be drawn? Brothers and formators share their experiences.

“From the very beginning of their formation, postulants, novices, and young religious must acquire a taste for missionary adventure” (General Congregation 101).

The Pastoral Immersion Time (PIT), implemented starting in the fall of 2024, represents a new stage in the formation of religious, the result of two years of reflection. It aims to address current missionary challenges by strengthening the roots of the Assumptionist charism

and fostering openness to the world. In addition to the human, spiritual, community, and intellectual dimensions, it encourages language learning, international experiences, and concrete engagement in mission.

Lasting two years, the PIT (Pastoral Immersion Time) falls between the philosophy and theology cycles. It allows a brother in formation to live in another community and fully engage in an apostolic mission. This time fosters travel, the discovery of new cultural and ecclesial contexts,

and a broadening of perspectives. Prior discernment allows for gradual preparation for mission. Primarily focused on the missionary priorities of the Province of Europe (pilgrimages, media, Mission to the East, solidarity, charism), the PIT is supported by a structured program. It also includes a personal project related to the lived experience. More than just a step, it is a pivotal moment for deepening one’s missionary vocation and better responding to the call to serve the Kingdom of God.



Brother Pierre Bala Bala, from Cameroon, spent two years in Athens on a “PIT” (Pastoral Immersion Time), within an international community engaged in a sometimes isolated mission. He shares his testimony here.

A Missionary Immersion in the Heart of Greece

I am Brother Pierre Bala, originally from Cameroon. From September 1, 2024, to June 16, 2026, I lived in Greece: it was certainly not for tourism, but above all to continue my formation in the apostolic life of the Congregation and to humbly participate in proclaiming the Kingdom of God within the pastoral reality carried out by the Assumptionist community of Athens since 1934.

Like many communities of the Mission to the East, our presence here is isolated. This situation, far from discouraging me, helped me to lead a simple fraternal life in the company of Fathers Germain and Janvier, both Congolese and respectively superior and local bursar, along with Fathers Rex, originally from the Philippines, Dominique from Vietnam, and Alexandre, the only Greek member of the community. Together, we carry out the mission of the parish of Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus and are fully integrated into the life of the diocese through Caritas and the Eucharistic celebrations we preside over in parishes and religious communities other than our own.

What I Learned

These two years of pastoral immersion taught me to love God's people. They taught me that a mission never belongs to one person alone, even when that person has dedicated himself to it with great zeal for years. I also understood that my own quali-



Br. Pierre Bala Bala in Athens.

ties, particularly my inclination for preaching and spiritual guidance, only find their full meaning when they are aligned with the community's mission.

Through accompanying catechumens, choirs, and French-speaking liturgical ministers, I discovered a vibrant Church, albeit one that is small in number. In my interactions with the faithful, I learned to listen more than to speak, to welcome before I try to teach, and above all, to walk with people in their joys as well as their trials. Today, what I take away from this experience is that in a parish, we can only accompany the spiritual and human journey of the faithful if we accept that we are faithful alongside them.

Based on this experience, I believe that brothers preparing for a period of pastoral immersion should be themselves and not play a role. I also believe that communities welcoming brothers for a period of pastoral immersion would benefit from being open to new experiences, creating a space of trust, and considering each brother sent not only as a collaborator but also as a gift from God to the community.

Fr. Pierre BALA BALA
(Paris-Denfert, France)

- Article published in the
ATLPE bulletin of the Province of
Europe, no. 51 (July-September
2026)

The Oblates: From Division to Reconciliation

In 2026, the Oblates of the Assumption commemorated the 100th anniversary of the union between the Oblates of Paris and the Oblates of Nîmes, who had been separated from 1882 to 1926. A look back at a history of ruptures and reconciliations.

The Oblates of the Assumption were founded in 1865 by Father Emmanuel d'Alzon (1810-1880) to join the Assumptionists in the "Mission of the East." Mother Emmanuel-Marie Correnson (1842-1900) was their first Superior General. In 1868, five Oblates embarked from Marseille to go to Bulgaria. The mission grew over the years: schools, hospitals, and literacy centers for women were established. Meanwhile, the Oblates were also developing in Nîmes: they collaborated with the Assumptionists at the Assumption College and opened a school on Rue Séguier.

A Serious Disagreement

After the death of Father d'Alzon, Father François Picard was elected Superior General of the Assumptionists. He claimed to lead the congregation, of the Oblates while Mother Emmanuel-Marie Correnson was their legitimate Superior General. He decided to transfer the novitiate of the Oblates of the Assumption, established in Nîmes since November 1874, to Paris. This decision led to a disagreement between him and Mother Emmanuel-Marie Correnson.

In 1882, the break between the Oblates of Nîmes and the Assumptionists was complete. The name "of the Assumption" was withdrawn from the Oblates of



Mother Marguerite-Marie Chamska (1842–1926) and Mother Berthe-Marie Paré (1860–1946).

Nîmes, who were reduced to a diocesan congregation. Their responsibility was transferred to Bishop Louis Besson of Nîmes.

Meanwhile, the Oblates in the East, unaware of the events unfolding between the Fathers and the Oblates of the Assumption in Nîmes, opted to continue their partnership with the Assumptionists. Thus, Sister Jeanne de Chantal Dugas was brought back from Bulgaria to Paris to care for the young women gathered by Father Picard to become Oblates. This marked the beginning of the Paris branch of the Missionary Oblates. The Oblates of Paris established their novitiate first on Rue de Sèvres and then on Rue Berton in Passy. This branch flourished rapidly thanks to numerous vocations, fostered

by the Oblates' visibility in the press (they worked for *La Bonne Presse*) and by the various missions they established around Paris.

The Nîmes and Paris branches worked separately, with the same zeal and in the same Assumptionist spirit, for forty-four years, from 1882 to 1926. The anti-clerical laws of 1901 having forbidden teaching congregations from remaining in France, the Oblates of Nîmes left for Switzerland, then for Italy and Belgium, and finally for the Netherlands. In 1897, Mother Marguerite-Marie Chamska was elected Superior General. The Oblates of Paris, for their part, were under the direction of Mother Marie du Christ de Mauvise, then of Mother Berthe-Marie Paré, elected in 1924.

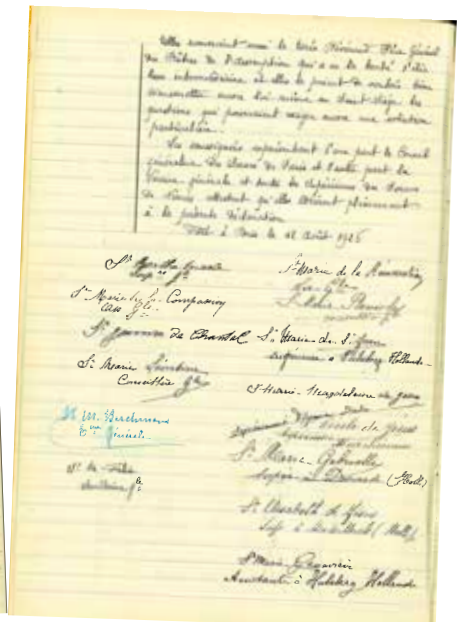
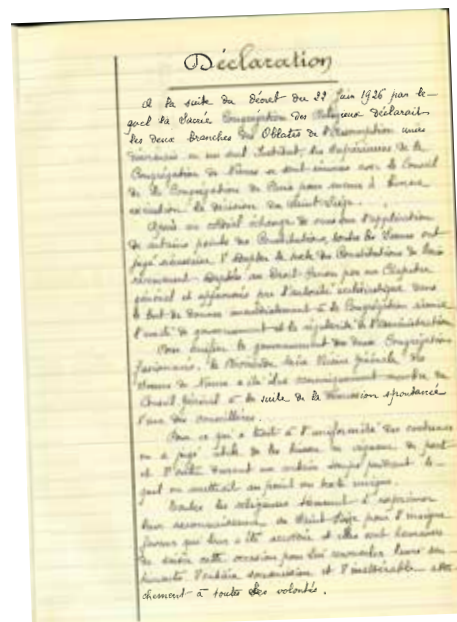
While the Oblates of Nîmes worked towards the official recognition of their congregation, the Oblates of Paris devoted themselves to the approval of their constitutions. On February 10, 1893, the Oblates of Nîmes obtained the “decree of praise” establishing them as a congregation of pontifical right under the name of “Oblates of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary”.

Union of the Two Branches

The split within the congregation caused much suffering to the Oblates of Nîmes, who had been founded to promote unity. The Oblates of the two branches owe their reconciliation to the care and kindness of Father Gervais Quenard (1875-1961), the third Superior General of the Augustinians of the Assumption. In 1924, the Assumptionists contacted the Oblates of Nîmes to consult the writings of Father d'Alzon, kept in Hulsberg (Netherlands). They agreed.

In May 1925, Father Gervais Quenard and Mother Marguerite-Marie Chamska met in Rome and discussed the possibility of union. A meeting was arranged with the Oblates of Paris on August 11, 1925, allowing Mother Marguerite-Marie Chamska to meet Mother Berthe-Marie Paré. Another meeting took place in Hulsberg, this time between Father Gervais Quenard and Mother Marguerite Chamska, around the writings of the founder.

Unfortunately, Mother Marguerite-Marie Chamska died on April 15, 1926, before the union of the two branches. She was replaced by her assistant, Mother Marie de la Résurrection Jourdan. Work toward the union continued. The Oblates of Nîmes sent a letter to the Holy Father, asking him to have the Superior General of the



Assumptionists “study the means of restoring the union between the two branches of the said congregation, accepting in advance whatever the Father General and the Holy See decide in their wisdom.” For her part, the Superior of the Oblates of Paris declared herself ready to welcome any initiative toward the union and asked the Superior General of the Assumptionists to act as her intermediary with the Holy See to bring this project to fruition.

Thus, on June 22, 1926, Father Gervais Quenard obtained from the Vatican (Sacred Congregation for Religious) the indult granting a twofold favor: the grace of union and the privilege of pontifical right bestowed upon the entire Institute. The union took place in Paris on August 12, 1926, through the merger of the two general councils. The Institute adopted the constitutions of the Oblates of Paris, recently approved by the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, and the entire congregation benefited from the pontifical right acquired by the Sisters of Nîmes in 1893. Mother Berthe-Marie Paré was recognized as superior general of the two now united branches.

Sister Léa KAVUGHO PALUKU, O.A.

General Councilor (Paris)

- Article published in

L'Assomption & ses œuvres no. 785

(May-July 2026)

Deed of union between the Oblates of Nîmes and Paris, signed on August 12, 1926, at 203 Rue Lecourbe, Paris.

Historical Landmarks

1865 Foundation of the Oblates of the Assumption by Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon.

1868 Departure of the first Oblates for the Mission to the East. Mother Emmanuel-Marie Correnson becomes Superior General of the Oblates.

1880 Death of Fr. d'Alzon. Fr. Picard becomes Superior General of the Assumptionists.

1882 Split between the Oblates of Nîmes and the Augustinians of the Assumption. Fr. Picard establishes the Paris branch of the Oblates.

1882–1926 The two branches develop in parallel and separately found different missions.

1926 Union of the Oblates of Nîmes and the Oblates of Paris, thanks to the involvement of Fr. Gervais Quenard, 3rd Superior General of the Assumptionists.

May 24, 2026 Unveiling of a commemorative plaque at the Oblates' General House (203 rue Lecourbe, in Paris) in thanksgiving for the union achieved in 1926.

Journal of a Return to Congo

A missionary in Zaire (later the Democratic Republic of Congo) from 1986 to 1997, Fr. Giuliano Riccadonna recently had the opportunity to return to this country and this Church to which he remains deeply attached. (1) We are publishing some excerpts from his travel journal.

History

1986-1992. Bulengera, Democratic Republic of Congo
1992-1997. Kambali, Democratic Republic of Congo
1992-1997. Provincial of Zaire (Democratic Republic of Congo), later renamed "Africa"

• August 8, 2026

We leave at 4:30 a.m. from the Oblates' house in Kampala-Nsamibia, Uganda; we head towards the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), at Mpondwe-Kasindi. The first truck we pass has a large inscription on the back: "Psalm 32" "Shout for joy, you righteous in the Lord."

What a thrill to return to this African land after more than 14 years! Last time, we came with Lorenzo and Andrea. Lorenzo Carlomagno, the photographer passionate about faces and authentic stories, had produced an excellent video report, filming some of the key figures of the mission: Passage au Congo. He passed away a few years ago from lymphoma. He had lost weight, was nothing but skin and bones, and preferred to lie on a mat on the ground, as the pain never left him; but when he welcomed us, just after Christmas, he insisted on sharing a slice of panettone and some sparkling wine with

us. Friendship prevailed over his suffering. A man in love with life, nature, and all creatures!

As the car speeds through a landscape rich in banana groves and evergreen plants typical of the equatorial zone, we can't help but thank the Lord. The heavens and the earth are full of his wonders!

Meanwhile, a new Ebola outbreak has occurred in the DRC, but it appears to be confined to the northeastern area of Isiro. We continue... with caution and confidence!

At the Kasindi border post, Mama Chantal, from Beni, head of the OFIDA office in charge of imports, welcomes us into her office and even offers us a meal. It is 2:30 p.m. when we set off again on the road that crosses Virunga National Park. We cross the Semuliki River, one of the Nile's tributaries, aboard a rudimentary ferry where the few passengers are clearly enjoying themselves. We head towards the Kalivuli sector (in our parish of Kyondo). The church is under construction; all around, simple and humble little houses are scattered amidst the greenery; most are built of rammed earth with corrugated iron roofs. I am struck by the faith of these Christians; They have no riches, yet they unite to build the

house of the Lord, which is far more important than their own homes. I think back to the time when cathedrals were being built in the Middle Ages; these faithful people also make great sacrifices to advance the construction. Faith moves mountains!

The dirt road, riddled with potholes, climbs the mountainside. Motorcycles overloaded with all sorts of goods struggle to ascend the steep slope. At one point, we stop to help the driver of a motorcycle that has overturned; he's carrying a basket containing about 100 kg of salted fish. The five of us have trouble righting it. How do they manage to make such journeys... it's a constant miracle!

I wonder: our Italian government has touted the Mattei project as a flagship of its cooperation with Africa. Why can't it commit to paving the Kasindi-Beni-Butembo section, which has been in a deplorable state for over 50 years? It's certainly a Congolese political choice to neglect this national highway. The Italian state could make this choice in memory of Ambassador Luca Attanasio, assassinated in 2022, precisely on this national road, between Goma and Butembo.

Along the road leading up to Kyondo, many mothers and young



Arrival at the Provincial House in Butembo, with a welcome gift: a goat!

girls return home after working in the fields. On their shoulders or backs, they carry what they have harvested from the fields where they worked. This will be for dinner. Their days are marked by fatigue, yet it is a fatigue sustained by such strength, joy, and dignity.

• Father Aymar

Father Kishindo Matolu Aymar served as prefect of the Kambali Institute for several years. On July 31st, he passed away after more than six months battling liver cancer. He was 45 years old. He had returned to Butembo after six months of chemotherapy at Nsambia Hospital in Kampala. We visited him at the UCG (Catholic University of Graben) hospital, in the "Horizon" ward. *"Don't forget to replace the tiles with corrugated iron sheets":* in his heart,

the institute he led with such intelligence, good humor, and competence still lives on. It was one of the projects he had started and was determined to see through. His doctor couldn't send him back to Kampala because of the Ebola epidemic.

In recent days, his fellow priests began preparing him for his final journey, as there was no longer any hope from a medical standpoint. In his eyes, I seem to see the immense suffering he must have endured these past few days. *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

• Flashback

It is 1977. At Cophaco, one of the communities in Butembo, an assembly of the first Zairian aspirants is being held.

This is a delicate moment in the life of the Zairian Assumptionists. Some Assumptionists are rather hesitant and cautious about opening religious life to young Zairians; Father General, Hervé Stephan, and especially Father Marc Champion, the Provincial, advocate a confident opening. Bishop Kataliko of Beni-Buambo was invited to the assembly and encouraged the formation of young people: *"Remember: I am more Assumptionist than you!"* Through his life, he has faithfully and courageously borne witness to selfless service for the Church... like a true disciple of Emmanuel d'Alzon! For a few months in 1999, he was even exiled by the political authorities of Bukavu as *persona non grata*. Generous, bold, and selfless! Today, the Province of Africa has nearly 400 religious.



At the Provincial House of the Oblates of the Assumption in Butembo

• The Buzz of Butembo

It's the holiday season and children and young people are everywhere. The city—with its nearly two million inhabitants—is teeming with motorcycles zipping in every direction. Some carry up to four people, while others are overloaded with bananas, sacks of cassava or charcoal, firewood, mattresses, or any other household item.

Pedestrians, Chinese Ape tri-cycles used as taxis, and small, medium, and large trucks often belch clouds of smoke. Along the roadsides, stalls offer all kinds of goods, not to mention the central

market, the true beating heart of the city. You can find just about anything there, but knowing where to find what you're looking for isn't easy for those unfamiliar with the city. Young people are always ready to fulfill all sorts of requests to find various materials, for a generous fee.

Butembo has developed at breakneck speed in every direction over the past fifteen years. Houses are under construction in every neighborhood; bricks and cinder blocks are everywhere, some for sale, others for building one's own home. This rapid urbanization, lacking basic services like water, electricity, and sewage,

brings with it problems. "*We are under siege*," meaning we are in a state of emergency due to the rebellion, so much so that everyone is building without asking anyone for permission; motorcycles and many cars and trucks circulate without license plates because the authorities can no longer issue them. It seems that anarchy is a driving force for initiative and creativity!

• July 31, 2026

On the road leading up to Bulengera, a woman walks with a slow, steady pace. She carries on her shoulders, or rather on her back, something she has man-

aged to harvest from her field for her family's dinner. A small child hangs from a cloth across her chest. The handle of a hoe protrudes from her shoulder. Her slow, steady gait also reveals the love and faithfulness with which she provides for and nourishes her family. "Give us this day our daily bread..." Every day, they must return to the fields to feed the hungry mouths. Weariness is overcome by love. In this woman's footsteps, I glimpse the mystery of Jesus' prayer, thanking the Father for revealing mysteries to the lowly and hiding them from the powerful.

• August 2

Butembo. Kitatumba Parish. Bishop Sikuli ordained 13 diocesan deacons and 14 priests, including 13 Assumptionist religious and one Comboni priest. The church was packed, and many people remained outside. The hymns seemed to pierce the heavens, so full of energy and joy, accompanied by the dancing rhythm of the entire congregation. The celebration began at 10:00 a.m. and ended at 3:00 p.m. Bishops Henri Piérard and Emmanuel Kataliko, his successor, must be rejoicing in heaven, seeing the fruits of the Lord's work that has unfolded over the past few decades. Words cannot describe the active participation both inside and outside the church.

"Here I am"... "Yes, I do": these words of newly ordained young men are a guiding thread that directs their consecration to the service of the People of God, especially the poorest and most vulnerable. May the Lord sustain them in their mission.

It is a fascinating mystery that

At the postulancy in Katendere.



the Lord continues to call young people to dedicate themselves within the various religious families, both male and female, or in the diocesan clergy. The Assumptionist Province of Africa has nearly 400 religious. It would be interesting to know all the consecrated men and women, as well as the approximately 300 diocesan priests, who come from this diocese. How does Jesus continue to captivate the hearts and consciences of this large youth population? Each year, more than 50 young people apply to become postulants, but it is not possible to accept more than 14.

These new vocations are certainly a sign of hope for the uni-

versal Church. In 1935, Father Gervais Quenard, Superior General, wrote **The Miracle of the Black Churches**. A prophetic book, for he had glimpsed the religious potential present in this culture and within this population. Alongside known and unknown human frailties, there are testimonies of great human and spiritual value. A woman with whom I traveled in the taxi back to Kampala told me that she knew five priests who had "hidden" children. "Perhaps it's true," I replied, "but that doesn't diminish the merit, the witness, and the joy of those who remain faithful to their vows." *"Simul iusta et peccatrix"* (Just and sinful): it was with these words that Saint Augustine had ►



At the Saint Joseph Carpentry of Kambali (Butembo)

already described the Church, holy because the Lord, through his Presence, gives it life and is its head, sinful because of our human failings.

• August 3

At 6:00 a.m., we left Beni, where we had spent the night with the Oblate Sisters. Before 6:00 a.m., I had entered their chapel and seen a novice kneeling on the floor, alone, adoring the Lord. An image of a creature in love with the Invisible, but with an Invisible that was present.

At 8:00 a.m., we arrived at the Kasindi border post. We were

greeted by Daniel, an employee of the DRC immigration service. The badge on their uniform bore the words: "Courtesy, Firmness, Honesty." He took my passport, as instructed, to bring it to his superior, along with the \$300 we had agreed upon. In the meantime, we stopped at a small restaurant next to their office. We ate some slices of chapati with a little coffee.

At 11 a.m., he called us up to his superior's office, who asked us, almost humbly and somewhat sheepishly, for an additional \$150. After speaking with his Ugandan counterpart, he explained that the passport stamps were too re-

cent, making the crossing more problematic. We made a virtue of necessity and paid the requested amount.

At 2:15 p.m., he came to get us and told us that his boss was waiting for us by his car. We loaded our luggage and he helped us in. He drove himself; we crossed the border from the DRC and entered Uganda. He stopped in front of the Ugandan immigration office. He told me to stay in the car while he went inside. After 10 minutes, he came out with my passport, stamped twice. In theory, I wouldn't have been able to cross because of the strict restrictions imposed due to the Eb-

ola epidemic. Then he drove me a hundred meters further, where I found a taxi that would take me to Kampala. We arrived at 11:15 p.m. at the Oblate Sisters' community in Kampala-Nsambia, after traveling through this fascinating land along Mount Ruwenzori, past vast tea plantations, and through the natural beauty that the Lord has bestowed upon us. Three major thunderstorms punctuated this journey. We are in a period where, almost every day, generous rain, combined with the heat, make nature green and fertile.

Fr. Giuliano RICCADONNA
(Florence, Italy)

1) A teacher at the Bulengera Scholasticate from 1986 to 1992 (superior from 1988), Fr. Giuliano then served as Provincial of Zaire from 1992 to 1997.

The Works Visited

Visiting the various Assumptionist communities gives one a sense of the dynamism that reigns in this young province. The impression is shared by others that the other religious orders, both male and female, as well as the diocesan parishes, are also thriving. What immediately stands out are the buildings conceived and launched, often with limited resources, but with a great desire to create something useful.

For example, we went to Beni to bless the foundation stone of the "Polyclinic" that will be built on the land adjacent to our School of Peace. There are not yet substantial funds dedicated to this project, but they are starting and will see how to proceed later. On paper, there is a well-thought-out and well-structured project to meet the concrete needs of the population; at the bank, there is mostly a depleted account. "The suffering of the coins," our Founder often said when he went to beg from his parents for his works.

In Kambali: New three-story school under construction: preschool, primary, and middle school.

In Butembo: A carpentry workshop, in operation for over 50 years, needs renovation. "1000 Solutions": Architectural and building engineering firm. E. d'Alzon Center: Sports hall and restaurant for young people. Car and motorcycle wash area (under construction).

New basketball and volleyball court under construction. Radio-Moto Butembo and TV station.

CEFIA Center (Assumption Computer Training Center).

Bulengera: Facility dedicated to banana plant propagation.

Assumption University of Congo (UAC) in Butembo: Administrative building under construction with a library.

I.T.I.MA (Mahamba Industrial Technical Institute): Administrative building under construction + community center.

Cophaco: New building under construction.

Kitatumba, the largest church in Butembo: a new adjoining hall for meetings.

Kyondo: Parish and residence for postulants in the Kilindera neighborhood.

Beni: School of Peace (nursery, primary, and secondary schools – approximately 1,400 students), and polyclinic (construction underway on land granted by the School of Peace).

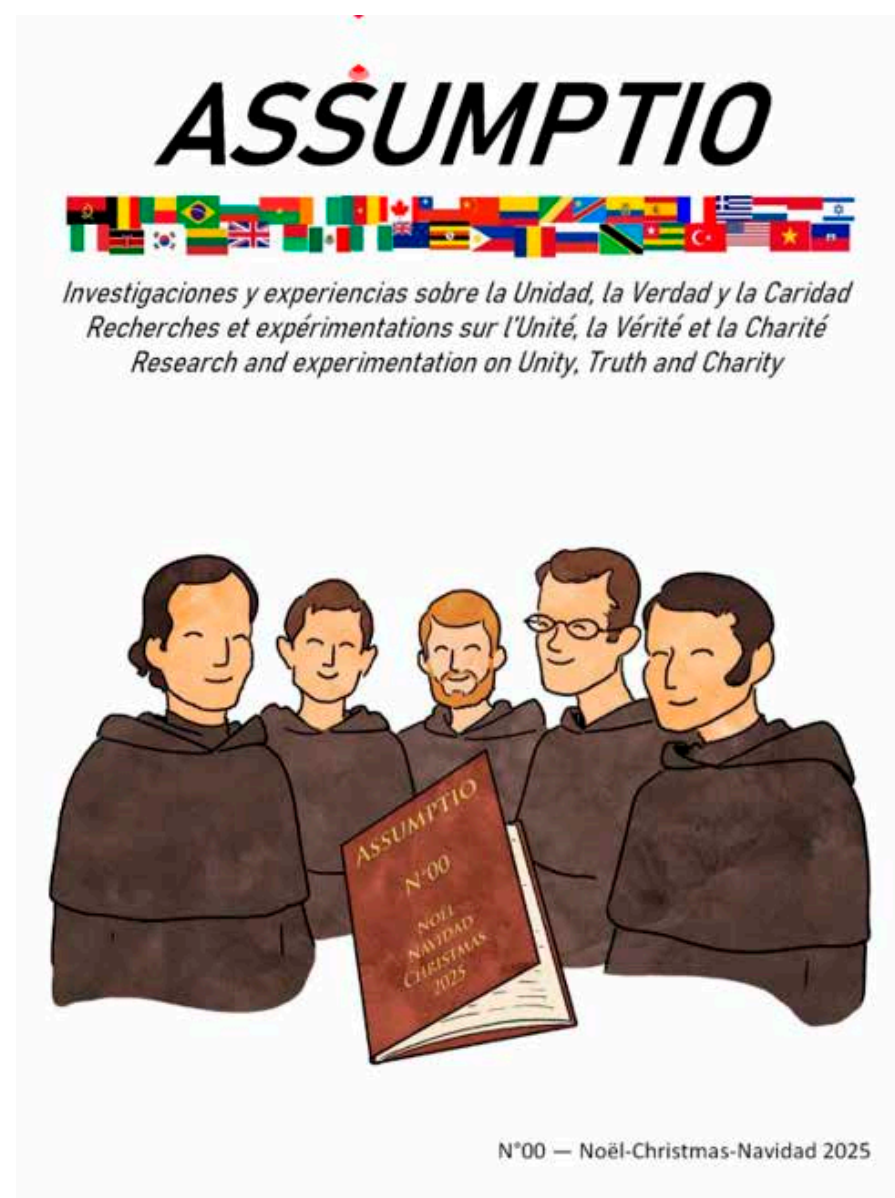
Radio-Moto Beni in the new premises of the new institute, the management of which has been entrusted to us by a benefactor.

UAC-Beni: University of the Assumption in Congo, located in Beni.

"Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain..." (Psalm 126)

Welcome to “Assumptio”!

It is not often that a new Assumptionist journal is launched: let us therefore welcome the one that was launched last Christmas, on the initiative of three international formators, and wish it the widest possible circulation throughout the Congregation! Here is the editorial from “Issue 0.”



to not only imagine but also carry out such a scientific undertaking? Why, with our current “houses of study,” should we, who are their heirs in the doctrinal dimension of the Assumption, hesitate to attempt a new scientific adventure commensurate with our means?

The journal you have before you aims to take up such a challenge. The idea had been floating around in the minds of a few Assumptionists and took shape when they met in Nîmes for a meeting of formators in November 2024. It is a call to all the sons of Father d’Alzon to produce doctrinal studies in the spirit of the Assumption, beginning in their years of philosophy and theology. Couldn’t each student brother, during his formation, write at least one article here, for example, a review of an academic work deemed relevant to our charism?

The journal aims to be international, welcoming writings in the three official languages of the congregation. Each article will be presented in French, English, and Spanish. This is an invitation to open ourselves to the perspectives of brothers who speak other languages, in order to better share the concrete universality of our Assumptionist experience. The title *Assumptio* expresses a common rootedness and horizon. We are rooted in the same history of the Assumption family, which has developed across the diverse

In the new library of the CIFA in Kinshasa, there are about twenty volumes entitled “Revue augustinienne” (*Augustinian Review*), which appeared from 1902 to 1910. Its subtitle was: “Monthly bulletin of the houses of study of the Augustinians of

the Assumption.” Discovering this impressive collection of historical, philosophical, and theological works, one cannot help but ask questions. How were the Assumptionists of the time, recently expelled from France and facing countless difficulties, able

geography of our cultures. Above all, we are drawn to the same horizon — which d'Alzon called “supernatural” — of an assumption of our human lives into Christ, of which Mary is the model. In this double sense, *Assumptio* expresses the love in action that permeates the diversity of our human and ecclesial environments, orienting them, in the image of Mary, toward Christ and his Kingdom. The journal therefore welcomes any reflection that explores a dimension of our charism as men of communion, proposing faith in solidarity with the poor. It aims to be a place of debate and discussion that stimulates our communities and our Assumptionist reflections.

The *Assumptio* journal thus opens a space for “Research and experimentation on Unity, Truth, and Charity.” Consequently, each issue will be structured in two distinct parts. The first part will bring together feature articles, specially written for the occasion, which highlight areas of Assumptionist research. With God’s grace, this may inspire graduate and postgraduate work. The second part will feature the best reflections of our student brothers: texts written specifically to deepen our understanding of our charism, or excerpts from larger works that shed particular light on it. At the end of this issue, you will find editorial guidelines.

The journal’s purpose is therefore to stimulate reflection, particularly through exchange and debate. With this in mind, we invite readers to produce critical counterpoints, which may appear in the next issue. In addition, we



are considering creating a website to host either articles that could not be included or more sustained debates on the issues raised.

The issue you have before you is a first attempt to encourage bold thinking together. Its greatest quality is that it was published at Christmas 2025 and therefore exists. This also implies many limitations. We did not have enough time to discuss with the various authors before publishing their texts, to prepare guidelines for them, and to smooth out the bibliographical references. The reading committee was only contacted at the very end of November. But thanks to them, thanks to the contributors, thanks to the SGF formators who supported the process, and thanks to the technical team, we were able to release this *issue Zero* in time to honor the 180th anniversary of our foundation! We entrust the journal it is inaugurating to the benevolent intercession of Our Lady of the Assumption.

A final word about the articles you are about to discover. They

came from here and there, giving rise to a final form that was not premeditated. You will see how much concern for “God threatened in man, and man as the image of God” is present. It runs through the four texts of the first part, “Research”: in the form of law, catholicity, forgiveness, and dialogue. You will also see how our patriarch and our founder still inspire younger brothers: the four texts in the second part renew our view of Augustine

and d'Alzon. The following pages are an invitation to read the summaries in the language you are most familiar with before delving further into the gift of reading. We look forward to your feedback, and in 20 years, we will have 20 volumes for the bicentennial of our foundation. But until then, let us fully enjoy a Merry Christmas in *Assumptio*!

Frs. Nicolas TARRALLE
(Ouagadougou),

Louis-Martin RAKOTOARILALA
(Nairobi)

and Alain THOMASSET (Kinshasa)

¹ The journal is available in all three languages on the Congregation’s website. For English:
<https://www.assumptio.org/en/download/assumptio-no-00-journal-of-aa-study-houses-2025-12-25/>

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Model and laid out

Loredana Giannetti

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Our deceased brothers



† Fr. **Marcel POIRIER**, of the Québec community (North American Province), died on July 19, 2026, in Québec (Canada). His funeral was celebrated on August 1st in the chapel of Montmartre. He was 84.

† Fr. **KISHINDO MATOLU Aymar**, of the Gervais-Quenard community of Butembo (Province of Africa), died on July 31, 2026, in Butembo (D.R. Congo). His funeral was celebrated on August 4th in the church of Kitatumba, followed by burial in the Assumptionist cemetery in Mahamba. He was 45.

† Msgr. **Louis-Armel PELÂTRE**, of the community of Kadiköy (Province of Europe) died on August 2nd in Istanbul (Turkey). His funeral was celebrated on August 24th in the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit of Istanbul. He was 86. (read pg. 4)

† Fr. **KAHINDO NZANDU Jean-Bon**, of the community of Gervais-Quenard of Butembo (Province of Africa), died on September 16, 2026, in Butembo (D.R. Congo). His funeral was celebrated on September 18th in the church of Kitatumba. It was followed by internment in the Assumptionist Cemetery of Mahamba. He was 62.