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EDITORIAL

« ... Jesus knew and loved that small land in Western Asia where he was born, suffered, died and rose from the dead... ! »



Asia, the earth's largest continent and home to nearly two-thirds of the world's population is home to God's only-begotten Son. It is here in this intricate mosaic of many cultures, languages, beliefs and traditions, which comprise a substantial part of the history and patrimony of the human family, that the 'God of salvation' initiated his saving plan ...and in 'the fullness of time,' sent his only-begotten Son, Jesus, the Saviour, to take on flesh...as an Asian! And from this land, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church went forth to make 'disciples of all nations'.

Jesus knew and loved that small land in Western Asia where he was born, suffered, died and rose from the dead. He made his own the history, the sufferings and the hopes of its people. He loved its people and embraced their traditions and heritage.

Truly, Asia is the cradle of the world's major religions— from Hinduism, the world's oldest religion which predates recorded history (around 6000 to 8000 BCE), to Buddhism which has overtaken Hinduism as the major religion in Asia to the Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity & Islam with Islam now the 2nd largest religion in Asia. Asia is the birthplace of many other spiritual traditions as well, such as Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Sikhism and Shintoism as with the traditional or tribal religions that millions also espouse. Here, Christianity is a widespread minority religion with only three countries which are predominantly Christian, Cyprus which is predominantly Greek Orthodox, the Philippines, which is the 4th largest Roman Catholic nation in the world, and East Timor, the other predominantly Roman Catholic country.

Indeed, the people of Asia take pride in their religious and cultural values: love of silence and contemplation, simplicity, harmony, detachment, non-violence, the spirit of hard work, discipline, frugal living, the thirst for learning and philosophical enquiry. The values of respect for life, compassion for all beings, closeness to nature, filial piety towards parents, elders and ancestors, a highly developed sense of community and their spirit of religious

tolerance and peaceful co-existence in the midst of a plurality of religions and cultures.

One has only to pass a sweeping glance at the range of some of the more outstanding Asian Nobel Prize winners to see a reflection of the innate spiritual richness and creativity with which Asia's best have hurdled the formidable ordeals of a highly complex political panorama with its array of ideologies confronting them: from Tagore to Mother Teresa from India, Aung San Suu Kyi from Burma, Yitzhak Rabin and Yaser Arafat of the elusive Israel-Palestine peace, Jose Ramos Horta and Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo of Timor Leste, Dr. Muhammad Yunus of Bangladesh's Grameen Bank, the numerous Japanese scientists, and of course, the Dalai Lama.

However today, a historically very significant shift of economic and strategic weight from the West to the East is beginning to occur. Behind this is the rapid growth and industrialization Asia is currently undergoing spearheaded by China and India - the two fastest growing major economies in the world with the economies of emerging 'Asian tigers' in their train. Experts believe that the current centre of financial activity is moving toward "Chindia" - a name used for jointly referring to China and India - with Shanghai and Mumbai fast becoming major financial hubs. It is forecasted that the People's Republic of China will surpass Japan to have the largest GDP in Asia within a decade. India is also forecast to overtake Japan by 2020. By 2050, China will have the largest economy in the world.

In the midst of all these developments how does the Church of Asia situate herself? It is true, that not only economically and socially, but spiritually, too the world's centre of gravity is moving back eastwards. What does it mean to be a Church in Asia which is the womb of the world's religions? Can it withstand the onslaughts of materialism and secularism gaining ground and which undermine traditional, social and religious values, threatening Asia's cultures with incalculable damage? This is a question of serious concern not only for the Church but for all Asia's religions, as well, as they watch with growing alarm the spirit of materialism take over the consciousness and priority of their people. As one Thai educator sadly declared: 'Thailand has lost its soul. It has exchanged the 'wat' (temple) for the shopping mall.'

Faced with the sheer magnitude of the territory from Kazakhstan to Indonesia, the difficulties of travel and communication, the varieties of cultures and languages, the minority and often insecure status of Christianity, the relentless secularism that is eroding the spiritual sense of Asians, the ethnic and religious divisions and conflicts, the widespread corruption existing at various levels of both government and society, the worsening social inequality and issues of migration, human trafficking, justice

and peace, ecology and human rights...what is the Church's response? Can she continue to uphold the simplicity of life, closeness to the common people, harmony with nature, openness to religions, genuine hospitality and a contemplative witness that are hallmarks of Asia's religiosity?

Can the Church become the privileged place of encounter between God and the human person, giving adequate importance to the inner experience of transformation into a new way of life that is central to the God-experience of Asian religions? Can she be in touch and nurture the unrelenting search of the Divine deeply entrenched in the hearts and minds of the Asian peoples...that experience of God that alone can make Asian people not lose their soul before the violence, hedonism, unbridled individualism and materialism that "are striking at the heart of Asian cultures, at the religious character of the people, families and whole societies"? Apostolic initiatives can touch hearts only if Church people know the pulse of the people, respect the sublime values of the culture and get enriched by her own spiritual heritage. There is an intimate and indissoluble dependence of the Church's evangelical mission on the rediscovery of the contemplative heart of the Church because evangelization is essentially and pre-eminently the work of the Spirit acting through a community of persons in constant dependence on his action. This is no longer a challenge faced by the Church alone, but by all the Asian religions assaulted by the same social reality. And only together, can Asia's religions uphold, strengthen and fulfil its role for the emerging new face of Asia.

It is thus that the vision of the Asian Church for herself is to become humbly a Church in triple dialogue -- dialogue with the poor, with cultures and with religions.

Part of the Church's hope lies in the fact that, as a Church, she is relatively young, full of enthusiasm and dynamism. Today this movement toward a "new way of being Church" is mainly concretized in the building of BEC or faith communities characterized by people's participation, belongingness, fellowship, and pastoral action toward social transformation. The emergence of "contrast communities" in many places and where the faith is truly lived and practiced is indeed a work of the renewing Spirit. Through these communities, parishes have become more alive and dynamic, a faith-force that is "salt and light" in the wider society.

It is in this context of hope and challenge that the coming 9th Plenary Assembly of the FABC (Bangalore, January 2010) with its theme, "Living the Eucharist in Asia," aims at a renewal toward "becoming Eucharistic persons and communities" that celebrate and live the Lord's own Eucharistic action of loving, self-sacrifice, sharing and serving in the context of Asia, as it seeks to bring the relevance of the Eucharist to bear on life. A key word that constantly reappears is 'renewal', an ongoing spiralling process of renewal of

the local church, of seminary formation, of clergy and religious, of laity, of developing the evangelization power of the young and the over all pastoral priority regarding education and Christian formation, of harnessing social communication tools for integral evangelization.

Renewal for the Church in Asia today means moving toward a "new way of being Church" a Church that is a humble servant of the Gospel as well as servant-companion of the peoples of Asia in the journey to God's reign. The Assumption in Asia (Philippines, Japan, India, Thailand & Vietnam) situating herself in the heart of a Church called to renewal, cannot do or be any less.

Sr. Vicenta
Philippines-Thailand

(Sources: Ecclesia in Asia, UCAN Archive, FABC Papers, Wikipedia, Jivan, Vidyajyoti Journal, The Hindu)

1. A GPC IN ABIDJAN, IVORY COAST

1.1. Ivory Coast, a Journey into the Real Country...

In order to prepare the Provincials in the GPC at Abidjan for a three day immersion, Sr. Celine invited a journalist to speak about the socio-political situation of the country. These pages are not a transcript of his talk, even though the content is the same, but rather an account of a journey that he took recently, visiting throughout the whole country.

Journey through the Real Country

2000 kilometers of “Ivoiritude.” From North to South, East to West. This reporter has covered an impoverished nation, seeking change.



At about 100 km from Abidjan, Aboisso is the last town before the border with Ghana, only some 50 km beyond. First one travels through the historic city of Grand-Bassam and then Bonoua, the town of the Aboures. This is the ethnic group of Simone Gbagbo, the wife of the President. Aboisso was the home of the rich planters of coffee and cocoa. The first plantations appeared in this area at the beginning of the 20th century.

A little bit outside of Aboisso lies the pleasant suburb of Koukourandoumi, “the Village of the Smile,” as one sign informs us. Today, the cocoa and coffee plantations are being replaced by those that specialize in the palms for oil and rubber, which are more profitable. Almost all the villages have electricity and often the roads are paved. The houses are built of bricks and roofed with tiles. There are many lovely villas here. Only the agricultural workers from Burkina Faso, Togo and Ghana who work in the plantations live in camps of huts.

Ten km from Aboisso is the little village of Krindjabo, capital of the Sanwi Kingdom. It was there that Michael Jackson was consecrated as a prince of the Sanwi in 1992. The kingdom has its own king, whose primary function is to oversee matters of local custom.

After Krindjabo, I set my sights on the little town of Mafere, only about 30 km from the Ghanaian border. The mayor is a member of the PDCI (Parti Démocratique de Côte d’Ivoire). But the RDR (Rassemblement des Républicains) is attempting to cut a path for itself locally. Its strategy is to root itself in all the regions of the Ivory Coast. In order to gain ground, this party distributes cars and motorbikes to its regional officials according to their level of responsibility. It also provides the chairs and benches in the villages when there are funerals. (Funerals are very important in our country.)

After Krindjabo, I head to Assinie, on the coast, one of the most beautiful sites in the country. On the tongue of land that separates the sea from the lagoon, the rich people of the country, whether old money or new (among whom are many Europeans), have built big and beautiful houses or simple cabins where they come to spend the weekends (or to take refuge there, when Abidjan is shaken by violence.) A big street lined with grand, luxurious hotels leads to the village of Assinie Mafia, made famous by the song of Alpha Blondy. Here without doubt you’ll find the biggest concentration of huge houses in the Ivory Coast.

Next day, having returned to Abidjan earlier, I set out again, this time taking the coast road to discover the southwest. This is one of the richest regions in the country, blessed with the most beautiful beaches in the country, where one finds more plantations of coffee, cocoa, palm oil palms and rubber trees... [Past President] Houphouet-Boigny wanted to make it the second economic lung of the Ivory Coast. The highway that goes along the sea, built in 1992, is completely destroyed in some places, obliging a driver to take to the smaller lanes if he doesn’t want to damage his car. This is the most dangerous part of the trip, because bandits, the “route-cutters,” regularly attack travellers.

Fifteen km from Sassandra, a little lane of some 10 km takes you to one of the most beautiful hotels in the Ivory Coast, the “Best of Africa,” located at the edge of a forest that is still intact. You have the impression of being “at the end of the world.” The hotel was bought by two Frenchmen, several weeks before the *coup d’etat*, the event that marked the country’s descent into hell. After that came the chaotic transition of Robert Guei, the elections of 2000, which were marked by violence, the attempt at another coup in January 2001, the war of 2002, and the events of 2004. Nothing that would attract tourists to come to the country, for sure. The hotel has just been bought by another Frenchman who has also taken control of an airline serving the cities of the interior with the thought of getting his clients right to his hotel. The city is located in an area that will take your breath away, with hills falling down to the sea right at the mouth of the majestic river Sassandra. In colonial times, it was quite prosperous. I find the French proprietor of a hotel whom I had last met in 2004. Sitting on his terrace that overlooks the town, he confides to me, “Sassandra is dead, and so am I. I’m the last white man in this town. I’m trying to hang on, but I don’t believe in it anymore.” We study the city at our feet: the boats of the Ghanaian fishermen, the hills covered with shacks, the dirty, broken streets, the anarchic jumble of little shops that clutter the sidewalks. Very few tourists have visited the Ivory Coast since 1999, and the people of Abidjan are afraid to come out here because of its dilapidated state and the bandits. “Can you imagine a similar situation in any country of Europe? What a beautiful city it could have been,” he sighs. Yes, what a beautiful city! But everybody is running away from it.

San Pedro. It’s Sunday and the little churches are full to bursting. The road is even worse than before. San Pedro was one of those crazy dreams of Houphouet-Boigny during the 1970s. He wanted to make a second centre of development for the country. So he constructed a second port for the Ivory Coast by transforming an ancient little village of fisher-folk into a cute little town where thousands came running to make their fortunes or just to make their living. Lots of timber, cacao, coffee. A paved road was even built to facilitate the iron mined from Mount Klaodio, in the Man region. Many Frenchmen set up business here and made a fortune. The end of the 1980s, however, was a time of the economic crisis, the “conjuncture” as it’s called in Abidjan. The dream was transformed into a nightmare for thousands of the little guys who found themselves in the slum of Bardot, considered then as one of the biggest in Africa. When the country entered into the “eye of the hurricane,” starting in 1999, many of the French sold their businesses and left. Everything was vandalized in November 2004, including the French school, the *lycée*.

The Lebanese, who renewed all the business organizations and whose children also attended the French *lycée*, have taken their place. Today the town is full of life, the roads well paved. My Lebanese friend Ali Lakiss, a cacao merchant, agrees with me that activities have started up again and that the town is beginning to move once more. He's just invested more than six million CFA francs in a factory that grinds up the cacao beans. All the multinationals have their factories in San Pedro. And Ali explains to me that the Chinese are also installed hereabouts so as to cultivate the beans. "When we give them 100 hectares of forest, they plant 10 hectares for nothing. People accept that."

Issia. I find myself in the heart of the country of the Bete, the ethnic group of President Gbagbo. Issia is located between the big cities of Soubre, Daloa and Gagnoa. In all the villages, gendarmes are posted to protect the trucks transporting the cacao, so that they'll get to their destinations safely. Everywhere, young men demand money from drivers that they stop at barricades made from tree trunks: this is the price to pay, they claim, for their work of cleaning the roadsides. If you refuse, you expose yourself at the very least to insults accompanied by threats.

The town of Issia is getting ready to receive a visit from the Head of State. Big signs celebrate the arrival of "Gbagbo, the Man of Peace", "Gbagbo, the Fighter", "Gbagbo, the Man who brings communities together." One of the objectives of the president's visit is to lead the various populations to live together. As it waits for him, the town spruces itself up, pulling up the weeds that have invaded everywhere, bulldozing the little shanties that line the streets. The merchants weep, trying to resist. Everyone in the region has to pay so that this event can take place.

From Issia, I am going to visit Gagnoa and make a quick trip to Mama, the village of Laurent Gbagbo, about 50 km from there. The nine kilometers that separate us from the town of Ouragahio are tarred and lined with street lights. The village is quite small, with little houses made out of cement and well paved streets. There is also the house of the Head of State, of which one can only see the long courtyard, several huge villas, a big church and what resembles a football stadium under construction. And a little booze joint called The Patriot, where I went to drink a beer, under the suspicious glances of some young people sitting in front of some very big bottles of palm wine. There was not a soldier, not a gendarme, not even a policeman, not even in front of the residence of Gbagbo.

To get myself to Man, I cut across Duekoue, where the two towns of Little Duekoue and Guitrozon were attacked by a mysterious commando group in May 2005. About 50 inhabitants were massacred. The assassins have

never been found. This part of the country has known some of the worst atrocities of the way because of the presence of Liberian war veterans who were used by both sides of the conflict. Many villages were destroyed. They have since been rebuilt. I come across some members of the new Armed Force at Logouale, about 15 of them. They approach and demand money to buy cigarettes or tea. Private vehicles go through without any problem. It's the passengers on buses who are forced to pay up.

Man is a town surrounded by mountains, with a natural waterfall, one of its attractions. The region is rich in lumber - lumber that has been copiously stolen since the crisis exploded. The agency of the BCEAO and all the commercial banks of the town have also been pillaged. Motor fuel, which comes from Togo by way of Burkina Faso, is sold in bottles. This traffic is the principal activity of the majority of the young people in town. "It's wretched here", Toure Junior, president of the civil Society, told me; "those who can afford to have three or even two meals a day are rare around here." Chinese motorbikes from Burkina are for sale throughout town. The hospital is still standing, but there's nothing inside to care for the sick. Prostitution, he tells me, has taken on crazy proportions.

Yamoussoukro. There used to be a luxury hotel called "The President," built during the time of Houphouet-Boigny. For the last several years, however, this establishment has only seen occasional visits from the Head of State or some seminars organized by various ministries and enterprises. Local people and the occasional tourist frequent it on the weekends. Laurent Gbagbo, with the help of the Chinese, has built a new luxurious hotel out in the bush, to the tune of 21 billion CFA francs. The members of parliament have to stay there since the capital's transfer [from Abidjan] to Yamoussoukro. But the future Parliament building itself is always "under construction." The same thing with the presidential palace, just next door.

Bocanda. I was born here. The town prospered in colonial times. It was one of the regions with the greatest production of cacao and coffee. Today, the terraces are exhausted, and Bocanda resembles a ghost town of the Old West abandoned after the Gold Rush. Just about everything is in ruins. But there is still electric power and running water, all the cell phone networks and even a cyber cafe. My mother tells me that she saw a poster of Gbagbo at the house of one of her relatives. When she asked him if he'd become a militant of the FPI, he smiled and replied that it was the only way that he could get a little money from time to time. "The people are so poor here that if you give them a 1000 franc bill, they thank you for an hour."

Bouake. As I was leaving Bocanda, everybody warned me against the highwaymen who operate in the region. Bouake is the second city of the Ivory Coast and the headquarters of the rebellion. (You can also say that it is the second biggest Malian city - Montreuil in France is the third.) When the rebellion broke out, the Baoule, who were the big shots in the town, abandoned it into the hands of the rebels, who profited by occupying their houses. They occupy them still despite the Ougadougou Accord - one of the many problems that must be solved before there can be a real peace. When I spoke about disarmament, everybody started to laugh. Someone explained to me why nobody could speak about that before the end of January. "The harvest of cacao is going to begin in October. That's the time when the rebel chiefs get even richer, with the taxes that they levy on all the beans that pass through their zone. It's the last time that they can make some money." At Bouake, begging goes on everywhere. No municipal services are available for anything. The warlords roll on in their big cars, accompanied by their escorts.

Dabakala. The city is some 88 km from Katiola, toward the east. We are on a real savannah; the landscape is magnificent. The villages are made up of round huts with thatched roofs. We pass by families of peasants coming and going to and from the fields, hoes on their shoulders. We also pass men on motorcycles, each one with his Kalashnikov around his neck. At the checkpoint of the new Armed Forces, at the entrance to the city, the papers of the vehicle are examined for a very long time, while all around men circle us, looking for a bribe.

On the road back to Abidjan, I stop once more at Yamoussoukro. There are still caimans [a kind of crocodile] in the lake, in front of the abandoned palace of Houphouet-Boigny. In front of the basilica of Our Lady of Peace, I see only a herd of cows. A few days earlier, the Chief of State had been present at the consecration of three bishops and had laid the first stone of the hospital that Houphouet-Boigny had promised to build in his village. We learn that the builder of the basilica had left the money needed to build. Sixteen years after his death, and several months before the election that will be the most crucial one in the history of the country, they at last find the time to think about doing it.

At Abidjan, everyone is amazed that I was able to make this journey around the country without meeting any of those bandits who "rage throughout the whole country," if one can believe the government journal "*Fraternity Matin*," which had devoted its whole first page to this issue on Tuesday, 1 September. "Under me, the state will not be broken," Laurent Gbagbo had said at the time of his meeting at Issia. But is there still a state, when the brigands, whether newly recruited youngsters or crusty veterans,

make their own laws over all the roads? When the rebels, who actually sit in the government, continue to occupy and pillage a part of the country? Whatever happens in this next election, the person who takes the reins of the Ivory Coast will have a lot on his plate.

Venance Konan, October 2009

1.2. An Impassioned Dominican, Sidbé Semporé

Conference given to the CGP in Abidjan in October 2009

RELIGIOUS LIFE IN AFRICA 1994-2009: FROM ONE SYNOD TO ANOTHER

You have asked me to speak to you on the evolution of Religious Life in Africa these last 15 years and that coincides with the period that separates us from the celebration of the first special Synod on Africa and the Synod on Consecrated Life respectively in April-May and in October 1994 from that of the Second African Synod opened last October 4 in Rome. Thus the period we will look into places Religious Life in Africa in an ecclesial inter-synod dynamic. Thus the title: *Religious Life in Africa - From One Synod to Another*.

1- AFRICAN SOCIETIES

For 15 years or so, the African societies have experienced diverse evolutions depending on the vagaries of socio-political events and the economic vicissitudes of the countries of the Continent. For our reflection, I will enumerate the points that seem to me characteristic in the changes that have taken place during the period indicated.

Ills and Misfortunes

- **Increasing poverty:** all the economic indicators note the alarming fact that, far from having diminished as foreseen at the start of the 90s when the global mobilization for the Millennium objectives were launched, poverty has on the contrary gained ground in the African societies. The causes for such a situation are multiple: dysfunction of the economic politics of our countries, natural climatic catastrophes, armed conflicts, looting of resources and diversion of the revenues from raw material, lack of infrastructures and of energy, etc. Hunger (265 million Africans suffer from hunger and malnutrition) and endemics decimate the populations and represent an absolute priority in the race against time in the fight against poverty.

- **Explosion of the transoceanic migratory phenomenon:** Since the scandal provoked by the discovery of a young Guinean smuggled in the landing gear and frozen in death on arrival in France, the phenomenon of the migration of Africans to Europe has known an extent that has no equal but that of the despair and misery that hundreds of thousands of clandestine migrants flee, men, women, youth, children, old people risking their life in the deserts and on the seas... The desert and the sea are for tens of thousands among them a sad shroud... This phenomenon of migration towards the European countries barricaded by laws and restrictions of immigration happens however in diverse forms.

- **Violence and fatal tragedies:** The decades of 1990 and 2000 were marked in Africa by the worst human dramas since the colonization era. Recall the Rwandan genocide in 1994, which took place at the very moment when the first Special Synod for Africa opened, the fratricidal wars of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Sudan, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Uganda, Angola, Kenya, etc... The most disquieting is the apparition, in all the conflicts on the Continent, of what I call the ‘becoming beastly’ of the violence and the barbarism of the crimes: blind massacres, massive and systematic violations and prisoners transformed into sexual slaves, destruction of cultures, of livestock, of water sources and of dwellings, cynical use of child soldiers, nameless cruelty towards the submissive populations (example of the cruelty and the physical abuse committed by the barbarian hordes of Sierra Leone, of Liberia, of Uganda (the “Lord’s Army of Resistance”, of Kivu (Rwandan Hutu, government soldiers, Mai-Mai and soldiery of Jean-Pierre Bemba...)). These forms of beastly violence are perpetuated regularly not only in the wars and the rebellions, but also in the religious conflicts as in Nigeria, on the university campuses, in the land conflicts or between farmers and breeders, in certain political or social manifestations that are violently suppressed (Ivory Coast, Guinea, etc.).

- **Proliferation of sects:** The religious landscape of Africa has been modified considerably these last two decades by the proliferation of sects and churches of different origins. In 1968, a researcher on religion counted no less than 8000 sects and African churches. Forty years later no one dares take on such an impossible task. This phenomenon results in the search for a religion and easy happiness here below, search for a remedy against the feeling of insecurity (witchcraft), and religious ignorance which pushes the gullible masses to run here and there towards the new and the miraculous. The rush towards sects and religions of prosperity goes hand in hand with the rush for lotteries and other games

of chance, and the tendency towards easy gain and corruption. The self-proclaimed “apostles”, “prophets” and other “bishops” fill the stadiums and numb the crowds by demobilizing tasks (political, economic, etc) of the construction of the society.

Advances and Hopes

- ❖ **National Conferences and the democratic spirit:** the 1990s saw the beginnings of a political upheaval more or less all over Africa triggered partly by the fall of the Berlin Wall (9 November 1989), the liberation of Nelson Mandela (11 February 1990) and the speech of François Mitterrand in Baule (20 June 1990). These three events produced considerable impact in the political life of the African nations and opened the way for a slow but decisive democratization of political regimes most of which are mono-parties and autocratic. The national conferences inaugurated in Benin, produced, often in pain, the constitutions open to democratic and multi-parties practices.
- ❖ **Emergence of the civil society:** in most of the African countries, the wave of democracy of the 1990s gave birth among the people of a sharper awareness of the force civil society represented when organized in view of respect of its rights, demand individual and collective liberties, defend the institutions and the Constitutions... In several countries, the religious authorities, the recognized ethical personalities, the defenders of human rights, the associations and the diverse NGOs, are at the origin of the civil society and the activities for a normal and consensual life as a citizen: cf. Niger, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Senegal etc...). The appearance of private media (radio, printed media, television...) has contributed a lot in the forging of a common and critical conscience in society, and to defend the freedom of expression. In some countries, radio and private newspapers are regularly the focus of judicial or physical attacks by the public powers that have difficulty in accepting a contradictory position. One knows the difficulties encountered by Radio Okapi in the RDC, Radio Dunia in Niger, ‘The Messenger’ in Cameroon, etc.
- ❖ **Great moral figures:** the decades 1990 and 2000 are graced with some great moral African figures that remain as reference points and examples for the present and future generations. I can name Julius Nyerere, whose cause for beatification has been introduced, Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, Wole Soyinka, Cheikh Modibo Diarra, Amani Toumani Touré, Alpha Oumar Konaré, Wangari Mataï, Abdou Diouf, Cardinal Tumi, etc.
- ❖ **Justice and the struggle against impunity:** The ratification by the majority of the African nations of the Treaty of Rome (1998) instituting

the International Penal Court provided an opportunity for the people struggling against injustice and impunity. This sword of Damocles that hangs over the head of rulers and the powerful has made possible the institution of Tribunals to judge the crimes committed in Rwanda, in Sierra Leone, and to bring before the jurisdictions of the elder heads of states such as Charles Taylor, Hissen Habré, and even the ruling heads of state such as those of Sudan or of Guinea. Such an international institution would not allow crimes and their authors to go unpunished.

- ❖ **The positive increasing role of sub-regional organizations:** one must underscore the more and more decisive role of sub-regional African organizations such as CEDEAO, UEMOA, CEMAC, SADEC etc. not only in the march towards the integration of peoples and of economies but also in the settlement of conflicts and the and the facilitation of negotiations for social peace.

2 - AFRICAN CHURCHES

- The Church of Africa continues its growth in number and in institutions: (cf. statistics of Fides Agency (2008) ANNEXES below).
- Vitality and courage in situations of great poverty and precariousness: often people find in the Catholic Church a recourse and a help in situations of trouble, danger or the threat of death. As a whole, the Church of Africa is engaged in the multiple social works appreciated by the people: health, education, development...
- In the Muslim countries or with a Muslim majority (besides the countries of the Maghreb, cf. Nigeria, Niger, Mali, Chad, Guinea, Senegal...), with the rise of fundamentalist Islamism, the Catholic Church is torn between its commitment to the Islam-Christian dialogue and the affirmation of its personality and the defence of its right in the nation.
- The Church still has not had the time to “digest”, assimilate and put into action all that was taken up at the 1st African Synod and no in-depth report as been done up to date. Certain decrees were not enforced or remained wishful thinking (pious hope). The main benefits: the theme of *Church-Family of God*, the building up of *inculturation* and the establishment of a pastoral based on the structures of the BEC (Basic Ecclesial Communities) have not been sufficiently exploited anywhere.
- We are still a Church that is too dependent, extroverted, turned towards Rome from whom we expect everything: directives, finances, etc. The Church of Africa accepts without question or protest the ‘Roman’ control of

all the sectors of its life and its doctrinal, jurisdictional, administrative and financial dependence.

- That explains the certain timidity and hesitancy of our Churches, the lack of prophetic spirit and audacity in taking the initiative, reforms and position. Perhaps we should be less “followers” and more inventive and creative in the different sectors of the life of our Churches, without waiting always that Rome or other partner Churches speak or act before following suit.

- Dangers that threaten the Church of Africa: allegiance to regimes in office and to the powers of money - lack of prophets and of taking distance in relation to political powers - tribal or ethnic yarn not always exorcised from one’s being - still timid missionary spirit.

3 - RELIGIOUS LIFE

- Constant numerical growth, especially in the feminine Religious Life (cf. Statistics in ANNEXES).

- “*With regard to the foundation of new Religious Institutes, great prudence and enlightened discernment are needed, and the criteria laid down by the Second Vatican Council and the canonical norms now in force are to be followed.*(184) *Once established, these Institutes are to be helped in acquiring juridical status and becoming autonomous in the management both of their own works and of their respective sources of income.*” (Ecclesia in Africa, #94) - Despite this recommendation of *Ecclesia in Africa*, the African Bishops have continued to found Institutes often with the aim of providing the Diocese with a helping hand for pastoral work (“pastoral agents”!).

- One always regrets a certain ignorance of Religious Life by the African clergy, priests and Bishops. Such incomprehension of Religious Life is sometimes a source of painful institutional, juridical or property conflicts, between the Institutes and the hierarchy. *Mutuae Relationes* is hardly applied. There is often an over-valuation by the clergy of the pastoral or parochial aspect of religious life only and the commitments of religious men and women to the detriment of the specifically religious dimension that underlies them.

- Over-valuation by religious men and women and the faithful of the ministerial priesthood in relation to religious life. There is even a certain ‘clericalization’ of feminine religious life (cf. Benin: after their Profession, religious women have a *First Mass* celebrated in their parishes of origin just like the new priests!).

Faced with this awareness it is urgent to:

- re-center Religious Life on its essential values and main axes;
- recall that Religious Life:

- ▶ is not defined as a *ministry* in the Church. For that, Christ calls us to pray to His Father to send *laborers* into his harvest (“...*the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few...*”), *Agents* of evangelization;
- ▶ is more like a diaconate, a personal call to follow and serve the Master and to enter into his friendship (cf. Christ personally calling certain disciples: “Come, follow me”, “come and see”, or again, in Mk 3, Christ calling his Apostles firstly *to be with Him*, then *to be sent...*) - In the vocation to Religious Life, to favor the aspect of the *gratuitous gift* of self, of one’s life (one does not enter the Institute *first* to do something, even if this is something great, beautiful, exalting, fulfilling, but to learn the gratuitousness of the gift of self at the service of Christ and of His people; the gift of self in abundance (and not for ulterior motives or interest) as did the sinful woman of Bethany.

ACTUAL CHALLENGES

Religious Life in Africa is confronted with a certain number of challenges of which I mention only a few:

Ad intra:

- **Challenge of Formation:** the hundreds of religious Institutes working in Africa ask themselves the same question: “What adequate formation to give to the candidates to Religious Life for an authentic witnessing of the evangelical life and a credible missionary commitment for the African people of today?” How do we prepare the consecrated persons to *render an account of the Hope that dwells in them*, this “*extraordinary force that makes persons commit themselves courageously and generously in the fields of justice and of peace*” (Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 1, regarding Love) and to *awaken* the Hope buried in the population that is at a loss? Despite appearances, Africa, far from being this *rudderless Continent* as the afro-pessimists see it, is rather the *Continent of Hope*, and the religious men and women are called to sow Hope. This is the double aim of religious Formation in Africa today:

a) *To give an account* of the Hope that dwells in them, to show what spirit animates them, what force moves them. Not to appear first of all as *humanitarians*, but as witnesses of the new Values, those of the Kingdom. To make the young religious men and women in formation understand the need to invest time in the acquisition of knowledge, of know-how and of manners: not a diploma course but a demand of truth and of effectiveness in witnessing and in service.

b) *To awaken the Hope* that lies dormant or that wavers in the people. Communicate the flame. One can no longer content oneself today, with the increasing complexity and the enormity of the social problems, with arriving

in Africa just to gather some candidates to form them for hostels or workshops or to sell medicines or pious objects... The religious of the 21st century in Africa have no other choice than to be as well qualified as possible to respond according to their charism to the unceasingly increasing needs and ever more complex challenges of society. The mission in Africa today demands a longer time of preparation to dispose the heart and the spirit to better meet the people in their life context, the aim being **to love, to live and to announce the Word of Life**. Do not send too quickly persons barely out of the formation houses into the mission field because of the urgencies and the calls. Know how to be patient and wait and do not hesitate to invest to prepare the Mission and the changeover in the houses of formation.

The challenge of formation concerns not only the young but also the *formators*. One can no longer, should no longer continue to send to the novitiates and juniorates persons without any preparation or qualification for the task of formation. One can no longer improvise counting on the “grace of state” and infused competence... in West Africa this need to form the formators has been taken seriously by the foundation of the Formation Institute “*Mater Christi*” which has functioned for a quarter of a century and which has formed numerous masters and mistresses of novices.

- **Conversion:** a patient work of conversion in relation to the gravities and obscurities of African cultures, customs and traditions (sorcery and other beliefs and practices...) - Conversion to Christ also leads to conversion to others to allow for a community life in tolerance, mutual acceptance and trust, values often overwhelmed by the African cultures! Take seriously the *cultural dimension* in the path to conversion.

- **Family:** The importance and the weight of the African *family* influence and interfere with the choice of life of consecrated persons and provoke questions, doubts, uncertainties and hesitations in the practice of the vows, especially that of *Poverty* and in the insertion in communities of consecrated persons in their new *Families*. The relations with the family cannot be harmoniously lived except in reference to the demands of the Gospel on the duty to “leave” their own to follow Christ and linked to the positive cultural solidarities imposed on all the members of the African families. The question is often asked on the invasion or the hold of the family which knows little or nothing at all of the new solidarities/bonds contracted by their child.

- **Self-sufficiency:** A great challenge for all the religious Institutes in Africa is the need to work to ensure with as little delay as possible the assumption of the material and financial resources. The generalized context of poverty in Africa calls the religious to give the example in the fight against dependence and for autonomy in the promotion of the resources and the goods of life. A resolute commitment of the Religious Institutes in the process of becoming autonomous regarding resources and the reduction of dependence vis-à-vis the ‘mother provinces’ of Europe or of America is urgent. Do not wait that help and subsidies for the life of the communities, formation or the apostolates tarnish in order to begin to explore the local possibilities for fundraising or the production of resources. There is need for the structures and the religious communities of Africa to revise and reduce standing, style and lifestyle!

Works: urgent and long-term. **Education:** knowledge disconnected from wisdom and ethics, teaching from education, science from life.

The young are transients in our schools. Transit = come from a milieu (social and religious) that moulds them, live the time in the school as that of a transient during which they prepare a stage of their life then leave the school for other adventures where, often, we leave them alone, in the middle of the road, to confront realities. Would it be possible to envision structures of post-school accompaniment that will help the young to find a landing field on the social, professional and religious plan? Should one not re-invent new forms of movements (cf Catholic Action) adapted to each category of youth?

Ad extra:

The ensemble of Religious Institutes in Africa is confronted with the massive and unavoidable fact of a multiform **poverty** that affects the body (hunger, illnesses, etc.), the spirits (ignorance and illiteracy), the hearts (violence...). In one way or another, the different Institutional charisms are questioned by the massive fact of poverty that constitutes a primary challenge for all.

Commitment in development projects, charitable works or initiatives on human advancement convey the will to carry out this diaconate that responds to the injunction of Jesus to his disciples: “*Give them yourselves something to eat*”. The Encyclical of Benedict XVI *Caritas in Veritate* is a strong incentive for the Religious Institutes to commit themselves, in their struggle for justice and for peace, in the promotion of development works according to the recommendations of Paul VI recalled by Benedict XVI: “*development is the new name of peace*” and, “*the hungry nations of the world cry out to the peoples blessed with abundance*” (Paul VI in *Populorum Progressio*). By publishing his Encyclical to give homage to

Populorum Progressio of Paul VI, Benedict XVI specifies that “Paul VI had a structural vision of development. Through the word “development” he wanted to mean above all the objective of making people escape the ravages of hunger, poverty, endemic disease and ignorance” (CiV 21). The challenge of poverty is a call to the commitment in the struggle of *development* in its full and holistic meaning.

The Second Special Synod for Africa taking place in Rome this October has as theme: *The Church in Africa at the Service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*. The increasing poverty (265 million Africans die of hunger and malnutrition) is the seedbed of violence and fatal conflicts that shake the African societies, block economic development, put a strain on schooling and education, weigh down the conscience and democratic practices. The announcement of the Good News cannot ignore these zones of great suffering of the African people at the risk that the missionary work become empty and produce deceiving fruits.

Fr. Sidbé Semporé, op

3. Final Message of the GPC

« AKWABA »

« Quelle est la Nouvelle ? » « La nouvelle est bonne ! »¹

“Africa must not despair. The blessings of God are still abundant, waiting to be prudently and justly employed for the good of her children. Where the conditions are right, her children have proved that they can reach, and have indeed reached, the height of human endeavors and competence. There is much good news in many parts of Africa. But the modern media often tend to emphasize bad news and thus seem to focus more on our woes and defects than on the positive efforts that we are making. Nations have emerged from long years of war and are moving gradually along the path of peace and prosperity. Good governance is making appreciable positive impact in some African nations, challenging others to review past and present bad habits. Signals abound of many initiatives seeking to bring effective solutions to our problems. This Synod, precisely by its theme, hopes to be part of such positive initiatives. We call on all and sundry to join hands to address the challenges of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Africa. Many are suffering and dying: there is no time to waste.

Message to the People of God 23 October 2009

¹ A Traditional Welcome, sign of hospitality in Ivory Coast where the youngest ask the question and the guest responds with the “good news”.

The General Plenary Council began against the backdrop of the Second African Synod of Bishops that had for its theme -

The Church in Africa at the Service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace.
"You are the salt of the earth ... You are the light of the world" (Mt 5:13,14)

Immersion as a way of living the mystery of the incarnation today was our door to becoming persons of dialogue, open to God's transforming action in ourselves, in our communities, in our Provinces and in our world.

This is the context that became the challenge and the inspiration for the CGP to consciously take a perspective, a way of looking and being that sheds light on the "shadows" that are present in these our times and makes transformation possible.

Rooted in Christ, We Journey in HOPE...

The climate of simplicity, responsibility and attention to the essentials has given the CGP an optic with which to look at the reality of the Congregation and the world today.

The experiences of violence, corruption, growing poverty, political instability, situations of hopelessness and insecurity, and the phenomenon of migration all pose a challenge to communion and solidarity. At the same time we recognize countless acts of generosity that have brought about life-giving changes.

From the Reports of the Provinces to the Reports of the Commissions, the immersion and exposure experiences, throughout all that has been discussed and reflected upon and shared, we perceive a growing conviction that our weaknesses and limitations have become our strengths. Yes, HOPE is born in the heart of our fragility.

- ◆ **OUR SISTERS AS OUR GREATEST TREASURE** - Regardless of age, numbers, nationality, each one is important and capable of living our life in its fullness. In the reality of diminishment, we recognize that we need one another; that our elderly sisters are the bearers of our tradition; that in their wisdom and serenity they pass on to those who come after them a rich heritage that is a source of joy and encouragement for all. The young, also, give to those who have come before them a vision of the world of today with enthusiasm, generosity and passion. As we strengthen our Intergenerational exchanges we become signs of HOPE for our world.

- ◆ **COMMUNITY AS MISSION AND FOR MISSION** - We recognize that community in itself, when lived in truth is a prophetic witness and a proclamation of the Kingdom. Our common mission commits us to live deep sisterly relationships between us. We are responsible for the quality of our life .This is our moment to recover the force of our community life.

“Community gives us wings for mission... we feel the urgency of living the mission in a manner which is both creative and daring, in accordance with the needs of the times. This requires reflection and a discernment which commits the whole community.”²

- ◆ **FORMATION AS A WAY OF TRANSFORMATION** - Formation seeks to facilitate personal transformation to awaken the conviction that Christ calls each one to collaborate with Him to realize the plan of God. It relies on the natural virtues and helps cultivate the possibilities and the grace proper to each sister.

The process of personal and communal formation goes on for us all, whatever our age. This formation prompts us to maintain a dynamic following of Christ and to deepen our capacity to respond to the urgent calls of the Kingdom.

At all stages, spiritual accompaniment is essential in order for us to remain faithful to the call of God.³

- ◆ **VOCATION MINISTRY AS A PROCLAMATION OF THE GOOD NEWS OF OUR RELIGIOUS LIFE** - We see Vocation Ministry as inviting the young to encounter, to give and to commit themselves to the following of Jesus Christ and to share the beauty of a life of consecration in a journey towards authentic freedom and joy.

² From the Work on the Rule of Life

³ From the Formation Project of the RA - RATIO

We must share creative initiatives and have a systematic and serious Vocation Ministry for young people. This ministry consists of accompanying young people in their search for truth and freedom so that discovering their personal vocation, they will move towards full development and be happy.⁴

- ♦ **SOLIDARITY AS A STYLE OF LIFE FOR A GLOBALIZED WORLD** - We are called to strengthen and deepen our interconnectedness with each other (Sisters, Communities, Provinces, Projects). We believe that each one has something to give and something to receive. Our internationality lived in solidarity gives us the possibility of transcending boundaries in our globalised world in favour of genuine communion. We want to go further in creating links among us, sharing resources, networking and intercultural exchanges.

We believe that justice, peace, care for the integrity of creation and solidarity (JPIC-S) is a way of being, thinking and doing. It opens us to the big questions of our world today and is integral to all our educational works.

We need to “deepen our reflections on the opportunities and challenges of the digital means of communication for its reasonable use at the service of the apostolate, of the community and of each one.”⁵

Information-Communication Technology (ICT) is a resource and an opportunity to reinforce relationships, build bridges and make formation accessible in all levels.⁶

Our charism of transformative education asks us to see information technology as a tool that serves the mission and allows for better communication.

⁴ From the Formation Project of the RA - RATIO

⁵ From the Work on the Rule of Life

⁶ From « Dimensions of Leadership »

- ◆ **OUR LIFE AS A RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGES OF THE CHURCH AND OF THE WORLD TODAY** - We recognize the call to centre our lives in the following of Jesus Christ in our mission of transformative education.

As Assumption Together, we witness to a new way of being CHURCH by a shared responsibility for our charism.

Today, ASSUMPTION TOGETHER is a very important element of our congregation. We are called to be attentive and involved in the dialogue of life among persons of other religions, Christians as well as Post Christians.

We were very happy to feel the participation of each sister, each community, each International Commission that made it possible for all to take part in the animation of the life of the Congregation, today.

We have received the fruits of the work done on the Rule of Life, the Formation Project (RATIO), and Education with gratitude.

Now, we are called to undertake decisions in view of the future, filled with HOPE.

We thank God for the grace of living this CGP here in Africa.

We will never be able to thank the Province of West Africa enough for their untiring, generous hospitality that has provided us with experiences that we will forever treasure.

With much affection,

THE GPC COMMUNITY in Abidjan

28 October 2009

PHOTO des provinciales

2. PRESENTATION OF THE PROVINCES OF THE ASIAN CONTINENT

2.1. Philippines-Thailand

ASSUMPTION THABOM

Assumption-Thabom is probably unheard of to many. But to some it is no longer just a place, it is an experience.

But where is Thabom?

It is in Thailand. In the northeast of Thailand, close to the Mekong River that separates Thailand and Laos. Even on not so clear days, one can stand by the riverbank of Chiangkhan District and see clearly the temple and the houses on Laotian soil across the river. As close as that.

Assumption is a good 20 kilometers from the Mekong River and 520 kilometers from Bangkok. Highway 201 that runs through the northeastern provinces leads to Loei Province. From Loei City it is easy to find the highway that leads to the border. After 28 kilometers to the main district, take a right turn and drive 14 kilometers through a dusty road that cuts through small villages. Thabom is not difficult to find. Just ask the villagers along the road. Some of them probably have children or grandchildren studying in Holy Redeemer School, a Grade School owned by the diocese or at St. John's School, a high school owned by St. John's Group of Schools. Both schools are animated by the Sisters in partnership with St. John's.

How did Assumption come to Thabom?

Thabom was conceived in Antipolo early 1997 during the Asian Educators' Congress. The Thai lay representative, Mr. Chainarong Monthienvichienchai who came with the 2 RAs to represent Assumption-Thailand was instrumental in the birth of this mission. Ajan (or Acharn, a title of respect used in Thailand for educators in general) was at the time Executive Director of St. John's Group of Schools in Bangkok. He was so impressed by our work of education particularly in Assumpta, San Simon and recognized in it a call, or rather the answer to St. John's long-nourished dream to have a school for the less privileged who cannot come to St. John's in the city. The revered founder of St. John's, the late A. Samai Chinnapha, grateful for the education he had received through the Brothers of St. Gabriel, established a school in Bangkok for young people who wanted a good education but who could not easily get into the existing universities which were limited in number at the time. He was also concerned that there were many more in the provinces who needed to have basic education, that is Grade School to Junior High School, but had neither means nor opportunity.

As soon as A. Chainarong returned to Thailand, he lost no time in presenting his report to the Board of St. John's. His proposal to have an 'Assumpta' was unanimously approved, and he was put in-charge of the project. The question now was - where? There were several possibilities and a number of proposals from different people but as A. Chainarong said, they did not really need St. John's. One day, while talking in between sessions with Bishop George Phimphisani of Udonthani Diocese, (both were involved in the Mass Communications Commission of the Bishops' Conference) A. Chainarong mentioned the school project. The Bishop had a ready response. In his diocese, a particular parish had long been asking for a high school so that the young people who finish grade school need not go out of the village which meant added expenses and even danger.

A. Chainarong is a visionary, but he is as much a man of action. That same afternoon he asked to go to this place called Thabom which was not at all indicated in the map. He liked what he saw and felt it was THE place for the school of their dreams, but would the Sisters be able to live there? No running water, no market, no stores. But there was a beautiful Church and a big Catholic Community. The Redemptorist and O.M. I. missionaries had built the Church, and the grade school. Later, diocesan priests took over and continued the work.

How then, was A. Chainarong going to find out if the Sisters could live in Thabom? His wife, A. Chintana suggested that they take a trip to Pakjan, in Ranong Province in the south where the other Community of Assumption Sisters was still carrying on the mission. Two very busy university people went out of their way taking a 7-hour car ride, and stayed overnight just to find out for themselves how the Sisters lived there.

They found out. And they were convinced that if the Sisters could live in Pakjan, they could live in Thabom. In Pakjan, the Sisters were living in what used to be a small community-centre renovated by the villagers to look like a convent - that is, with a little chapel added to the side, and half of the hall divided into 6 small "cells". The sky provided rain water for drinking. How many people have been welcomed to that little house! And how blissful were the nights, how concrete was God's Hand feeding them through the villagers who would bring rice, cooked food, or just leave fruits and vegetables outside their door or window.

At this particular period, the Assumption was about to close its mission in this small village. The group of coffee and fruit growers that the Sisters had helped organize and followed up over the years was now able to stand on their own, managing their own revolving funds and strengthening their own

group structure. The Sisters had also established a Children's Centre, training the "teachers" (local young ladies who had no college degrees but possessed some teaching qualities) in the philosophy of education of Mother Marie Eugenie. They were prepared to carry on the work and the government would pay their salaries. Some Sisters needed rest and renewal and the number of Sisters in Thailand who remained could not maintain 2 communities. By a Provincial decision in 1998, the Sisters all gathered in Bangkok where the Sisters worked at St. John's in different capacities.

The Sisters leave. The mission lives on.

Although the foundation in Thabom was approved in 1998, the Sisters started the foundation only in May 2001. In partnership with St. John's, they started a Secondary School, receiving about 70 first year students for SY 2001-2002. The Sisters lived in a small house next to the Grade School which is in the same area as the Church.

In 2003, St. John's built a beautiful three-storey building on the plot of land that had been procured for this purpose. The Sisters moved to one part of the building which also served as their convent. It was not until February 2006 that the Sisters moved into their own house- the first and only house they owned in Thailand. After 26 years in Thailand they finally had their own address.

Assumption - Thabom is on its 8th year of mission. It is 8 years of a continuing experience of the hundredfold Jesus promised to all those who "leave home, country, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, land for His sake and the sake of the Gospel". It is a journey not only geographically, but a journey into people's lives, their customs and traditions, their language and culture, their own world view. It is an inner journey that enables them to discover the depths of their own need for God and the zeal to make Jesus known and loved, a journey marked by joy as they discover that God is indeed among His people and that the power of His Love alone transforms.

The students come from more than 50 villages. Although Thabom is a Catholic community, only 10 per cent of the students in the two schools are Catholics. The rest are Buddhists. Some of them make an hour-long trip through mountain roads just to study here. Many parents work in the big cities as construction or factory workers. Others work in rubber plantations or are hired to gather corn. A few cultivate their own fields for a living.

Thabom has shed some of its rustic beauty as development brought in more vehicles and cell phones, fashionable dresses and hairstyles among the young. A regular water system is in place, stores have photo copying machines, a mobile wet market is scheduled weekly. The school and the Sisters are

equipped with Internet, thanks again to St. John's. During the rainy season though, we still have foghorn symphonies at night, men and boys carrying torches scour the fields to catch small animals for food, and early in the morning after a thunderstorm, women carry their pails to harvest varieties of mushrooms which have sprung up during the night.

When the Community of 3 Sisters - Catalina Maria Silva, Deanna Maria Combong and Mary Cecilia Claparols left the Philippines in 1980 to begin the foundation in Thailand little did they know that the Spirit would take them on a missionary journey from the south to the central region to the northeast of Thailand. Maybe the geographical journeying is not yet over. But wherever the Spirit leads them, they shall remember that the first thing they need to do is 'to take off their shoes lest they step on people's dreams and forget that God was there before their arrival.'

For how can they doubt God was here before them?

The Sisters wake up early in the morning with the hills in full view as they pray in their little chapel. Sometimes the fog envelops the whole area and in December and January the temperature takes a dip to as low as 7 degrees. Fireflies twinkle in the night.

As they adore and pray in the morning before sunrise or in the silence of the night, they are convinced that their prayer range goes beyond the visible horizon and touches the remotest ends of the earth. They are in the company of Our Lady whose statue stands in a corner. Their Mother - St. Marie Eugenie of Jesus is by their side, the missionary cross and the Blessed Sacrament before them, the birds just outside the windows spontaneously singing their own song.

Unseen from the highway, unmarked in the map... who but God knew that the Assumption was to find a dwelling in such a place as this How privileged and blessed is the Assumption to have been brought here by a God who was already waiting so that He can manifest that here, too is a place of glory for God!

The Community of Thabom

FRIENDS OF THE ASSUMPTION (FOA)

By: Ma. Lourdes G. Herrera Provincial Lay Representative

When I was elected as provincial lay representative in 2007, I honestly did not realize the magnitude of the task that lay before me --- to promote the growth of the Friends of the Assumption (FOA) and to strengthen Assumption Together in the entire Philippines-Thailand Province. As in my

past involvements with Assumption, I just said *YES!* and then immersed myself in the work, finding out later that the scope of responsibility was bigger than I thought. I would always end up consoling myself with the idea that it was meant to be, and that I had a mission.

And so I thought there was also a reason I was wearing other hats at the same time --- as President of the Assumption College Alumnae Association and Co-Chair of the canonization committee in the Province. The three roles actually gave me the strength to face my first challenge as lay head which was the immediate need to organize the pilgrims to Rome. With barely three months to mount a pilgrimage for over 1000 Assumption alumnae, faculty, staff, students, families and lay friends, it seemed like a physically impossible task --- many did not have passports, visa processing took a month, and flights had to be reserved for big groups, not to mention many other stumbling blocks. However, many mini-miracles took place and Mother Foundress paved the way for the poor, the sick, and the troubled to attend her canonization. A former teacher, for instance, had an emergency eye operation just two weeks before the flight and was therefore resigned not to push through with the trip. Days before the trip, she found out that the travel agent forgot to cancel the reservation and her doctors declared her fit to travel, something totally unexpected! The organization was in itself a miracle --- funds streamed in to enable more lay partners to join the pilgrimage; the registration, travel arrangements and other details just fell into place.

In the months that followed the canonization of Marie Eugenie, thanksgiving masses were held all throughout the Province and each celebration was attended by thousands who wanted to know our new saint better. Seizing the grace of the canonization, it was the time to spread her charism and make her known as she already belonged to the Universal Church.

There was no way to control the growth of FOA that ensued, so in 2008, the necessity was to develop a structure that would formally link all the FOA in a more organized manner. That meant building a database of members and providing ways they could move out of their comfort zones and start sharing lived experiences of Assumption Together with one another. To date, the Philippines-Thailand Province already has close to 20,000 FOAs, and the numbers are growing!

In the latter part of 2008, I organized our lay formation team and we all underwent the lay formation program consisting of the three main aspects of Marie Eugenie's spirituality -- Knowledge and Love of Jesus Christ, Humility and Joyful Detachment. The objective we had at the start of 2009 was to give

the formation program to all the FOA in the Province. By March 2009, we had conducted three major trainers' training programs in the main islands of the Philippines. And last September we had one in Thailand. These groups further echoed the formation in their respective communities. Our team also conducted the program for many other FOA groups of parents and alumnae. By the end of 2009, we would have achieved our aim to have all the FOA on the same level of understanding and appreciation of Marie Eugenie's spirituality. Hence, the 500 delegates to the Assumption Together Congress to be held in January 2010 will have a richer experience as they interact with those coming from other communities with different faiths, different cultures, and united by a common objective of "making the earth a place of glory for God".

The lay formation program has become the catalyst for the spiritual renewal of the lay communities. The feedback from the participants of the sessions affirms that Assumption Together is a charism that transforms the heart, mind, and spirit. It is the spirituality of Marie Eugenie as lived by the Sisters that witnesses to their lay friends (faculty, staff, parents, students, community at large) the transformative power of education, solidarity, love, relationships, support of community, joy, humble service & incarnational presence of God.

Each of the twelve formation sessions we conducted this year was an immensely enriching and learning experience for the lay team. We met lay partners from all walks of life, from different cultures and faiths and felt humbled by the passion they had in sharing their lives while absorbing the spirituality of Marie Eugenie. Our own lives have been made richer by the challenges we have faced and overcome, by the unexpected encounters with strangers who touched us and by the new friendships which were forged by our common dreams of a transformed society. Each exposure was an assurance that Marie Eugenie's words are truly universal, and that gave us the confidence to continue our work. The sessions allow us to cross barriers and build bridges among the FOA groups. We have indeed achieved a momentum we should sustain.

It seems imperative for us to now develop the next formation sessions after the Congress. The FOA groups will look forward to continuing talks on Marie Eugenie's spirituality and it is our role to feed this yearning for the soul. The next three years should be years of continuing formation to be given in the same manner --- via trainers' training sessions which allow faster echoing and dissemination of the program. The continued growth of the FOA will eventually reach all sectors and classes of society. This is the gift we have received and the grace we ought to share.

The Province will have its first National Congress after the Canonization of Mother Foundress on January 29, 30 and 31, 2010 with our Superior General, Sr. Diana Wauters and her General Council as special guests. There will be over 500 delegates from all the Friends of the Assumption groups throughout the Philippines and Thailand. The Congress theme is *“Assumption Together: Extending the Reign of God”*

The Assumption Together Travelling Exhibit of best practices will be opened on Friday, 29 January 2010.

On January 30, there will be the keynote address of Sr. Diana and a dialogue with her and her Council followed by sharing in groups on their experiences of living Assumption Together. In the evening, the Marie Eugenie Theatre of the Assumption will present a special performance with Assumption Together as the theme. This was the same group which organized the Youth Night presentation in Rome during the canonization.

On January 31, there will be a marathon called *“Run Assumption Run”* where we expect around 3000 participants. There will be a community Mass after the run and then the provincial delegates will go on tours of special Assumption Together projects: the housing project called *“Pusong Assumptionista”* in Cavite, the Assumption Antipolo campus and the Assumpta Technical High School in San Simon, Pampanga.

It is our hope that the delegates will experience Assumption Together, lived by the Friends of the Assumption as a renewed way of being CHURCH today.

ASSUMPTION EDUCATION FOR DEVELOPMENT (AEDEV) - Experience of solidarity

*“Helping the Mission Schools Help Themselves”
contributed by Sonjie Trillana and Sr. Fe Emmanuel, RA*

INTRODUCTION

Development education is an active learning process, founded on values of solidarity, equality, inclusion and co-operation.

Education for sustainable development aims to help people to develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge to make informed decisions for the benefit of themselves and others, now and in the future, and to act upon these decisions.

The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014), for which UNESCO is the lead agency, seeks to integrate the principles, values, and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning, in order to address the social, economic, cultural and environmental problems we face in the 21st century.

Even before the UNESCO made such declarations and published their development principles, the General Chapter of 1996 asked the Assumption Provinces to set up solidarity desks in view of effectively implementing in their Provinces, a mechanism for sharing and solidarity. AEDEV is a direct response of the Philippines-Thailand Province to this mandated effort aimed at providing a structure for the development of a consciousness for communion. Because of its obedience to this General Chapter decision, the Philippines-Thailand Province through AEDEV has seen the desired effect that the UNESCO has foreseen. Assumption Education for Development (AEDEV) purposively embarked on this kind of development.

AEDEV's main programs

Organized in 1997, AEDEV strives to assist Assumption mission schools in its mission to provide quality education to the less-fortunate. In the Philippines-Thailand Province, the Commission on Transformative Education is charged to oversee the growth of schools by looking into the mission school curriculum and faculty development. AEDEV helps in the administrative aspects of operating the school. To name a few, AEDEV has assisted in:

- ◆ Increasing teacher's salaries to a competitive level to help slow down faculty turn over.
- ◆ Helping the administrative team make regular financial reports and understanding how these reports reflect the financial health of their operations.
- ◆ Teaching the administrative team how to make a realistic yearly budget and the importance of this budget for their operations.
- ◆ Developing computer software for important administrative functions to enable them to utilize technology in improving their work. Schools were given computers, printers, and were taught how to use programs dealing with enrolment, financial accounting, payroll and student records.

AEDEV: Lived Communion

These different types of assistance are rolled out during a yearly workshop/seminar where various topics and formation opportunities are

prepared based on expressed needs of the participating school. So that the learning is effectively applied in the context of the respective schools, follow-up sessions and visits on a private/tutorial basis are done. The yearly gathering also provides an opportunity for these schools to share common problems and solutions, weaknesses and strengths, downfalls and success stories. This sharing has been very helpful in lifting up everyone and giving them the courage to move towards a certain direction. The school administrative teams are often the participants of these gatherings. They learn from one another's sharing. And in most instances, they leave the sessions filled with new insights and renewed regard for their work of animation of the school communities. AEDEV becomes a space for communion.

AEDEV: Growing in sustainability

Since more mission schools are operating on a deficit, AEDEV also provides financial assistance by way of:

- ◆ A yearly subsidy that they may use for their operating needs.
- ◆ Amounts given to each school vary depending on their needs.
- ◆ A grant-in-aid fund that the schools may give directly to their students who have difficulty meeting expenses such as transportation, subject materials, etc.
- ◆ Assistance in improving library, classroom and other physical facilities.
- ◆ Raising consciousness among donors (especially Manila-based alumnae) of the continuing need of our mission schools of their valued support. AEDEV also acts as a channel for donations.

This financial assistance for each school is reviewed on a yearly basis. Subsidies and grants are given based on actual and realistic needs

MOVING TOWARDS SELF-RELIANCE:

Becoming a School of Choice through a home-grown technology

After years of charging minimal tuition fees to all its students and operating on huge deficits, the mission schools have started to attend to its financial viability. We realize that many of its clientele can now afford to pay higher fees. Also, the mission schools which are largely dependent on the generosity of donors are beginning to experience donor fatigue. To increase income, schools have started implementing a socialized tuition fee scheme whereby those students who can afford to pay more are charged more- some students are now paying full cost of education. But the majority of students (at least

50%) enrolled are still charged a subsidized fee in varying amounts. Reaching a certain degree of financial independence means that our schools also have a little money to pay its teachers better salary, improve delivery of services, and provide better facilities. We can now work towards becoming a “SCHOOL OF CHOICE” in whatever area we are in.

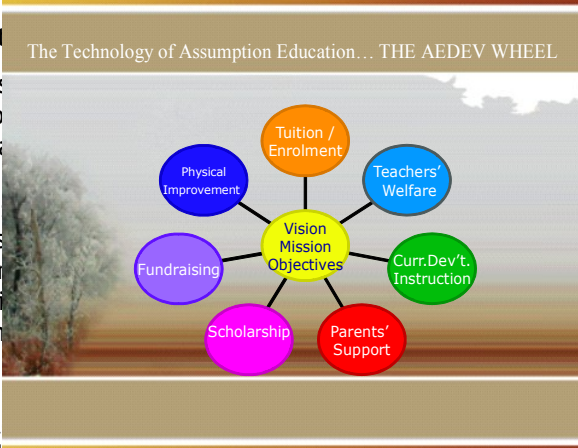
The AEDEV Wheel is a simple way of evaluating whether a school is able to attend to the various aspects that make for a school of choice. The schools are accompanied to make every aspect of the wheel develop suitably for a school to become a school of choice where parents and students will aspire to belong to such a school.

TEA (Transformative Education in the Assumption) SCHOLARS:

Educating the best and the brightest

Assumption education not only strives for formation, it also aims to make a positive influence. Assumption education is transformative.

In support of this thrust and to jump-start choice, the Assumption TEA scholars program was launched in 2009. The TEA Project provides a comprehensive formation that recognizes academic excellence, extracurricular involvement, and community service. It aims to attract and form the young leaders of the future, capable to become change agents in their communities. By developing their academic capabilities, the TEA scholars are expected to contribute to the growth and development of the communities where they come from and become positive contributors to our nation-building effort.



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This program allows each of our mission schools to accept as full scholars, the valedictorians and salutatorians of the surrounding public schools. The program which is open to both grade school and high school students will facilitate the entrance of 12 outstanding honour students. Each year, additional 12 scholars will be added until there are 48 TEA student leaders by the 4th year. This program aims to form a critical mass of students in the school who are imbued with the vision, values and capabilities to inspire their fellow students to strive for excellence so as to serve.

This program is about educating the future leaders and transformative agents. Deserving students will experience quality education they would otherwise not have access to. TEA scholars are also given opportunities to develop their leadership potentials through different program in their schools

and communities.

THE FUTURE

“No one more than we has been founded with a view to this society of the future for which our vows [desires] hasten the coming...”
MME’s Letter to Father d’Alzon, 25 mars, 1844.

AEDEV hopes to have a sizable scholarship fund that will provide financial assistance to those deserving students who cannot keep up with tuition increases. This way, our mission schools who are working towards becoming self-reliant, can remain faithful to its mission of providing quality education for the poor. This is our bright future. It will mean hard work and determination. And we are taking small double steps to make it happen. Our AEDEV Schools are becoming schools of choice and often they become pivotal points for encounter among the different sectors in the larger community.

◆ IMPRESSIONS OF AN OBSERVER OF AEDEV: BY SR GEETA from INDIA

I am so grateful that I was able to participate in this seminar. It helped me get a wider perception of the Province-its mission and commitments. It changed my attitudes and awareness. The effort you are putting in making the schools, schools of choice is very inspiring and enriching. I was so much touched by the lay collaboration to make this transformative education possible. It also gives me hope that I can do something in the situation of India, may be a step to bring about transformative education.

◆ COMMENT FROM AN AEDEV SCHOOL on the impact of AEDEV on their school

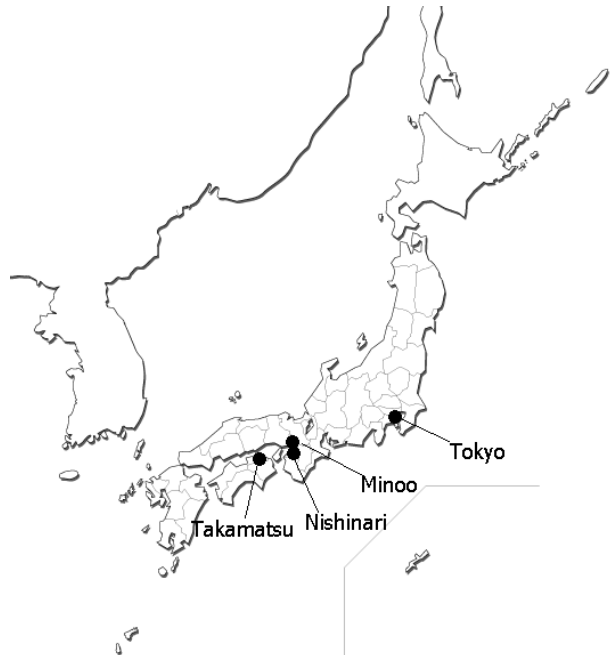
Assumption School Passi’s AEDEV Wheel continuously moves towards its directed goals. But there are areas in the wheel that need fine tuning. The journey is long and tiresome and needs people’s deeper commitment and dedication to accomplish its mission, yet it looks forward to another milestone with pride and thanksgiving... ”Come a

The Technology of Assumption Education... THE AEDEV WHEEL



2.2. Japan

Japan is an Asian country composed of four main islands: Honshu, Shikoku, Kyushu and Hokkaido. Four communities in two of the four main islands with 28 Sisters in Honshu Island (Tokyo, Minoo and Nishinari) and Shikoku island (Takamatsu). Different realities are emerging that influence the changes that are taking place in Japanese society: immigration, unemployment, weakening economy, among others affect the lives of the people. Japan is a country of basically Buddhist-Shinto culture. These two predominant religions are integrated in the culture of the Japanese. Christians approximately comprise 0.6% of the total population, 0.3 % of which are Catholics. Buddhist Temples and Shinto Shrines are a common sight and site of worship. This materialistic, secularized society and predominantly non-Christian milieu is the seed-ground of a “mustard seed” that is **Assumption Japan**.



The Province of Japan, in its effort to respond to the challenges of the present realities and according to its resources, has designed a project that aims to make the Assumption charism relevant today.

Transformative Education. Deepening our vision and understanding of Assumption Education. A collaborative comprehension of our vocation as Transformative Educators. Planning and implementing activities in line with this vision.

JPICS. Integration of our comprehension of our Religious Life in the JPICS especially in our ordinary daily living and in our attentiveness to the contemporary issues that challenge us.

Vocation Promotion and Apostolate for the Young. This is an apostolate given due importance by the Province which is ageing and is in need of more Sisters. A bi-monthly retreat for the Young who are searching for meaning in life and hope to discover their vocation, is facilitated by the Committee of Vocation Promotion of the Province. This is an occasion for them to understand better the choices they have and perhaps consider religious life as a choice. In the process, we share with them our joy of following Christ.

Assumption Together. Gathered in the spirit of St. Marie Eugenie, Assumption Together aims to transform society through the Gospel. The Province strongly supports the activities, forum and gathering of the Friends of the Assumption. Once every two months, the Core Group meet to plan and discuss matters pertaining to Assumption Together, whose membership is composed of Teachers & Staff, Parents, Parishioners, Alumni and Sisters. Along the way, they know more about St. Marie Eugenie.

MINOO COMMUNITY

Minoo is in the Prefecture of Osaka. Assumption School and our school are located at the foot of Mount Minoo known as the “Mountain of Prayer and Worship.” There are Buddhist Temples and Taoist Shrines on this mountain and are places of pilgrimage. This quiet residential area close to nature is the base of our religious presence and education ministry. In



School

In 1953, a small kindergarten school was established with 31 children. That “mustard seed” planted 54 years ago at the foot of Mt. Minoo, has grown to 950 students of 4 educational departments: Pre-School, Elementary, Junior and Senior High School. The grace of God, the cooperation of Parents, Teachers, Alumnae and Friends helped the Sisters continue to bring to fulfilment St. Marie Eugenie’s vision of transformative education

notwithstanding their being Buddhists or Taoist or perhaps, being non-believers. Almost all of our students are non-Christians, but their Parents want quality education in the Assumption, based on the philosophy of education of St. Marie Eugenie. School events are carried out at individual departments. But there is an event where all departments, all Teachers, Staff, Alumni, Parents and Sisters are involved. Held annually in October, the *Assumption Charity Day* is a unified activity for the missions. It is to bring to all participating the chance to be conscious of the less privileged and to make concrete action to help and serve others.



Minoo Community composed of 11 Sisters is the Provincial Community. The Sisters are involved in various apostolates.

The School. It is a fact that the number of Sisters working in the school is less, yet the Sisters' Group, composed of all Sisters involved in the school from Minoo and Nishinari communities, try their best to offer quality presence in the different departments. The Sisters teach, animate religious activities and relate with the students and teachers.

The Parish. The Sisters are involved in Minoo Parish. They help prepare the children and adults for Baptism and First Communion. A sister is also a member of the Parish Council. A missionary Sister is working with Migrants in Suita Parish.



Involvement with AMA. The Sisters identify and motivate students and graduates who are interested to do volunteer work for a year or two. At least every year, the community facilitates the sending of AMA volunteer/s to the Philippines. As a preparation, they are initiated into a Christian experience of a community. A send-off ceremony culminates their mission orientation.

Coming of Age Day. In Japan, when young girls reach the age of 18-20, there is a rite called “Coming of Age day.” It is to commence their age of maturity. Senior High School students and young graduates are invited to the community for a gathering highlighted by a Mass and a blessing since most of them are not Christians.

Christmas prayer gathering takes place as Christmas nears. Teachers and Staff are invited to the community to pray, share about the meaning of Christmas and share a simple meal. This is well participated in and appreciated by those who attend.

TAKAMATSU COMMUNITY



Takamatsu Community was founded in 1966. Presently, there are 6 Sisters in the community. We have a Kindergarten School, the *Maria Kindergarten*, which was set up in 1967. There are 220 pupils in the school under the direction of a lay person. The school is adapting the Montessori Method of teaching and learning. Sisters teach Religion

and give Bible lessons to the Mothers. The younger teachers are attending “The Youth and the Bible,” a session offered by the Takamatsu Diocese.” There is an apparent interest in the Catholic faith even if there are only 2 teachers and 3 sets of parents who are Catholics.



In the *Parish*, the Sisters give Catechism classes to



the children with the help of lay church workers. The Sisters also prepare children for First Communion. The Parish has members from other countries who have integrated well into the life of the local Church. The laity is actively involved in the formation in the faith of the children and the young. A Parents' association was organized to assure the continuity of lay involvement. The Sisters are likewise involved in the Nihongo language lesson for the Filipinos. A Sister is a member of the Parish Choral group which animates the liturgy of the Parish. A "Peace Music Festival" was held last August. At the Diocesan level, a Sister is a member of the Council Pastoral Mission and the Pastoral care for Women and the Youth of the Diocese of Takamatsu.

NISHINARI COMMUNITY



Nishinari Community was established in Kamagasaki area of Osaka Prefecture in 1989. Located in the industrial and prosperous city of Osaka, it is the place of labourers, the unemployed and those “obliged” to be poor. The community started in a rented house near the Emmaus Community Centre, close to Kamagasaki. In 2001, it was decided to build a house for the community and make it the base for the JPICS apostolate of the Province. The reason why Nishinari was established in this area is to be with



the poor, to concretely live the mission of Christ: “to proclaim the Good News to the Poor.” Presently, there are 5 Sisters in the community serving those who get severe blows caused by worldwide economic recession, the day labourers and those who have lost their jobs and are forced to live on the streets. Under this condition, the community tries hard to give these people the support they need. The apostolate of the Sisters aims at social evangelical reforms inspired by St. Marie Eugenie- “we make efforts to walk with Christ by starting to reform ourselves.”

In Kamagasaki, there are many support groups who offer help and services: NGOs, labour groups as well as the Students of Assumption Junior and Senior High School who come to be exposed to the other reality of Japan. These groups offer collaborative efforts to help those in need in Kamagasaki. The Sisters facilitate the social awareness and awaken the social responsibility of those who come and are open to a learning experience of the plight of the less privileged. It is the hope and the prayer of the Sisters that they too will take action in building a much better society. A Sister is actively involved in issues related to immigration. She gives support to Migrants and Refugees, helping them as interpreter since most of them cannot speak Nihongo. Three Sisters are involved in the school in Minoo. The presence of the Sisters in Nishinari is a presence of hope and in the process, they too are evangelized.

TOKYO COMMUNITY



Tokyo Community started as a *Community of Formation* in 1993 in Kasai Area and later moved to Koiwa area in 1999. While it continues to be a formation community and a house of prayer, the Sisters have been serving different Parishes. The community is composed

of 5 sisters. The community serves Koiwa, Ichikawa and Kasai churches where they give introductory lessons on Catechism, the Psalms and the Sacraments. They help prepare the First Communicants and those who are to be Confirmed.

In *Kasai Church*, an Augustinian Parish, a Sister is involved with the formation of children and youth whose parents are Japanese and Filipinos. They are referred to as “doubles” as they have 2 inherent cultures: Filipino and Japanese. There is a Bible class for the Youth.



A *Lectio Divina* session is facilitated for Filipino women. On Saturdays, a group gathers in a household to pray the Rosary and have Bible sharing called *the Block Rosary*. The Sisters also give assistance to Filipino women who have emotional problems due to breakdown of marriages. Kasai church is home to the *JFY (Japanese-Filipino Youth Education Program)*, a program for

youth with multi-cultural background through Youth Camps, outdoor activities workshops, exchange program with the Filipino-Japanese Children (JFC) in the Philippines and volunteer activities. The JFY Program has now become Church-based. Every Wednesday, the Community receives food nearing its expiration date from a big US Supermarket in Tokyo brought by an NGO called *Second Harvest*. Some members of the Prayer Group volunteer to deliver them to poor families to augment their need for food. The Prayer

group is composed of Filipino, Korean and Indian nationals. The Sisters are also involved in “Seseragi,” the spiritual centre of the Jesuits in Sanya area, a town of day labourers and the jobless; the animation of the Assumption Minoo Alumni based in Tokyo; and teaching French to some Japanese.



After more than 50 years of its foundation, the Province of Japan has never ceased to be committed to the mission of making Jesus Christ known and loved through the different ministries they are involved in and with great respect, to peoples of different religions. Small steps, simple ways, loving dedication, humble means and a great love for Jesus, the “raison d’être” of our religious life in the Assumption. So few, 28 Sisters but this will never be a hindrance to keeping the Assumption spirit alive in Japan nor diminish their zeal for the Kingdom. St. Marie Eugenie will always inspire us with her words

“All comes from Jesus Christ,
All belongs to Jesus Christ,
All must be for Jesus Christ.”



2.3. India

The Province of India and its life in the communities

carte

The Province of India has 13 communities spread out in 4 states - Kerala, Maharashtra, Bihar & Jharkhand. Our Provincial Project is based on the Congregational Project and we envision a society where Justice, Love, Peace & Care of Creation prevails and the glory of God is experienced by the people.

Pala community:

The 1st community of Assumption in India was and still is in Pala. It was opened in October 1968 in the Syro-Malabar Diocese of Pala. Our convent is situated in Kerala the southernmost part of India.

The first Sisters stayed in a small rented house at Arunapuram, in Pala from 1968 to 1970. In 1970 the Sisters moved to the present convent. The three storied building attached to the convent was meant for a Retreat House as per the wish of the then Bishop Rt. Rev. Sebastian Vayalil, who had invited the Assumption Sisters to open a convent in his diocese.

photos

Assumption Convent at Pala.

The community with...during the visit of the G.C.

In 1972 the Jyothis Theological College for Sisters was started at the Assumption Institute, Pala. As many other theological colleges came up the number of Sisters attending the course became less. From 1982 onwards the Assumption Institute was used as a hostel for college students.

At present the Sisters in the community are engaged in different apostolates. This year 2009-2010 the community in Pala chose to live 3 priorities in our community life, prayer life and the apostolate (in the assumption hostel, diocesan schools, college and parish) in a deeper way. These priorities are transformative Education, JPICS, and witnessing to community and our target groups are children, youth, and women. As a community, we want to live with passion for Christ and for the extension of His Kingdom, to make our community a place for the Glory of God helping the young in their search for meaning in life.

photo

Sr. Valsa with the girls in the hostel

photo

*Silver jubilee celebration of Sr. Gita
R.A. Friends in PALA*

Sr. Mary James is the Superior of the community. She conducts language courses in French & English at different times of the year. She is also involved in Pastoral activities and keeps good contact with the people around. Sr. Valsa is in charge of the Hostel and she conducts the prayer meetings and monthly meetings. The Catholic students attend daily Mass in our Chapel. Sr. Therese is a professor in the M. Ed College of the diocese. Srs. Celine, Geeta & Stella teach in the diocesan schools. Wherever they are they re-affirm the charism of Transformative Education in all their apostolic activities, help the young in their search for meaning in life and motivate them to discover their mission on earth.

Calicut:

The Vision of our Community is ‘A globalized and dehumanizing society, transformed by Christian faith, where God is recognized, loved, served and glorified.’

photos

Assumption Convent, Calicut.

Marie Eugenie Centre

The community of Assumption Sisters in Malaparamba, in Calicut was started in 1977 in view of programming a radical formation for the novices based on Indian spirituality and culture. Taking the Church’s trend, option for the poor seriously, the life style of community is simple in solidarity with the majority of the people around them. Besides the formation programmes, the Sisters are involved in socio-religious activities in collaboration with the Jesuits of Kerala Province. The Sisters worked with the fishermen in the beach area and are engaged in formal and non-formal transformative education of programmers.

The present community in Calicut:

Our community has five Sisters, five postulants and one candidate who is doing the 11th class. The postulants and the candidate stay in the Marie Eugenie Centre as there is lack of space in the convent.

Srs. Saly and Archana teach in two different schools in Calicut. Sr. Marykutty is the Superior of the community and helps Sr. Leela in the formation. Sr. Vimla is involved in the social apostolate and is in charge of the Marie Eugenie Centre. Sr. Leela is also engaged in counselling.

photo

The Calicut Community

photo

The postulants in Calicut

We are also involved in the pastoral activities of our local Church. We engage ourselves in women's welfare activities, Guidance and Counselling, Brainwave therapy, hospital visits, mental hospital visits, co-coordinating work of diocesan social service programmers etc. The group of Friends of the Assumption was formed last year with the neighbourhood contacts.

photos

Sr. Archana with her students

R.A. Friends' National Gathering

photo

SHG women making soap powder

The National get together for the Friends of the Assumption was held in Calicut in October 2008. On September 12 & 13 we had the regional gathering of the Assumption communities of Kerala region, in the Marie Eugenie Centre.

Formation:

The Calicut community was entrusted with the responsibility of the formation of our postulants from November 2008 onwards. Of the five postulants three are from Bihar and two from Maharashtra. The candidate we have in Calicut is from Kerala.

The postulants will be entering the novitiate on October 15th 2009. Sr. Leela is the Mistress of Formation and Sr. Marykutty is the Assistant. All the community members take part in the formation in one way or another.

Our community also assumes the responsibility of vocation promotion by conducting camps in the parishes and keeping up contacts with the youth.

THEL PARA:

We, Srs. Mary Thomas, Elsy Thomas, Sherly Thomas and Asha are the Thelpara community members. Thelpara community was founded in 1983. Sr. Mary Thomas, the present Superior of the community, takes care of the rubber plantation of the Province. The income from the rubber is used for the hospital expenses and for the formation needs of the Province. Sr. Elsy is involved in the pastoral activities and the women's programs locally.

photo

Assumption Convent at Thelpara

Sr. Sherly Thomas serves the diocese as coordinator for the women's programs in the diocese of Mananthawady. Sherly gives sessions for women

and meets the women's groups in the different parishes. Sr. Asha teaches in a nearby English medium school. Her teaching has extended our contact beyond Thelpara.

Chepparamba:

Chepparamba is situated in Tellicherry Archdiocese in Kerala and it became a parish in 2003. There are 165 Catholic families. The people are simple, friendly, welcoming, hospitable, hardworking and have a deep faith in God. Most of them are economically poor. Many work in the quarries and some do farming. The children are intelligent and talented. They study in a school which is 5 kms. away from here. The people are conscious about giving good education to their children and do not want the children to work like them in the quarries. The men use up most of their earnings in drink. Alcoholism is one of the main problems. Counselling is very much needed for the people to build up the family integrity and well being

The Assumption Community here was founded in April 2007 with four Sisters. We own about 5 acres of land with rubber, cashew-nut and coconut plantations which is our main income. We cultivate tapioca, vegetables, fruits, flowers and herbal medicines to keep up the productivity of the land and the beauty of creation.

We are three members in the community at present. Still we carry out the work of four. We are involved in the socio-pastoral and educational activities of the place. We run a nursery school for the locality. In the pastoral field, each of us has been given responsibility for different organisations, like The Holy Childhood, The Little Flower Mission League, Kerala Catholic Youth Movement, Catechism and The Catholic Mother's Association. Besides that we animate the choir, conduct prayer services and form the altar boys. The women and the children of the parish are also involved in the Social Service Society of the Parish through which they come to know the problems of the society and take steps to solve them. They also learn the proper use of money and how to save it. One of the Sisters animates them.

Regular life of the Parish: feast celebrations, preparations of the Annual retreat, refresher courses, meetings, competitions, house-blessings, baptism, marriages etc. We are part of all these. There are people with chronic sicknesses, economic problems, old age, and mental ill health. We visit and empower them.

Vocation Promotion: The main purpose of our existence here is vocation promotion. Tellicherry diocese is the cradle of vocations. We visit several parishes and we organised a personality development seminar which was conducted by our own Sisters from Calicut. We welcome priests and lay people who come unexpectedly to visit the church and we share our meals with them. Many express, "You are different from other Sisters." They

invited us to visit their parishes and visit the youth. Our Parish Priest is very co-operative and supportive in all the steps we take for vocation promotion.

We are happy to be with the people of this locality sharing their simple life and faith and we hope our presence and activities will help them and orient their life with right values and that families become more integrated and the Chepparamba Church will witness God's kingdom of love and unity.

photo

The Parishioners of Chepparamba

Pune- SashtriNagar Community:

The city of Pune is well known for its cultural and educational heritage. It is known as the Oxford of the East. It is also characterized by plurality of religions and cultures. Pune is one of the fast industrializing cities of India, with an increasing number of IT companies and construction companies. During the last 15 years Pune City has witnessed an enormous increase in the number of people living in the slums. It is estimated that 32% of Pune's *population live in the slums.*

photo

The SashtriNagar Community with Sr. Diana

photo

Women's rally organized by the WWC

The Assumption Sisters arrived in Pune in 1974. Four young Sisters lived in a rented house and did their studies in the university. In 1975 the juniorate was started in Pune, with Sr. Myriam Selz as the Junior Mistress.

In 1979 we purchased the present building at SashtriNagar for the Formation and Provincial House.

The SashtriNagar community lives in proximity to many religious houses of men and women as well as centres of religious learning and universities for college studies. Our neighbourhood consists of upper and middle class families belonging to different religions, castes, cultures and languages.

The Present Community:

We are 6 finally professed Sisters, 3 Juniors and 2 aspirants doing their junior college studies. Our apostolic project is reaching us out to the Christian intellectual milieu, middle class Christian families as well as to the poor and marginalized people of different religions living in the slums and villages of Pune.

Sr. Shobha, the Provincial lives in the 2nd floor of the house. She is often out visiting the communities which are spread out in the country. Being the Provincial house we often have Sisters from other communities.

Sr. Lizzie is the Superior of the community. She is part of the Formation team and is actively involved in the pastoral apostolate.

Sr. Alphonse is the Provincial Treasurer, a provincial councillor and is also part of the formation team.

Photo

Sr. Rekha teaches in the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Pune, and she is the director of the new Master's Program in Biblical studies. She is a resource person for Biblical exegesis, theology and spirituality, and has been invited to various national and international conferences to present papers. She also writes articles and books, and is the section Editor of Jeevdhara (Word of God), one of the leading theological journals in India.

Rekha was recently appointed as the Junior Mistress.

Sr. Philo is the director of the Women's Welfare Centre, which works for the empowerment of women & welfare of the families in the slums and villages of Pune. She is a lawyer and helps the women and conflicting families through legal aid and counselling.

Sr. Anjali is in charge of the aspirants and helps Sr. Lizzie in the management of the house

Sr. Sneha is a young Sister. She has completed her juniorate and due to ill health she is recuperating in the community.

Sr. Schola is doing a diploma degree in theology as her juniorate program.

Sr. Jyotsna has completed her juniorate and is doing her studies in Social Work (B.S.W.)

Cynthia & Sibal are our two aspirants from Maharashtra. They are doing their college studies while getting to know the life in Assumption.

photo

Cynthia & Sibal

Friends of Assumption:

Our community has a group of Friends belonging to different languages and cultures. They are slowly growing in love for St. Marie Eugenie and our spirituality. Srs. Lizzie and Alphonse are in charge of their formation and animation.

Pune-Vithalwadi:

photo

Vithalwadi community

Vithalwadi: Our community has four Sisters: Gracy, Jacinta, Daisy & Shiny. Sr. Gracy is the Sister-in-charge of the community and is in charge of the Vidhyakiran boarding house. There are 60 girls in the boarding house at the moment. These are children whose parents have died due to HIV-AIDS or are affected by AIDS. Sr. Gracy is also involved in women's empowerment programs.

Sr. Jacinta gives her service as a Counsellor in St. Vincent's High School, Pune.

Sr. Daisy is a counsellor who gives her service to the Sisters of different congregations in India. Individual Sisters from different congregations are asking for counselling service. Lack of facility for this in Vithalwadi convent keeps Daisy from taking this up.

Sr. Shiny is a trained nurse who is having work experience in a hospital nearby.

photo

The Children in Vidhaykiran with Srs. Sophie & Gracy

Ambatta:

Ambatta community was started in 1985 at the invitation of the Jesuit fathers to take care of the boarding for the tribal girls and to teach in their school for the tribals.

At present we are a community of three Sisters. The main apostolate of our community is the boarding house for tribal girls.

We have a dispensary which takes care of the health needs of the children in the boarding house as well as the people of the nearby villages. We aim at the integral development of the children through the different activities in the boarding house.

photo

Through the dispensary we try to impart curative & preventive health. The importance and use of herbal medicines is taught to the villagers.

Women's self-help groups started by the Sisters have made the women confident & economically independent. The women make use of the training they received to create income to support their families.

Tilloli:

Tilloli village is about 1 hour drive from Nasik City. Here we have a boarding school for the tribal girls. The strength of the school is about 600. In the boarding house there are about 500 girls.

photo

Tilloli Community

Sr. Jaya is the superior of the Community and is the Manager of the school. Sr. Tissy Thomas (exclaustrated) is the headmistress of the school. Sr. Manjusha teaches in the high school section of the school. Sr. Shanty Varghese takes care of the health needs of the girls. Shanty joined the community in August 2009 and is planning to extend her service to the villages. Sr. Lali Jacob does the accounts of the school and the community.

We have a sister from another congregation to help us in the boarding house since November 2008.

Jnana Jyoti Kanya Ashram School in Tilloli is an attempt by the Assumption Sisters in India to impart a holistic education based on the values of truth, justice, service and knowledge, to the tribal girls of the village of Tilloli and the surrounding villages in the state of Maharashtra in India.

History

The Assumption Sisters came to the village of Tilloli in January 1996. They found the villagers poor, illiterate and socially backward. The villagers depended on rain for their agriculture. The literacy rate was very low. Only a few knew to read and write. The condition of women was worse. They worked 13 hours a day. Girls were given in marriage at a very young age. Boys were sent to school and girls were kept at home to work and look after their siblings. The women were the victims of superstitions and outdated religious customs.

The Sisters stayed in a mud house in the village, visited the nearby villages and took contact with the people. They realized that education and health care are the urgent needs of the place and that education can bring about a transformation in these villages.

The people of Tilloli requested the Sisters to open a school for their children. They donated 2 acres of land for the school. In answer to the request and need of the people, on 1st June 1996 the Sisters started the Jnana Jyoti Kanya Ashram School for the education of the girls in the area.

Now the school has a new school building thanks to the generosity of the Friends of Tilloli in Mallorca, Spain. From June 2009 the classes are held in the new school building.

Dispensary

The dispensary attached to the boarding house caters to the health needs of the girls in the boarding house as well as the women and children of the nearby villages. The healing they experience by the medical care of the Sisters has increased the trust of the people in the Sisters.

Women's empowerment programme

The Sisters are committed to the empowerment of the women of these villages. The girls of these villages were sent to learn different skills like tailoring which helps them attain self-employment and earn some income for their families. The Sisters have also introduced saving schemes and self-help groups for women

The community keeps in touch with the girls who have left the school and helps & guides them in their future studies. The Sisters plan to start an Alumnae association for the students who have left our school.

The changes that we see in the children and the villages.

The children have grown in freedom, straightforwardness, generosity and hospitality.

They have grown intellectually and are able to undertake further studies.

The people of the area have a lot of trust in the Sisters.

The students became aware of the value of manual work.

They help their parents in the household duties when they are at home.

There is lot of improvement in hygiene - personal and environmental.

The women in the village became aware of the lack of education in their life and they are now interested in sending their girl-children to school.

The parents became aware of the importance of girls' education for the development of the society.

The girls take initiative; give their opinion in the village meetings.

The people became aware of their rights and have started standing courageously for their rights.

The villagers have wider contact with the people of other villages and a sense of community is growing.

There is a strong move among the people to work for the development of their own families and their society

Rajodi:

Rajodi community is situated on the Arabian sea-coast. Rajodi parish is very special for the Indian Sisters as we have the statue of St. Marie Eugenie installed on the bell tower of the parish. The Friends of Assumption of Rajodi is a lively group. The group was formed by Sr. Shanti Pazhetu. At present Sr. Rose Tresa is in charge of the group.

photo

In community we are four Sisters. Sr. Sheela Jose is the Superior of our community. She administers a primary school of the nearby parish. Sr. Deepti & Sr. Rose work in the project "Jivhalla Assumption Social Centre" for the empowerment of tribal women and children. The tribals in Rajodi are a displaced group; they have no land of their own and are marginalized in many ways. At present we use one of the big rooms of the convent for the office of the social centre and for conducting programs. Sr. Precilla who has a diploma in tailoring gives training in tailoring to the women who come to the centre. She is doing the nursery teachers' training this year.

Patna:

The Patna Community was started in 1987 as the novitiate house for the Province, after a search of two years in Pune, for a proper place for formation. Sr. Alphy is the Superior of our community. Srs. Alice Toppo and Celine Mathew are the other members of our community who help in the formation. Now the Patna convent is the place for 'Come & See', candidacy for the candidates from the north

photos

Our Aspirants from north India

Sr. Alphy & Susan with M.Eml. outside the gate of our convent

We are also involved in pastoral activities. The parish has entrusted us a zone called Bascoti where we conduct a prayer meeting every Monday and take care of their other spiritual needs. Every Friday we go to two areas for communion distribution for the sick and aged. Sr. Alphy is a member of the Atmadarshan team so at times she goes to give sessions in Atmadarshan - a centre for retreats and counselling.

Harnaut:

Harnaut community was started in 1998 at the request of the then Bishop Rev. Benedict Osta, to work among the Christian and non-Christian Dalits (marginalised in the society) of Harnaut. Sr. Alice Ayathamattam is the Superior of our community. We are involved in both formal education and social apostolate. The Loyola school of the diocese was started by the Assumption Sisters. Sr. Annie Konnackal is the headmistress of this school since 2000. Srs. Alice and Lilly are teachers in this school. Srs. Veena and Sujitha take care of the social apostolate. The boarding for the girl-children is taken care of by Sr. Veena. It is run by the diocese.

Literacy programs for out-of-school children are held in different villages. Supplementary education for school drop-outs, training, skill development

and capacity building for young girls and women are conducted in the social centre. We have self-help groups for the empowerment of women and a Project for the physically handicapped children.

Pastoral involvements:

We participate in the Eucharistic celebration in the villages, take care of the women's organisation in the Parish, faith formation of hostel students through catechism classes and KRUS VIR (the soldiers of the CROSS)

Piriaponch:

photos

The R.A. community at Piriaponch

photos

Children in the School

In the village

Our Community in Piriaponch is composed of 4 Sisters - Lissy Antony, Mary John, Preeti & Sujatha. This small community in the corner of the tribal State of Jharkhand is constantly conscious of its mission & of its challenges. The greatest joy of being here is that we are constantly in touch with the least in our society.

Being close to nature, we discover the beauty and richness of God's creation, of every culture, every form of life. We thus learn to value, to appreciate, to respect and to take care of it. It is our deep faith and strong conviction that God has a plan for each one of us; He has appointed us to be the animators, in His project for a renewed and enlightened world.

In the Apostolic field we try to make our mission effective and meaningful according to the needs of our people. We inculcate value-based, life-oriented education giving importance to punctuality, discipline, cleanliness, love for Nature, promotion of cultural activities, sports and manual work. There are about 500 children in our school. We try to educate them by opening their hearts and minds to a new world of thinking and accompanying them to reach the higher goals in life. We lead them on the way of sacrifice, commitment and service; thus making them feel responsible for their society.

photo

Meeting with the women in the church compound.

We gather the tribal women in Self-help Groups (SHG's) and the men in Farmer's club (Kisan Club) and try to motivate them, empower them and enable them to take responsibility for their own development. We are constantly aware of our call to be in solidarity with the poor, with women -

illiterate and ignorant, discriminated and marginalized - in their struggle for social identity and for improved standard of living.

We educate them about their rights, about health and hygiene, empower them with human dignity, conscientise them about their potentialities to build themselves and their society. The poverty and the financial dependency in our society pushes us to take concrete action for economic development through learning skills, income generating programs by SHG's and Kisan Clubs and getting the schemes of Jharkhand government for the development of tribals available to our people

We accompany our youth through regular meetings, discussions, and the implementation of different programs planned by the diocese and the parish. We are active in the pastoral field by animating the groups for mothers, youth groups and the Catholic Sabha. The Catholic population in Piriaponch Parish is about 3000.

We have great hope and trust that the tribal community in Piriaponch will emerge as one of the developed, enlightened societies with economic sufficiency, dignity and security-free from all types of exploitative forces.

Bhagalpur

photo

Our community in the village of Pakartalla in Bhagalpur diocese was started in 1989 at the invitation of the late Bishop Rev. George Saupin. Our Sisters were present from the very beginning of St. Joseph's School. We are five Sisters in the community since September 2009. Sr. Mercy is the Sister-in-Charge of the community and Sr. Susan Varghese is the Vice-Principal of the school. Sr. Sarah and Sr. Mercy teach in the school and Sr. Jyothi is the school Office In-charge.

Each one of us takes a keen interest in imparting human and Christian values to students. We give special attention to the girl-children, encourage them to take part in the different activities of the school as they are not given equal opportunity like boys in the society and at home.

photo

1st batch of students from St. Joseph's.

Sr. Tessy with the SHG women

The community is involved in the socio-pastoral apostolate too. Sr. Tessy takes care of the Self-help groups for the empowerment of the poor women in the locality. Kahalgaon is an area affected by flood every year during the rainy season. Tessy had joined with the diocesan team in the project

“Disaster preparedness” to help the people to face the flood situation in housing and health awareness

A joyful event for us during this year was the Final profession of Sr. Leena in our Parish Church.

photos

2.4. What does Marie Eugenie say about China?

The world is too small for my love.

This reflection of Eugenie Milleret, newly converted, finds echoes in two texts of the Notes Intimes of 1837: first a reference to her recent reading matter in the *Annals of the Faith*,⁷ then, the expression of her desire to transmit what she has just discovered.

The books which should touch me get to me without my looking for them. Madame Levallant, who never gives me books, lent me the other day the Annals of the Faith, that moved me to tears. Upon reading them I was stunned that I dare rest in an inactive life whereas there still are in this century of doubt, very courageous martyrs, confessors, while there is around us so much good still to be done.

(N.I. March - April 1837 n° 159/01)

How my heart broadens; what insight of infinite love God sometimes bestows... the movements of happiness of the poor sick who return to life are nothing in comparison but something similar. I would like to give my brothers what I experience. (N.I. in the retreat of May 1837 - n° 154/01-sic)

From the first years of the foundation, Marie Eugenie knows where to direct her gaze:

In Jesus Christ and on the extension of His Kingdom. (1841-44)
and where to orient her life:

To consecrate myself, according to the spirit of our Institute, to extend the Kingdom of O.L.J.C. in souls throughout my whole life. (Christmas 1844 - formula of perpetual profession)

But this desire appears even before. On August 30, 1844, feast of St. Rose of Lima, Marie Eugenie makes a missionary engagement in her name and in that of the Congregation with Frs. Webber and Richard, apostolic missionaries, on the eve of their departure for Madagascar. Union of prayer was also done with Frs. Charrier and Galy, missionaries in China.

For the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls. Fathers Webber and Richard, apostolic missionaries and Sister Marie Eugenie,

⁷ *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith* - There are several volumes of Annals (1828, 1833-1856) in the archives library of the Congregation. These were brought over from Val Notre Dame in 1984.

Superior of the Religious of the Assumption, in her name as in that of her past, present but also future daughters who would want to be united by the same commitments, in the presence of the Holy Trinity, of the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God and our Mother also, of our Guardian Angels, of the Holy Angels, of St. Joseph, of our patrons and all the heavenly court, beg God to accept and bless our commitments; of St. Catherine of Sienna to whom we particularly entrust them; we put in common from now onwards and for always, our work, prayers, penances, sacrifices, communions and in general all our good works, begging God, to Whom charity is so pleasing, to approve this community established in view of His glory and of our general and particular good. We commit ourselves especially to united ourselves in the Immaculate Heart of the most Holy Virgin to say and hear Mass, receive Communion and recite the Office for each other on the first Saturday of the month in union with Frs. Charrier and Galy, Apostolic Missionaries in China and Confessors of the Faith who have made the same commitments with us. We agree, finally, that the greatest merits gained by one be shared equally by all and serve especially to obtain the graces of Christian Life for the souls among whom we work. The present commitments were taken at the Convent of the Assumption on the feast of St. Rose, August 30, 1844, eve of the departure of Frs. Webber and Richard for their mission to Madagascar.⁸

In the prayer intentions of Marie Eugenie at the time of her perpetual vows, on Christmas 1844, we find: *the Missions, the missionaries of Madagascar and of China.* (N.I. n°249/01)

The 2nd Volume of the *Origins* gives interesting details drawn from the notes of Mother Marie-Gonzague, Constance Saint Julien, the 6th Sister of the newly born Assumption.

We still have no chaplain. The Fathers of the Holy Spirit who lived near us at the Impasse des Vignes, said Mass for us and that is how we made the acquaintance of these holy religious. Two among them prepare to go to Madagascar. They were admirable in their generosity and fervour. We saw again Fr. Richard after two years of apostolate. His health was completely weakened but his courage had not diminished. He came to France to ask help from Queen Marie-Amelie and return immediately after. He spoke to us a lot about his mission and recounted how they live in Mayotte and in Sainte-Marie, evangelizing from there the neighbouring peoples. These good Fathers have lived only a short time, worn out by the devouring climate, as the missionaries sent by St. Vincent de Paul. Another Father who will replace for us those who left is preparing himself to minister in Cayenne,

⁸ Archives MO 1 - text handwritten by Mother Therese Emmanuel. Signed: Sister Marie Eugenie of Jesus, Superior of the Religious Assomptiades and Frs. Webber and Richard.

with the lepers. His joyful devotedness, his zest in sacrifice have edified us very much. It is with these religious, martyrs of their zeal for the faith, that we have established a union of prayers as well as with Father Pierre Charrier⁹, missionary to China.

This latter had undergone a long and admirable martyrdom whose acts are found in the Annals of the Propagation of the Faith and recall the heroism of the martyrs of the primitive Church. Two years in an iron cage, interrogations accompanied by torture, sublime responses, nothing has been lacking in the glory of this confessor of the faith. One day they wanted him to step on the cross. He remained unmoved and several men could not budge him. At the moment when they were going to lead him to the torture chamber and decapitate him, the missionary was called by the commandant of a French sloop of war. He was inconsolable at having escaped in this way the glory of martyrdom. "I was so close to heaven, he said, sure of going there straightaway! ...and now, who knows!"

Brought to France by the French warship, Fr. Charrier had but one desire: to return to China. He was able to enter by hiding and for several years continued his mission. Called back by his superiors, he returned definitively to Paris and died as director of the house of the Missions Etrangères.¹⁰

It will again be a question of Fr. Charrier, much later, in a chapter, 23 May 1880: *Live in the Sight of God.*

Well, Sisters, we too must give our mind to that. I think some of you have known Fr. Charrier, of the Missions Etrangères, who had suffered the first stages of martyrdom. He and his companions had been taken up, tortured and beaten with rods, and were freed by the French just as they were going to be strangled. He told us that in China there was only one devotion: never to forget the Presence of God. To forget it was to be lost. The only strength was the thought that everything one does or suffers is for God.

We live in a time of ferment and agitation. Evil plans threaten us. Will they be carried out? God alone knows. But in the midst of so many uncertainties we can draw great strength from the habit of living in the Presence of God.

⁹ Fr. Pierre Charrier (1803-1871)

¹⁰ We also read in a letter of M. Marie Eugenie to Fr. d'Alzon: *With this I am sending you a very precious relic, a piece of clothing of Fr. Cornay, martyr of Tonkin, that he was wearing at the time of his torture and which is soaked with his blood. It is another confessor of the faith, Fr. Charrier, who gave it to me. What a good impression this man has made on me! What shame when we fall back on ourselves and when we hear him speak so naturally of the tortures they endured!*

Beyond the spiritual relationships of 1844 with the missionaries of China, we must mention the first request for a foundation made to the Congregation. It was in 1848 after the months of revolution in Paris, the heroic death of Msgr. Affre, the end of June in the barricaded area, *this great call of God to the inhabitants of Paris*, the intuition in prayer of Mother Therese-Emmanuel: *that there will still be a lot of blood shed and that one must be ready to shed one's own with the perfect disposition of victim*, the disenchantments in the face of the situation and the question posed to Fr. d'Alzon: *What advice would you give us in the midst of all this?*

Lately Providence put me in contact with a Director of the Missions Etrangères who wanted two of our religious for the English Department in China to whom he would add a holy young girl he has placed here for her to learn English. Sister Marie-Gertrude would burn with the desire to go; I admit that this tempts me seeing that there is so little for us to do now here in France. God will repay us a hundred-fold. What do you think? We could work for this project as a province by receiving Irish nationals that we would form and give to the Missionaries at the end of two years. But say nothing on this. It is only an idea because of our 4th vow. The thought is very captivating. (Vol. X n° 1953, 5 July 1848)

In the end this project will not be realized and it will be the foundation of Cape Town in another continent, the following year.

In the years particularly gruelling for her health, Marie Eugenie expresses a real devotion for the *70 martyrs of China*. Thus, in 1852, when it is a matter of a hip operation, she, from the infirmary of Chaillot and under circumstances that forebode a lot of suffering, writes to Mother Therese Emmanuel in Richmond:

Many prayers have been said for me. Marianne (O'Neill) heard four masses at O. L. of Victories. Even Mr. Rolly (friend of the family) had a Mass said in Metz; I think my healing will be obtained and that I will owe it in particular to the 70 martyrs of China to whom I made a novena. (Vol III n° 383)

The pain intensifies from the month of January the following year 1853. In July, Marie Eugenie finds it impossible to remain seated or standing. The doctors decide to send her for treatment. Her brother Louis drives her there. At the end of August, the situation having worsened, the decision is taken to return to Paris. In October Marie Eugenie can displace herself only by car or on a stretcher. On December 13 they begin a novena to the 70 martyrs of China.

Marie Eugenie writes to Fr. d'Alzon:

My pain has not been pleasant these days. Our Sisters have started again a novena to the 70 martyrs of China. I have always been relieved after the novenas not only in my soul but also in body. I hope to be relieved also after this one. (Vol XI n° 2367)

On 22 December they think an abscess has been discovered. The pains increase to the point of wanting an operation, *not dangerous, but which must be done four or five times.*

At the onset of 1854 there is still an operation in sight, an operation postponed for the 3rd time after nine months spent *lying down and suffering.* She writes to Fr. d'Alzon:

I am rather well today. I think that the 70 martyrs of China wish to cure me because it is every time that I apply their relics that there is no more variation. (Vol XI n° 2385)

At the same time, she writes to her cousins Poujoulat-Foulon:

I am making a novena to these heroic priests from our seminaries who went to win the martyrs' crown in China. Just as they have won their glory by their blood, I have asked them for my healing by the pain and the blood and it is after applying their relics on my ache that Doctor Nélaton found nothing. Maybe they want to heal me without any pain. That to me is the only explanation for the decision on Friday. (Vol XVII n° 4041)

This prayer is applied to all the sick Sisters for whom *there is no longer any hope except for a miracle.* Relics are requested from the Missions Etrangères and the Lazarists for relatives, for priests.

Eventually, by November 1854, the pain of Marie Eugenie has lessened, but she still cannot write except lying down. The pain diminishes little by little and seems to reappear only in moments of much fatigue.

In her recommendations, Marie Eugenie advises the Sisters, *not to look for perfection in China, but there where they find themselves.* Thus she writes to Alix de Paty (future Mother Marie-Caroline) in 1846 before her entry:

After reading this letter I would like you to try to always live the present moment so that your perfection is not in China but in the house. (Vol. XX n° 5378)

In 1848, to Fr. d'Alzon, she alludes to *those people of whom St. Francis of Sales speaks, who think they can bear martyrdom in China but cannot suffer a single scratch at home. (Vol. X n° 1917)*

It is the same in the Chapters:

On 4 February 1877: *there are persons, according to St. Francis of Sales, who practice heroic virtues in China. They dream of circumstances that will never happen in their life!*

On 25 March 1880: *one must not imagine generosity in China.*

On 31 August 1888: *If you are in Auteuil before the Blessed Sacrament, do not transport yourself to China, to Bordeaux or to another house of the Congregation. Remain before God.*

On 11 November 1888: *You will not have the great trials of the martyrs of China but are you ready to bear the ten thousand bee stings presented daily?*

Among the saints, Marie Eugenie makes reference to St. Francis Xavier.

On 8 May 1885: *God sometimes demands a lot from His saints. But He gives them a lot. Look at Saint Francis Xavier: God granted him extraordinary perfection, but He led him to this isolation of dying alone, poor and abandoned, in a deserted island, at the doorstep of this China he had so desired to enter. On the other hand He rendered a hundredfold for his sacrifice! How many miracles, how many conversions! How smooth the path was made for the missionaries who came after him!*

In 1852, the bishop of Calcutta visits Chaillot. The missions of China (Sisters of Charity) are given as an example at the moment of the foundation of New Caledonia in 1873. The foundation of Manila took place in 1892. In 1898, the political events in the Philippines and the Spanish-American war brought about the departure of the Sisters and their return to France. In the course of the painful voyage to the Mother House, a young Sister, Sister Maria Guadalupe, dies in Hong Kong in the convent of the Sisters of Saint Paul de Chartres. This takes place after the death of Marie Eugenie. (cf. *A Hundred Years ago* - 10 March - 26 December 1898 - p.83-86)

From a letter of Mother Maria du Perpétuel Secours
to the Congregation
Rome, 14 December 1898

[...] The terrible shocks that Sister Maria Guadalupe (as well as the whole community) had to go through because of the political events wrought real havoc to her health. The days spent in the agitated Manila Bay in the hope of avoiding the danger of a second bombardment and then the difficult voyage from Manila to Hong Kong precipitated the course of her illness which, without these events, could have lasted years.

When we had to leave Manila, I proposed to the doctor to stay with her out of fear for the trip. He assured me, on the contrary, that the food in Hong Kong would be more nourishing, that it would be good for anaemia,

whereas staying in Manila we would have but a few days supply which would be very bad. This was the same advice given by the Archbishop.

From the moment she saw herself in danger, she offered her life for the Congregation, for Mother General who, having received her into religious life in Madrid, was the object of great affection and true filial cult, finally for her dear mission of Manila that she wanted to keep at the cost of her life and for which she will surely work in heaven. May she obtain the grace that the Assumption there continue to win souls for heaven.

Regarding our deceased little Sister, we can count on the Divine Mercy to quickly call her to the Beatific Vision. The Bishop of Hong Kong said regarding this some time ago: "She will go straight to heaven and if she passes by Purgatory, it will be a small bird flying through."

She lacked nothing in terms of consolation and spiritual assistance. God filled her with everything that could help her cross the threshold of eternity. The Bishop of Hong Kong would visit her twice a day in the last three months and in the last times would return again in the evening to bless her. One of the confessors in whom she had the most confidence in Manila, Fr. Jaime, a Dominican student, in Hong Kong since only a few months, visited her daily. The Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres who had generously given us several rooms in their convent helped her as if she had been a daughter of their community.

In asking your prayers for her, dear Mother, and those of your daughters who have sympathized with you upon the sufferings of this dear dispersed mission, I also ask you for a place for this good Msgr. Piazzoli, Bishop of Hong Kong who has in such a fatherly way devoted himself to soften the exile and has prepared the passage from death to true life of our dear Sister Maria Guadalupe.

I also request for prayers for the community of Saint Paul de Chartres whom we will never know enough how to appreciate their generous actions in our days of distress. May the gratitude of the Congregation translated into prayers obtain for these dear Sisters the most abundant graces from heaven. Our Sister will be interred in their cemetery. Sister Marie-Alypia will have a simple cross in stone or in marble put on her grave with the inscription that we put in Europe. If God allows us one day to return to Manila, her remains will be in the vault that we have in the chapel of the convent.¹¹ May this little flower transplanted into Paradise from the garden of the Assumption in Manila draw dew from heaven on those who one day in the future will continue to cultivate it.

¹¹ The body of Sister Maria Guadalupe was in fact brought back to Manila in 1913 by Mother Hélène-Marguerite, Superior of this community from 1904 - 1927, and by Sister Rosa-Maria.

Union of prayer with the missionaries in China; first perspective of a foundation in China; confidence in relation to the 70 martyrs de Chine; repeated novena for her healing and application of their relics; advice on a realistic perfection, here and now, and not in the dream of a far-off China. We can thus join Marie Eugenie in relation to Asia, without forgetting the souvenir of a young Sister from Spain and Auteuil for the first foundation in Asia and who reposed for some years on Chinese soil.

Sister Thérèse-Maylis
November 2009

3. FAMILY CHRONICLES

◊ Visits and activities of the General Council in 2010

27 December to 12 January 2010

India

Marie Emmanuel: retreat of the Province

29 December to 11 January 2010

Vietnam

Diana

12 January to 1 March 2010

Philippines-Thailand *General Council: visit*

13 and 14 April 2010

Auteuil

International Finance Team

20 April to 15 May 2010

Mexico

Diana, Brigitte and M. Emmanuel: visit

20 to 30 May 2010

India

Marie Emmanuel: Provincial Chapter

22 May to 16 August 2010

Auteuil

Session in preparation for Perpetual Vows

4 to 8 August 2010

Spain, Leon

Diana, Brigitte and M. Emmanuel

Assumption Together Congress

9 to 15 August 2010

Philippines

Marie Emmanuel: Centennial of Iloilo

17 to 22 August 2010

Central Africa

Diana

27 August to 14 September 2010

Japan

Diana, Brigitte and Martine: visit

5 to 7 October 2010

Paris

General Councils of the Assumption

◆ Jubilees of Foundations in 2010

In 2010 150 years of the foundation of Bordeaux (France)
 100 years of the foundation of Iloilo (Philippines)
 100 years of the foundation of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)

◆ Jubilees 2010

75 years

Bernadette Marie	SALA	ITA.	03/06/1935	Como
Andrée	MERESSE	FRA.	08/09/1935	Orléans

70 years

Antoinette Myriam	VERHEYDEN	BEL.	06/01/1940	Ciney
Ignacia Eugenia	URBISTONDO ECHEVERRIA	ESP.	23/05/1940	Collado Mediano
Claude Emmanuel	LICHTERVELDE	BEL.	23/05/1940	Boitsfort
María Teresa	DE SAN JUAN GARCÍA- CEBALLOS	ESP.	23/05/1940	El Olivar
María del Carmen	LANDECHO ZUAZOLA	ESP.	30/11/1940	El Olivar
Agnès Elisabeth	SILVESTRE	FRA.	30/11/1940	Montpellier

65 years

María Irene	LOITI ARANZÁBAL	ESP.	09/01/1945	El Olivar
Rosario	PÉREZ DE LA CRUZ	ESP.	09/01/1945	El Olivar
Marie Thérèse	ALDEBERT	FRA.	04/05/1945	Orléans
Julia	DE SAN JUAN RODRÍGUEZ	ESP.	08/06/1945	Riofrio
Ascensión	MENÉNDEZ GUTIERREZ	ESP.	08/06/1945	Collado
María Estrella	ÁLVAREZ GARCÍA	ESP.	08/06/1945	Los Molinos
María Sira	ROBLES ESTRADA	ESP.	08/06/1945	Los Molinos
María Orielda	ABURTO	NIC.	08/10/1945	La Palmera
Abela María	CERVERA MARTÍN-GONZÁLEZ	ESP.	21/11/1945	Riofrio

60 years

María Antonia	ACOSTA ACOSTA	SALV	21/01/1950	Zumbahuayco
Françoise Eulalie	MIRÓ LUQUE	ESP.	28/02/1950	El Olivar
Ana María	FERNÁNDEZ DE ARAOZ ALONSO	ESP.	03/03/1950	Collado
Francesca Maria	ALLIEVI	ITA.	29/06/1950	Genzano
Elizabeth	DOVE	BRI.	08/07/1950	Pavillons
Elsa	GADALA MARIA BABUN	SALV	08/08/1950	Guatemala
Gabrielle Marguerite	MOLLERAT DU JEU	FRA.	08/08/1950	Montpellier
María Elena	GONZÁLEZ-POSADA CAVO	ESP.	29/09/1950	Teguste
Maria Lavinia	ECLAR	PHI.	29/09/1950	San Lorenzo
Inocencia Maria	VIGILAR Y RAMOS	PHI.	12/10/1950	San Lorenzo
Pilar Emmanuel	WIJANGCO	PHI.	12/10/1950	Antipolo
Monique	TOURMENTE	FRA.	29/10/1950	Lourdes
María Olvido	GONZÁLEZ YUSTE	ESP.	30/11/1950	Auteuil
María Teresa	ECHÁVARRI OSACAR	ESP.	30/11/1950	Cuestablanca
María del Consejo	SUÁREZ RODRÍGUEZ	ESP.	30/11/1950	Teguste
María Oliva	PÉREZ MARTÍNEZ	ESP.	30/11/1950	Leon-Residencia

50 years

Regina Maria	CAVALCANTI	BRE.	13/01/1960	Rio de Janeiro
Maria Da Aparecida	DIAS	BRE.	13/01/1960	Brasilia
Maria Rachel	MELLO MATTOS DE CASTRO	BRE.	13/01/1960	Auteuil
María Concepción	SÁNCHEZ GARCÍA	ESP.	02/02/1960	Leon-Residencia
Maria Dativa	MASANZIRE	RWA.	11/02/1960	Rwankuba
Yohanni Teresa	MUKAMUGEMA	RWA.	11/02/1960	Bordeaux
Leila Maria	SALINAS ZEPEDA	NIC.	11/02/1960	Chalatenango
Maria Ludovika	MUKARUNYANA	RWA.	11/02/1960	Rwaza
Geneviève du Christ	LORY	FRA.	12/04/1960	Saint-Dizier
Maria Giorgia	CAILOTTO	ITA.	24/04/1960	Genzano
Maria Perpetua	ENARSAO	PHI.	26/04/1960	Baguio
Helena Eugénie	OGDEN	BRI.	03/05/1960	Lang'ata
Maria Socorro	LEE	PHI.	29/06/1960	San Lorenzo

María del Carmen	ORDIERES PIDAL	ESP.	02/07/1960	Gijón-Bibio
Maria Michiko	ISONISHI	JAP.	02/07/1960	Nishinari
Inés Teresa	FIGUEROA FIGUEROA	ARG.	02/07/1960	Florencio Varela
María Antonia	GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ	ESP.	02/07/1960	Riofrio
Annunciata Maria	MALVAR	PHI.	02/07/1960	San Lorenzo
Setsuko Maria	SHIMADA	JAP.	02/07/1960	Minoo
Patricia	MITCHELL	BRI.	02/07/1960	Newcastle
Margarita Eugenia	PAZ AREVALO	GUA.	02/07/1960	Santa Ana
Guillemette	TALHOUE DE	FRA.	02/07/1960	Paris-Lubeck
Bernadette Marguerite	HOPKINS	BRI.	02/07/1960	London
Jill	GRACIE	BRI.	06/08/1960	Newcastle
Gladys María	LANDA	GUA.	03/09/1960	San Luis
Juliana	ARIZMENDI VILLAVERDE	ESP.	29/09/1960	Mira-Cruz
Marie Lutgarde	TREINEN	BEL.	29/09/1960	Tournai
Maria Fe	MARTÍNEZ IGLESIAS	ESP.	12/10/1960	Leon-Residencia
Gabrielle Annunciata	MENDOZA	PHI.	15/10/1960	Kauswagan
Tarcisia Maria	PORCELLI	ITA.	23/10/1960	Roma
Silvia Eugenia	ROBALINO	EQU.	08/12/1960	W. Philadelphia
Irene Maria	HASAÑON	PHI.	08/12/1960	Mandaluyong

25 years

Catherine Marie	LIÉNARD	FRA.	06/01/1985	Lourdes
Valsamma Joseph	VALLIPPALAM	IND.	18/05/1985	Pala
Daisy Isaac	OZHUKAYIL	IND.	18/05/1985	Vittalwadi
Rosa María	CASTAÑEDA	SALV.	02/06/1985	San Salvador
Adria Bibiana	KIMARIO	TAN.	08/06/1985	Iguguno
María Josefina	HERNÁNDEZ MENESES	MEX.	15/08/1985	Queretaro
Colette	TUYISABE	RWA.	05/09/1985	Rwankuba
Anna	PAGANI	ITA.	09/09/1985	Roma
Katrin Marie	GORIS	BEL.	09/09/1985	Cté Générale
Clare Joseph	PALTO-UB	PHI.	29/12/1985	Tokyo

4. BICENTENNIAL OF THE BIRTH OF EMMANUEL D'ALZON (1810-1880)

**HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO OUR BROTHER ASSUMPTIONISTS AND OUR SISTER
OBLATES OF THE ASSUMPTION. MAY THIS JUBILEE BE A YEAR OF GRACE
2009 - 2010**

2009-2010



COMMUNIQUÉ - Extract from Press Briefing

In 2010, the Congregations of the Augustinians of the Assumption and the Oblates of the Assumption are celebrating the bicentenary of the birth of their Founder, Fr Emmanuel d'Alzon (1810 - 1880).

In the 19th century, Fr Emmanuel d'Alzon wanted to participate in the transformation of society.

Following in the steps of his master, the Abbé Félicité de Lamennais, a Christian philosopher, he understood the need for the Church to enter into the movement for democracy and liberty, then sweeping through Europe. It was his conviction that in order to participate in the evolution of society, we must affirm the rights of God so as to make sense of the Rights of Man. Hence his three great projects: education, pilgrimages and the press, giving a modern slant to the first two.

In 1845 he founded the Congregation of the Augustinians of the Assumption, to which he gave certain missions: education and the press to form Christians capable of taking on public office and taking part in public debates; work for the unity of Christians through dialogue with the Orthodox; pilgrimages and groups; junior seminaries and orphanages.

Twenty years later he founded the Oblates of the Assumption, missionary religious with varied works, at the service of Christians and the most disadvantaged.

To participate in the coming of a more just and fraternal world... The Rule of Life of the Assumptionists has to be lived in a doctrinal, social and ecumenical spirit. And so we find them in numerous sectors of social life: in the Press with the Bayard group (www.groupebayard.com); in education with universities in the United States and the Congo and in schools and colleges in various countries (www.assomption.org); in ecumenical relationships with a presence in all the continents; in pilgrimages, particularly the National Pilgrimage of the Assumption to Lourdes; in social projects and charitable activities in France and throughout the world. Many lay people are associated

with all of these activities, and this openness is an essential part of the Assumption project.

This Jubilee Year will be marked in a special way in the province of France firstly by the refoundation of the community of Bucharest, intended for the promotion of ecumenical dialogue, and secondly by the opening of a Christian hostel, named *Adveniat*, for young people in Paris. Next autumn an international community will be set up in Nîmes itself, in the diocese where Fr d'Alzon was Vicar General for almost 40 years. Please note the unveiling of a memorial to Fr d'Alzon in Nîmes on the 27th November 2009, and throughout 2010 the other events planned by the diocese.

Two centuries after his birth, the spiritual sons of Fr Emmanuel d'Alzon want now and always to witness to Christ - "the Way, the Truth and the Life". Called by Christ, they are sent by Him to serve their brothers and sisters by proclaiming the Good News, witnessing to the compassion of the Father and serving the Church. As Saint Paul (from whom Fr d'Alzon took his motto) says, they clothe themselves with Christ so as to make their own his sentiments, his words and his actions.

<http://www.alzon-2010.org>

"In 2010 we will celebrate the bicentenary of the birth of Fr Emmanuel d'Alzon. The Council of the Congregation wishes to share with all the members of the family of the Assumption its desire to live in depth this privileged time which has been given us in the celebration of this event. Our desire is to make this anniversary a time of grace and joy. It will contribute to strengthening our common conviction in the holiness of our Founder. We not only dare to believe in the holiness of Emmanuel d'Alzon, but also with him we wish to live this holiness to which we are called as disciples of Christ.

We are convinced that Fr d'Alzon is more than a historical figure, more than a distant ancestor of whom we think from time to time. He is a model of holiness who continues to guide us day after day in our path of discipleship. He is the one who leads us on to live the following of Christ in faith, hope and charity. He is the companion on the way of every Assumptionist, be he originally from Europe, America, Africa or Asia. Emmanuel d'Alzon is also the friend of all those men and women who share, with the Assumption, the passion for the Kingdom of God. All of us, laity, religious - men and women - recognise ourselves as the heirs of a father who has left us immense riches: his indefatigable zeal for unity, truth and charity. We love Emmanuel d'Alzon because he helps us to better love Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin and the Church."

Emmanuel d'Alzon (30 August 1810 -21 November 1880)

► **Bicentenary Leaflet N° 1: Some dates**

30th August 1810 Emmanuel d'Alzon is born into a family of the aristocracy at Vigan (Gard).

1823 -1835 His secondary and university education was in Paris: in the Collèges Saint Louis and Stanislas, then in the Faculty of Law of the Pantheon. Here he became friends with the Catholic intellectuals of the period: Lamennais, Montalembert, Ozanam. All of them were concerned about reconciling the Church with the post-revolutionary modern world.

1832 -1835 Having renounced a judicial or military career, he turned to the priesthood. He started his formation for the priesthood at the seminary in Montpellier (1832- 1833), and organised his own studies in Rome to complete it. He was ordained priest the 26th December 1834. From his onetime master, Lamennais, he retained some lessons for life, particularly the necessity for the Church of entering into the movement for democracy and freedom which was then shaking Europe.

839 - 1878 He was energetic and creative and launched numerous pastoral, educational and social initiatives in his diocese of Nîmes, where he was Vicar General for 39 years. On several occasions he refused the offer of a bishopric. A militant in the cause of the freedom of education, he was appointed to the Council for higher education, where he took a great interest in the content of the various programmes. He started the *Revue de l'Enseignement Chrétien* (Review of Christian Education) (1851).

1845 - 1865 He founded the Congregation of the Augustinians of the Assumption (Christmas 1845) and set out its apostolic objectives: education to form a Christian elite capable of taking on responsible roles in society; work for the unity of Christians through dialogue with the Orthodox; group pilgrimages so that Catholics could reoccupy public space; newspapers and periodicals for the formation of Catholic public opinion and the participation of Christians in political and social debates; junior seminaries in view of a better formation of the clergy; orphanages.

The twenty years later he founded the Congregation of the Oblates of the Assumption 1865: missionary religious at the service of Christian unity and the most disadvantaged through varied works and insertions, often in collaboration with the Assumptionists.

1880 he founded the Review *La Croix*, which in 1883 became the daily newspaper *La Croix*.

21st November he died in Nîmes

21st December 1991 He was declared “Venerable” by Pope John Paul II.

► *Bicentenary Leaflet N° 2: The Spirituality of Fr d’Alzon*

CHRIST AT THE HEART OF THE WORLD

Emmanuel d’Alzon, a man of the 19th century, was up against the effects of the French Revolution. Jesus Christ and his Father had been declared irrelevant and excluded from the public arena. But nevertheless their place is at the heart of the human adventure which, without them is doomed to fail. Salvation is the Gospel, the Kingdom of God as Jesus intended it and set it in action. This is the great project of God for the whole of humanity, made manifest in Jesus Christ and carried out by his Church. It is not a prison but a path of fulfilment. Like a revelation, the Gospel version of the Kingdom of God puts the spotlight on what is inadmissible and dishonours God, so as to remedy it.

The Kingdom of God: This is the key word in the spirituality and apostolic project of Emmanuel d’Alzon. It is a spirituality of the open seas, of blazing fires, not hot water bottles! It reveals God’s ambition, borne of his love in all its fullness. As in Jesus, the passion for the Kingdom of God follows in Fr d’Alzon from the overflow of his love of the Father.

Adveniat Regnum Tuum (May your Kingdom come) is the motto of the Assumption and the meaning of the logo A R T.

In the school of Christ, of the Church, of Saint Augustine

Attachment to Christ is vital. Every aspect of him so as to come back to Him. Our attitudes are modelled on his. With Him we love the Father and the Spirit, but also Mary his mother, and the Church his spouse. We act like Him, because the messenger must themselves bear witness to the Kingdom they proclaim. His prayer becomes ours, but we pray also in Him and through Him. His Fidelity, his Hope, his Charity become the divine life in us. AS for Him, contemplation, listening to the Word, activity are three interwoven modes of a same passion for the Kingdom of God to be brought about today. Truth, Charity, Unity, or put in another way Faith, Justice, Communion are the three principal notes of the Augustinian tone of this spirituality. It fashions men and women of faith well adapted to their own times.

Like every river, a spirituality has a source. A humble thread of water in its beginnings, it widens over time. A source of life, it gives new blooms and is enriched by the contributions of different ages and unexpected lands which it crosses. It has spread through Africa, Asia, the two Americas. It waters








deeply: “The Rule of Life” of the Assumptionists and the “Path of Life” of the laity.

Other leaflets are available: for further information consult:






www.alzon.org

Calendrier de l’année jubilaire

2009 en France

-  Beginning of November: Availability to communities of DVD of the International meeting of religious and laity in Nîmes at the end of August.
-  2 - 21 November 2009: Canonical visit of Father General.
-  14th November: Discovery Day of the Assumption Family and its Spirit, at the Lycée Polyvalent Bourg Chevreau - St Anne (O. A.). Conference JP Périer-Muzet.
-  17th November: “Bicentenary Day” at Bayard Montrouge. Breakfast for the staff. Conference JP Périer-Muzet at 12 noon. Eucharist at 18.00.
-  21st November: Broadcast of a documentary on KTO (French Catholic television channel). Priority to local meetings and initiatives. The Paris region is expecting an interview.
-  27th November: Inauguration of the Memorial Site to Emmanuel d’Alzon in Nîmes.
-  End of December: Blessing of the Noviciate in Vietnam.

2010 in France

-  February: Follow up of the Canonical Visit of Father General who will preach a retreat open to the laity in Nîmes.
-  12th June: Conference of J.P. Périer-Muzet at Lorgues.
-  June: Opening of the *Adveniat* Youth Hostel.
-  Spring: Opening of the Centre for Study and Ecumenical Dialogue in Bucharest.
-  11 - 16 August: 137th National Pilgrimage to Lourdes



25 -29 August: European University of the Assumption: *The Mediterranean, mother of humanity.*



September: Installation of an international community at Nîmes.



7th October: Celebration at Notre Dame des Victoires, Paris.



8 - 10 October: Celebrations at Nîmes, Le Vigan, Montagnac. A play in five acts on the life of Fr d'Alzon will be produced by the Oblates of the Assumption with pupils from the schools which they manage. The play will be put on at the D'Alzon Institute at 16.00 on Saturday, 9th October, and at Vigan, in the church on the 10th October. After that there will be productions of it at the other schools.



13 - 19th November: Provincial Chapter



20 21 November: Great Assembly of religious and laity at Valpré. Mass will be televised from Valpré as part of the series *The Day of the Lord.*

Publications: Cahiers du Bicentenaire

Collection Cahiers du Bicentenaire d'Alzon 2010

- N° 1 Tour du monde assumptionniste en 41 pays, 2007
- N° 2 Il y a deux cents ans, année 1810, octobre 2007
- N° 3 Emmanuel d'Alzon: Bibliographie commentée et référencée, décembre 2007
- N° 4 L'Orient Chrétien, mars 2008
- N° 5 Le P. d'Alzon et l'Assomption vus par des contemporains, des historiens et des Assomptionnistes, mai 2008
- N° 6 La Mission d'Orient de l'Assomption, octobre 2008
- N° 7 L'Assomption A.A. et O.A.: Bibliographie commentée et référencée, janvier 2009
- N° 8 Los Asuncionistas en la Argentina (1910-2000), febrero 2009
- N° 9 Histoire de la Province de France.

Volume I: De l'Assomption indivise à l'Assomption des Provinces
(1845-1952)

5. PARTAGE AUTEUIL N° 84

We need you!



The work would be greatly lessened if you could translate your articles into at least one other language!
THANK YOU!

PA n° 84:

Presentation of the European Continent

Each Province in this Continent prepares a presentation of a few pages, with photos and maps, the Provincial Project, the challenges...everything you would like to say about your Province so that the Sisters of the other Provinces and Continents may know you better... and if possible translate them into the two other languages.

**→ *These articles must be sent to us
by March 2010***

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

The Editing Team

6. LA PAROLE À MARIE EUGÉNIE

« On Hope ...»

“I do not doubt, my dear daughters, that, upon seeing one of our Sisters depart for Heaven¹², you have made serious reflection on what you would have liked to do for God at this supreme hour and on the most necessary dispositions to advance in religious life. What I consider most important for all, whoever they are, is hope. This virtue that seems so easy is rarer than we think and yet it is of great help so as not to be discouraged in the difficulties of the spiritual life.

Saint Therese said that God is very close to a soul who lives in hope and in silence, spe et silentio. Another saint has said: in hope and in patience, spe et patientia. Silence to separate us from relationships and all the things of this world, patience to sustain us with all our miseries and our faults, and finally above all hope, which makes us put all our hope and all our confidence in God alone.”

M. Marie Eugénie
Chapter Instructions
Auteuil, 18 March 1860

¹². On 15 March 1860, Sr. Marie-Josephine of Nazareth, Eugenie Nourrit, died in Auteuil from an unrestrained phthisis, at 27 years of age.