

# A News of the Assumption



## EDITORIAL

### Paths are opened in their hearts

*A synodal Church is a Church of listening, a Church aware that listening is more than hearing.” It is a reciprocal listening in which everyone has something to learn.*

# Agenda

## Plenary General Council

- n° 9 : **December 1-10, 2021**, in Rome
- n° 10 : **June 1-11, 2022**, in Worcester (United States)

## Ordinary General Councils

- n° 32 : **November 8-12, 2021**.
- n° 33 : **December 14-15, 2021**.
- n° 34 : **February 14-18, 2022**.
- n° 35 : **April 11-15, 2022**.

## Benoît

- **Oct. 13-Nov. 5** : DR-Congo.
- **November 24-26**: Assembly of the USG.

## Marcelo

- throughout October: Angola.
- throughout November: Belgium.

## Didier

- **October 1-10** : East Africa.
- **October 12-29**: DR-Congo.
- **November 13-18** : Paris.
- **November 22-27** : CEC.

## Thierry

- **October 13-November 5**: DR-Congo.
- **November 25-27**: Preparatory Commission of the General Chapter.

## Miguel

- **throughout November**: Madagascar (if possible).

## On the cover

Our Lady of the Assumption Parish, run by the Assumptionists in Sokodé-Komah (Togo), celebrated the consecration of its new church this month.

## News from « Due Pini »



Like all communities, the one in Rome was hit by the Covid crisis. And more than others, due to its own mission, she seeks to regain her daily rhythm. Therefore, the Superior General and his assistants have decided to go back to the provinces and to the brothers for the visits linked to their governing and animation responsibilities (see their agenda on the right). Our brothers in special studies can return to classrooms and libraries: this group has been enriched by two members during this school year---Fathers Dalmon Katembo Kamera and Ignace Aïssah.

Other changes are in progress. Fr. Pierre-Emmanuel Rospide has left the General House after ten years of good and faithful service, for which we are most grateful. As soon as the borders of Vietnam are opened, we are awaiting his replacement Br. Dominique Nguyen Van Tho. He will help our house get back to its usual hive-like rhythm. There will then be fifteen religious in residence at Due Pini. In keeping with the traditional name of our house, we are happy to welcome you.

The picture below shows all the religious present since the end of September. From left to right: Fr. Marcelo Marciel (Vicar General and local Superior, Chile), Very Rev. Fr. Benoît Grière (Superior General, France), Fr. Vincent Leclercq (Secretary General for Formation, France), Fr. Thierry Kambale Kahonga (Assistant General, Congo), Br. Gilles Allard (maintenance of the house, Canada), Fr. Michel Kubler (Secretary and Procurer General, France), Fr. Gervais Muhindo Bakerethi (BDS, Congo), Fr. Dalmon Katembo Kamera (student in spirituality, Congo), Fr. Jérôme Kaseraka Masumbuko Kombi (doctoral student in liturgy, Congo), Fr. Ignace Akoule Aïssah (student of Islamology, Togo), Fr. Alexis Kasereka Valyamugheni (doctoral student in fundamental theology, Congo), Fr. José Miguel Díaz Ayllón (Assistant General, Mexico), Fr. Pierre-Emmanuel Rospide (steward, France), Br. Didier Remiot (General and Local Treasurer, France).

*Absent:* Fr. Bienvenu Kamsele Agbaka (student in missiology, Congo).

# Paths are opened in their hearts



**Fr. Benoît Grière**  
Superior General  
of the  
Augustinians of  
the Assumption

On October 9 and 10, 2021, the opening of the synodal journey was celebrated in Rome. The itinerary proposed by Pope Francis is a long journey of preparation and work, which will conclude in October 2023. We have two years to get involved in the process. The 16th assembly of the Synod of Bishops is entitled: *“For a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission”*. A synod on synodality! As we know, this theme is dear to the heart of Pope Francis. He regularly insists on the need for the Church to reform itself in depth by integrating a new style of functioning. This is why the synod will take place over two years. There will be input from the particular Churches and from “other ecclesial realities”: the Dicasteries, the consecrated life, the Associations of the Faithful, the Higher Institutes of Education, etc. Congregations will have their say, as will dioceses and bishops conferences. We are all invited to enter into the process of prayer and reflection. The Assumption will also have its contribution to make.

But what are we talking about when we speak of synodality? The term is a bit cryptic and is not part of the common language of the faithful. But Pope Francis has put it in the spotlight and shown its importance in the life of the Church: *“A synodal Church is a Church of listening, a Church aware that listening is more than hearing.”* It is a reciprocal listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful, the College of Bishops, the Bishop of Rome: one listening to the others; and all listening to the Holy Spirit, *“the Spirit of Truth”* (Jn 14:17), to know what he is *“saying to the churches”* (Rev 2:7). The Pope, in this speech of October 17, 2015, recalled that he was committed to *“a salutary decentralization.”*

At the Assumption, our synodal experience takes place essentially during our various chapters: local, provincial and

general. The brothers exchange with one another and learn to read the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel and in the presence of the Holy Spirit. The chapters are collegial times of responsibility. They are mini-synods. But in order to intensify their practice, it is up to us to encourage even more the circulation of the word. Perhaps we have lost some of the sense of debate and of fraternal and peaceful confrontation? Perhaps we are afraid to exchange in depth on what we think is necessary for the coming of the Kingdom of God? At a time when the international meeting of Lay-Religious Alliance has been held (by videoconference), it is useful to ask ourselves the question of the place of our lay brothers and sisters in the life of the Assumption. A synodal approach allows the expression of all for the common good. There are probably efforts to be made to better integrate the viewpoint of our friends of the Alliance in our debates and decisions. The 34th General Chapter, like the three previous ones, will welcome a delegation of lay people in its assembly. The important thing is the preparatory work that will be done in our different countries so that the voice of the laity can be heard and taken into account in our debates.

I hope that the synodal process will open new paths in our communities and in each one of us. We can do better and do more in listening to each other. Too often we think we already know what the brother is going to say and we deprive ourselves of his contribution. There is an attitude of listening that alone can open up new ways of being Church. To walk together in order to go further and take up the challenges of the present time; such is the challenge of the synod. *“Blessed are the people whose strength you give them: paths are opened in their hearts! (Ps. 83)*

**Fr. Benoît BRIÈRE a.a.**  
General Superior

# Callings, nominations, agreements...

Father Benoît Grière, Superior General,  
with the consent of his Council, has called:

## ■ TO PERPETUAL PROFESSION

**1) MUMBERE NDAKASI Jérémie**  
(Africa) (09/14/2021)

**2) MUZUDI KINDALA Dieu-Merci**  
(Madagascar) (09/14/2021)

**3) MATONDO LUBIKAMO Juvens**  
(Madagascar) (09/14/2021)

## ■ TO THE DIACONATE

**4) KATEMBO MUHATIKANI Modeste**  
(Africa) (09/14/2021)

**5) KIBOLOKO MFUMU-KANDA Urbain**  
(Africa) (09/15/2021)

**6) NGUYỄN VĂN Thắng Antoine**  
(Europe) (09/15/2021)

**7) RABENIRINA Simon**  
(Madagascar) (09/15/2021)

**8) RAMANANDRAIBE Rolland**  
(Madagascar) (09/15/2021)

**9) TIENDREBEOGO Justin**  
(Madagascar) (09/16/2021)

## ■ TO THE PRIESTHOOD

**10) BWAMBALE NYENZE Jackson**  
(Africa) (09/16/2021)

**11) KAKULE KALEMBERYA Moïse**  
(Africa) (09/16/2021)

**12) KAKULE MAHAMBA Nicolas**  
(Africa) (09/16/2021)

**13) KAMBALE KATUSELE Barthélemy**  
(Africa) (09/17/2021)

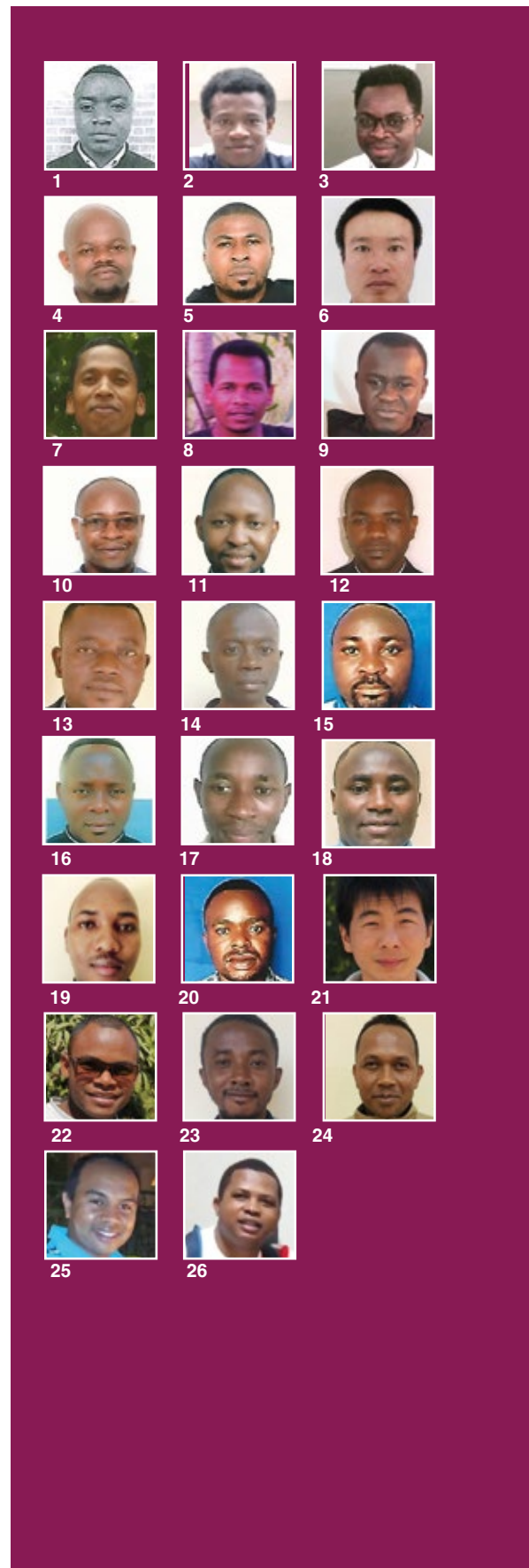
**14) KAMBALE TSONGO Pacifique**  
(Africa) (09/17/2021)

**15) MBOUNGOU Eriel Kermelis**  
(Africa) (09/17/2021)

**16) MUMBERE MULYANGASU Michel**  
(Africa) (09/20/2021)

**17) MUYISA BORA Mumbere**  
(Africa) (09/20/2021)

**18) BAKAMARHE CIZUNGU Elie**  
(Africa) (09/20/2021)



**19) GITAU MACHARIA Morris**

(East Africa) (09/20/2021)

**20) KATEMBO KASOLENE Moïse**

(Africa) (09/21/2021)

**21) TRẦN QUỐC Cường Joseph**

(Europe) (09/21/2021)

**22) NDRIAMANMONJY Florent Régis**

(Madagascar) (09/21/2021)

**23) ANDRIAMASILAINA Jean Lucien**

(Madagascar) (09/21/2021)

**24) RAKOTONIARIVO Jacques**

(Madagascar) (09/21/2021)

**25) NJARANIAINA Raphaël José Mario**

(Madagascar) (09/22/2021)

**26) RASOLONIAINA Dieu Donné Frédéric**

(Madagascar) (09/22/2021)

**HOUSE OPENINGS**

Fr. Benoît Grière, Superior General, with the consent of his Plenary General Council, has given his approval for the opening of:

- An apostolic community in **Abidjan** (Ivory Coast, Province of Europe);
- A community of formation in **Digos** (Philippines, Province of Europe).

**AGREEMENT OF FORMATORS**

Fr. Benoît Grière, Superior General, with the consent of his Plenary General Council, has given his agreement for the nomination:

- of **Fr. Jean-Luc ECKERT** as Superior of the house of formation of Lyon (France, Province of Europe;
- of **Fr. KAMBALE TASI Augustin** as Provincial Formator of Africa;
- of **Fr. KATEMBO KAMUNDU Jean de Dieu** as Superior of the Scholasticate of Bulengera (DR-Congo, Province of Africa).

**NOMINATION OF THE POSTULATOR**



Fr. Benoît Grière, Superior General, with the consent of his Council, has named **Fr. Vincent LECLERCQ** (Province of Europe), Postulator General of the Congregation, beginning on September 15, 2021.

**NOMINATION OF THE TREASURER OF THE COMMUNITY IN ROME**

Fr. Benoît Grière, Superior General, with the consent of his Council, has named **Br. Didier REMIOT**, local treasurer of the General House in Rome for a 4th triennium, beginning on October 1, 2021.

**EXCLAUSTRATION**

Fr. Benoît Grière, Superior General, with the consent of his Council, has granted an indult of exclausturation from the Institute to **Fr. Wilfrid Clo-taire MALANDA** (Province of Africa), for one year, beginning on September 23, 2021.

**INCARDINATION**

By the decision of Msgr. Robert LE GALL, Archbishop of Toulouse (France), dated July 6, 2021, **Fr. Laurențiu UNGURU** (Europe) was finally in-cardinated in his diocese, where he was received since his exclausturation on November 15, 2017.

## Religious, for a synodal Church

In a letter dated June 24, 2021, Cardinal João Braz de Aviz, Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, invites consecrated persons to undertake the ecclesial journey towards Synod 2023.

“Dear consecrated men and women,

It is with great joy that we make our own Pope Francis’ invitation to set out on an ecclesial journey that begins next October 9 and 10 and will conclude in October 2023 with the celebration of the next Synod of Bishops on the theme “*For a Synodal Church: communion, participation, and mission*”...

This path is presented as already being an experience of synodality because, as Pope Francis reminds us: “*A synodal Church is a Church which listens, which realizes that listening ‘is more than simply hearing’.* (...) “*It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium, because the world in which we live, and which we are called to love and serve, even with its contradictions, demands that the Church strengthen cooperation in all areas of her mission*” (address of Pope Francis for the 50th Anniversary of the Synod of Bishops, 17 October 2015).

These words strongly challenge the prophetic dimension of consecrated life, which finds its source in the *sequela Christi*, in communion with the Church and in the discernment that helps her to seek God’s will and to transform it into a life that can awaken the world!

No one should feel excluded from this ecclesial journey. The first phase, characterized by consultation and feedback from the

local churches and other ecclesial groups begins in October 2021 and ends in April 2022.

(...) Be open to the challenge offered by the three significant words of the theme of the Synod of Bishops on the Synodal Church: *communion, participation, and mission*. Pray, reflect, discuss and share your experiences, insights and desires. Do it with the freedom of those who place their trust in God and are thus able to overcome timidity, a sense of inferiority or worse still, reproaches and complaints. Let it be done in all simplicity, moved by the Holy Spirit, avoiding arrogance, without presumption but always having a sense

of co-responsibility because “*all the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients.*” (*Evangelii Gaudium* n. 120)

To ensure that the synodal church is not a mirage, but rather a dream to be realized, it is necessary to dream together, to pray together, and to work together.”

**The General Chapter (here the one of 2017) is a privileged implementation of synodality**



# A consultation of the People of God to « walk together »

On September 7, the preparatory document for the Synod of Bishops' assembly on synodality was published. Here are a few excerpts, to help us move forward in congregation on this path\*.

1. The Church of God is convoked in Synod. (...) With this convocation, Pope Francis invites the entire Church to reflect on a theme that is decisive for its life and mission: *“It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium.”* This journey, which follows in the wake of the Church's “renewal” proposed by the Second Vatican Council, is both a gift and a task: by journeying together and reflecting together on the journey that has been made, the Church will be able to learn through Her experience which processes can help Her to live communion, to achieve participation, to open Herself to mission. Our “journeying together” is, in fact, what most effectively enacts and manifests the nature of the Church as the pilgrim and missionary People of God.

2. (...) Here, we will indicate the main objectives, which decline synodality as the form, the style, and the structure of the Church:

- recalling how the Spirit has guided the Church's journey through history and, today, calls us to be, together, witnesses of God's love;
- living a participative and inclusive ecclesial process that offers everyone—especially those who for various reasons find themselves on the margins—the

opportunity to express themselves and to be heard in order to contribute to the edification of the People of God;

- recognizing and appreciating the wealth and the variety of the gifts and charisms that the Spirit liberally bestows for the good of the community and the benefit of the entire human family;

- exploring participatory ways of exercising responsibility in the proclamation of the Gospel and in the effort to build a more beautiful and habitable world;

- examining how responsibility and power are lived in the Church as well as the structures by which they are managed, bringing to light and trying to convert prejudices and distorted practices that are not rooted in the Gospel;

- accrediting the Christian community as a credible subject and reliable partner in paths of social dialogue, healing, reconciliation, inclusion and participation, the reconstruction of democracy, the promotion of fraternity and social friendship;

- regenerating relationships among members of Christian communities as well as between communities and other social groups, e.g., communities of believers of other denominations and religions, civil society organizations, popular movements, etc.;

- fostering the appreciation and appropriation of the fruits of recent synodal experiences on the universal, regional, national, and local levels.

## A Constitutively Synodal Church

9. (...) Synodality represents the main road for the Church, called to renew herself under the action of the Spirit and by listening to the Word. The ability to imagine a different future for the Church and her institutions, in keeping with the mission she has received, depends largely on the decision to initiate processes of listening, dialogue, and community discernment, in which each and every person can participate and contribute. At the same time, the decision to “journey together” is a prophetic sign for the human family, which needs a shared project capable of pursuing the good of all. A Church capable of communion and fraternity, of participation and subsidiarity, in fidelity to what she proclaims, will be able to stand beside the poor and the least and lend them her own voice. In order to “journey together,” we need to let ourselves be educated by the Spirit to a truly synodal mentality, entering with courage and freedom of heart into a conversion process that is indispensable for the *“continual reformation of which* ▶

[the Church] always has need, in so far as she is a human institution" (UR, no. 6; cf. EG, no. 26). (...)

## Synodality in Action: Pathways for Consulting the People of God

26. The fundamental question that guides this consultation of the People of God, as mentioned at the beginning, is the following:

*A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, "journeys together." How is this "journeying together" happening today in your particular Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our "journeying together"?*

In order to respond, you are invited to:

a) ask yourselves what experiences in your particular Church the fundamental question calls to mind;

b) reread these experiences in greater depth: What joys did they provoke? What difficulties and obstacles have they encountered? What wounds have they brought to light? What insights have they elicited?

c) gather the fruits to share: Where, in these experiences, does the voice of the Spirit resound? What is he asking of us? What are the points to be confirmed, the prospects for change, the steps to be taken? Where do we register a consensus? What paths are opening up for our particular Church?

## Different Articulations of Synodality

27. In the prayer, reflection, and sharing prompted by the fundamental question, it is opportune to keep in mind three

levels on which synodality is articulated as a "constitutive dimension of the Church." (International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, n. 70)

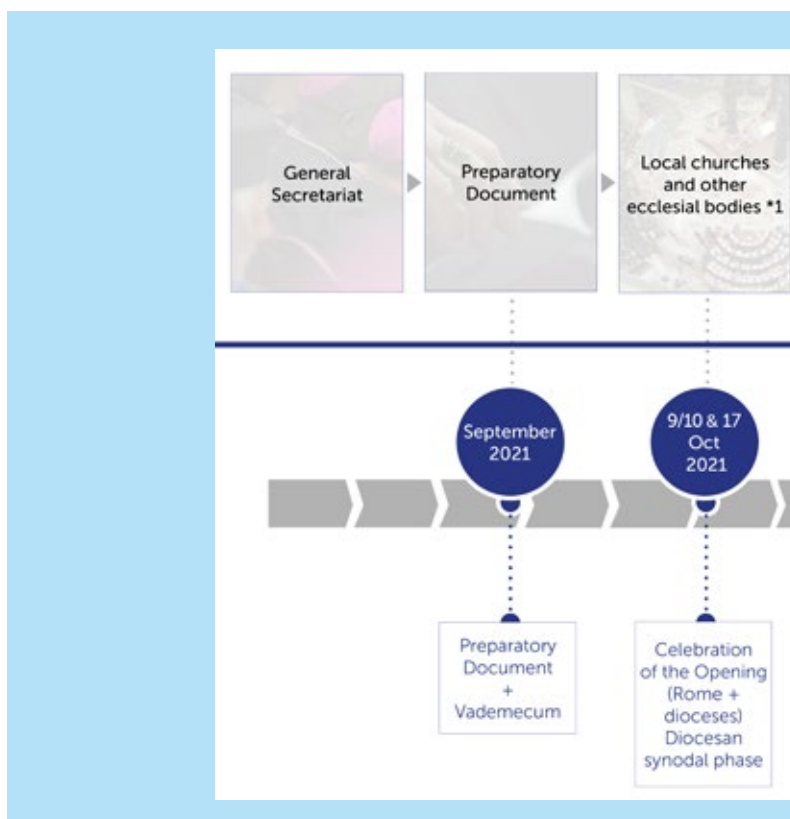
- the level of **the style with which the Church ordinarily lives and works**, which expresses its nature as the People of God that journeys together and gathers in assembly summoned by the Lord Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel. This style is realized through "the community listening to the Word and celebrating the Eucharist, the brotherhood of communion and the co-responsibility and participation of the whole People of God in its life and mission, on all levels and distinguishing between various ministries and roles;" (*ibid.*)

- the level of **ecclesial structures and processes**, determined also from the theological

and canonical point of view, in which the synodal nature of the Church is expressed in an institutional way at the local, regional, and universal levels;

- the level of **synodal processes and events** in which the Church is convoked by the competent authority, according to specific procedures determined by the ecclesiastical discipline.

Although distinct from a logical point of view, these three levels refer one to the other and must be held together in a coherent way, otherwise a counter-testimony is transmitted, and the Church's credibility is undermined. In fact, if it is not embodied in structures and processes, the style of synodality easily degrades from the level of intentions and desires to that of rhetoric, while processes and events, if they are not animated by an adequate style, turn out to be empty formalities.





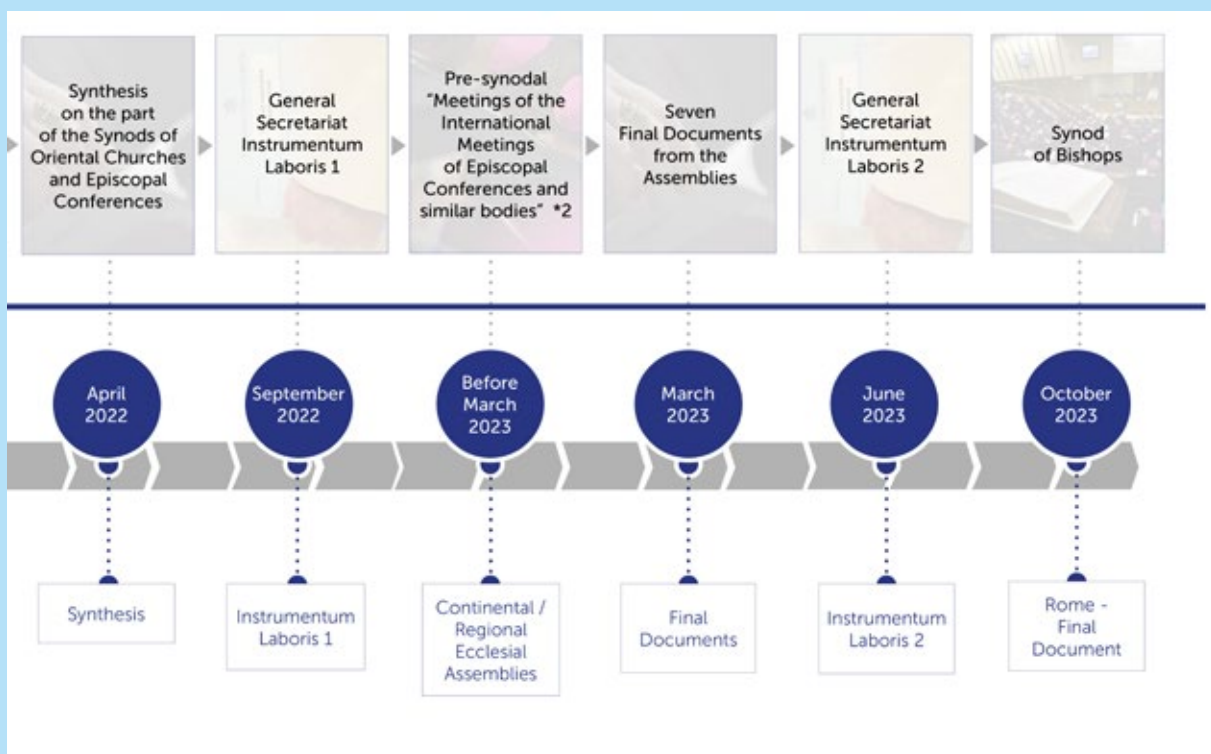
28. Furthermore, in re-reading experiences, it is necessary to keep in mind that “journeying together” can be understood from two different perspectives, which are strongly interconnected. The first perspective looks at **the internal life of the particular Churches**, at the relationships between their constituent parts (first and foremost between the Faithful and their Pastors, also through the participatory bodies envisaged by the canonical discipline, including the diocesan synod) and the communities into which they are divided (especially parishes). It then considers the relationships between the Bishops and with the Bishop of Rome, also through the intermediate bodies of synodality (Synods of Bishops of the Patriarchal and Major Archdiocesan Churches, Councils of Hierarchs and Assemblies of Hierarchs of the Churches *sui iuris*, and Epis-

copal Conferences, with their national, international, and continental expressions). It then extends to the ways in which each particular Church integrates within itself the contribution of the various forms of monastic, religious, and consecrated life, of lay associations and movements, of ecclesial and ecclesiastical institutions of various kinds (schools, hospitals, universities, foundations, charitable and assistance organizations, etc.). Finally, this perspective also embraces relationships and common initiatives with the brothers and sisters of other Christian denominations, with whom we share the gift of the same Baptism.

29. The second perspective considers **how the People of God journeys together with the entire human family**. Thus, our gaze will focus on the state of relations, dialogue, and pos-

sible common initiatives with believers of other religions, with people who are distant from the faith, as well as with specific social environments and groups, with their institutions (the world of politics, culture, economics, finance, labor, trade unions, and business associations, non-governmental and civil society organizations, popular movements, minorities of various kinds, the poor and the excluded, etc).

\* Multilingual full text : [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/index\\_fr.htm](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/index_fr.htm)



# The 34th General Chapter is taking shape

An extraordinary session of the Plenary General Council laid the groundwork for the Chapter to be held in 2023

**L**ess than two years before its meeting, and a few months before its convocation - Father General is expected to publish the letter of convocation in January 2022 - the next General Chapter was given a more precise outline during a “8 bis” session of the CGP, held on-line on September 28 and 29.

Here are the main elements, which have now been established:

**Dates:** Thursday, June 1 to Sunday, June 25, 2023.

**The place:** Rome (General House of the Passionists).

**The theme:** “**The Kingdom of God is at hand.**” (Mk 1:15)

*To live and announce the hope of the Gospel.*

(The translations of the theme into Spanish and English are still provisional)

**The number of capitulants:** 44 members with the right to vote, of whom 30 are elected from the Provinces and 14 are members by right (6 from the General Curia, 7 major Superiors, 1 former Superior General).

The number of elected members, to be confirmed and specified by Provinces on December 31, 2021, is the result of the electoral law adopted by the CGP, namely 1 delegate for 35 religious.

Other religious may be invited to all or part of the Chapter by the Superior General, with passive voice. The intervention of experts, punctual or lasting, is also possible.

It should be noted that a time of formation will be offered at the beginning of the Chapter to religious who will be participating for the first time in such an assembly.

**The participation of the laity:** about fifteen, present during the first week of the Chapter.

Among them, the members of the international commission, and lay people invited by the Superior General on the proposal of the Provincials.

The lay participants in the General Chapter will benefit from two days of formation in Rome before its opening, as well as from the accompaniment of a religious during the Chapter.

**The preparatory commission:** Thierry Kahongya (chairman), Dominique Greiner, João Da Silva, Jean-Paul Sagadou, Joseph Nguyen Chi Ai, Roger Sy-ayipuma.

**The pre-chapter commissions:**

- 1) Formation;
- 2) Lay-Religious Alliance;
- 3) Education;
- 4) Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC);
- 5) Congregation Economic Council (CEC);
- 6) Communication and social networks
- 7) Animation of the works of the Congregation;
- 8) Our community organization.

The composition of these commissions is currently being discerned.

This list leaves each Province free to create at its own level pre-Chapter commissions on other subjects that are relevant to it (youth and vocation ministry, parishes, senior religious, new missions, protection of minors, etc.), the fruit of which can be brought to the General Chapter.

In addition, most Provinces have already set the calendar for their own Chapters, intended to prepare for this 34th Chapter, in particular through the election of their delegates.

From now on, you will find in each issue of AA Info, the latest news on our march towards this major event in the life of our Congregation.

**P. Michel Kubler**  
Secretary General



# Two new foundations

During its complementary autumn session, the Plenary General Council validated the opening of two new houses of the Province of Europe.

## Digos (Philippines)

This foundation in the south of the Philippine archipelago, which has been under study for two years, has been delayed due to sanitary constraints and necessary adjustments with the local Church. In the meantime, however, the project has progressed and the founding religious are now on site to create our first implantation in this country outside of Manila.

Intended to welcome our Filipino postulants, the community will also be in charge of animating the Divine Mercy Shrine, which was created about ten years ago and proposed by the bishop as a quasi-parish, with an important youth ministry. This will be our first parish in the Philippines, where our future priests can be sent for internship. The Religious of the Assumption are not far away, on the island of Mindanao.



The initial team consists of two priests, Frs. Jay Lituañas and Rex Navarro, and Bro. Joseph Le Tuan Phuoc Thien. They will have to learn the local language, as English is not widely spoken and Tagalog is not spoken in this region. The capital is 1h30 away by plane.

## Abidjan (Ivory Coast)

It is a return to the Ivory Coast for our congregation, which had been established there from 1957 to 1990, animating

the Notre-Dame d’Afrique college and then parishes. Returning there today is justified first of all by the transfer of Bayard Afrique from Ouagadougou to Abidjan, while several religious are involved in this enterprise. But Abidjan also has important resources for higher education in the French language, from which brothers from West Africa but also from elsewhere can benefit.

The establishment is planned for Cocody, with the two religious working at Bayard and a deacon on probation, hosted by the Marianists while waiting to find a more permanent home.

Three female congregations of the Assumption are established in Côte d’Ivoire, both in Abidjan (RA and OrA) and in the provinces (RA and OA).

The closest community will be Lomé, an hour away by plane... or even by bus through Ghana.

It should be noted that this foundation will increase the number of countries where our congregation is present to 34.



# Finances at the service of our parishes

The « Directory for Financial Oversight » of our parishes has just been printed; it is meant to assure better oversight of the Christian communities that are entrusted to us.

I can still remember a visit I made to a province seven or eight years ago. Visiting a large parish served by the Congregation, I had requested to see the parish accounts for the preceding year. I was brought 36 terribly tattered pieces of paper (three per month) on which were scribbled the expenses and revenues of the parish in question. No one had bothered to undertake the yearly summary nor to verify if the revenues were greater than the expenses. So I had to spend several hours myself in constructing the operating statement of the parish.

Afterwards, I paid much more attention to the parish accounts of parishes run by the Congregation. Doing so allowed me to realize that their financial oversight revealed aspects that were no longer tolerable in today's world. Such matters demand ever greater transparency and they have become more technical and complex, especially in the area of finances.

## A requirement reaffirmed by the Vatican

It also became clear that certain religious in charge of a parish were quite negligent with regard to financial health of their own religious community. They failed to provide recompense to their brothers who were active pastorally and, what is worse,



they were making the religious community cover expenses that should have been covered by the parish.

Moreover, the Holy See over the last few years has itself recalled on several occasions the importance of putting in place modern techniques of oversight: construction of a budget, rigorous accounting, oversight procedures, etc. These requirements were finalized and appeared in a detailed document published by the Vatican in January 2018, *Economy at the Service of the Charism and the Mission* (text available on line).

From now on, it appears to be important to improve the rigor and technical quality of the financial oversight of our parishes. This is more specifically the case in dioceses where the bishop's guidelines in this matter are not well developed.

## 44% of our religious are directly affected

The topic of financial oversight has profound implications for the life of the Congregation. In 2019, the Economic Council of the Congregation (CEC) found that 44% of active religious (this includes elderly priests who are not in homes but excludes religious who are in studies) work in parishes or shrines.

If we want to build an Assumption that is financially « viable and sustainable », a theme frequently raised by congregations today, it is essential that our communities in charge of parishes can not only live from their own income but also contribute to the life of the Province: expenses of the provincial superior and his Council, formation costs, upkeep of elderly religious, etc. Even if there is work that remains, our Province of Brazil where the apostolic work essentially consists in overseeing parishes has done a great job in this field over the last 20 years and, as a result, has become financially self-sustaining whereas in the past it depended in part on aid that came to it from Europe.

## A recommendation of the General Chapter...

It was with this concern in mind that the General Chapter of 2017 adopted the following recommendation:



The consecration of the new church of Sokodé-Komah (Togo).

« The Chapter requests that the CEC examine how we oversee the economic life of our parishes and then recommend to the PGC measures in order that this oversight might conform to the principles articulated by the Church and to bookkeeping principles and in order that our parishes contribute in a fair and balanced way to the economic life of communities and of the Congregation. Such oversight must respect diocesan guidelines as well as the principles of *Mutuae Relationes*. » (Acts of the 33<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter, #139)

### ...taken up again by the CEC and the PGC

In the wake of the General Chapter, the CEC began by drawing up a questionnaire that each provincial treasurer had to submit to the religious in charge of parishes. Filling out the questionnaire and then collating the responses took a lot of time and

energy, but we were able to gather the responses from 54 of our parishes. Then we took the time to go over each of the responses, taking note each time of that which we considered to be best practices capable of being used throughout the Congregation and, to the contrary, nightmarish experiences that need to be absolutely avoided at all cost.

Just to cite one example of the latter: one of our parishes doubled its revenue from collection boxes; the day when the pastor withdrew the task from the layman who had had the responsibility in order to do it himself.... Well, I'll let you draw the conclusion ...

To sum up, all this work allowed us to edit a voluminous report that the CEC submitted to the PGC. At their December 2020 meeting the PGC approved the recommendations made by the CEC in this report.

These recommendations are gathered in the document now

published (in electronic format) and entitled *Parishes at the Assumption: Directory in view of Economic Oversight*. Rather detailed, this document contains a lot of recommendations of which the PGC requests the implementation by religious in charge of parishes. They cover a wide range of matters: agreements between the Congregation and the diocese; titles of our property assets; the potential rental of property; the Parish Finance Committee; personnel oversight; the setting up of parish accounts and annual budgets; bank accounts; liquidity management; material support of the religious community. Furthermore, the CEC came up with an accounting model to help parishes maintain their account in an orderly fashion. The PGC even wanted to add to these recommendations that the Provincial Superior be responsible for assuring their implementation!

### To be continued!

The Ordinary General Council intends to have a hard copy booklet printed containing both the small booklet published under the title *Assumptionists in Parish* and the new *Economic Directory for Parishes*.

All that remains is the hope that all this work will effectively lead to better financial oversight of our parishes....which can only serve to strengthen the means of the Congregation in view of extending the Kingdom.

**Br. Didier REMIOT**  
General Treasurer

# «God comes to us in the form of a stranger»

Last July, a session brought together online about a hundred members of the Assumption family, on the theme of migration, refugees, displaced persons and victims of trafficking. Here is Father General's homily for the closing ceremony on July 10.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

(...) Today, perhaps more than ever, our world is marked by the question of migration and by the distress of displaced people. I heard on the radio a few days ago that the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees announced that there were more than 80 million people affected by this phenomenon and that this number had doubled in 10 years. The causes are multiple and unfortunately all too well known: war, hunger, persecution because of religious affiliation or political options, upheavals related to climate change. More and more our Earth is suffering and the world's inhabitants are exposed to distress and violence. It is time to act.

Our Christian faith, deeply rooted in the Old Testament, urges us to defend those who have left their homeland without having any other concern than to support and welcome them. (...) (cf. Lev 19:33-34). Our human condition impels us to solidarity with all. We cannot exclude a part of humanity in order to keep our peace and to enjoy our happiness selfishly. Christ is the one who gave himself for all without exception.

Saint Augustine reminds us that we are all pilgrims because our homeland is the Kingdom of God. We are in a way migrants in



search of the true homeland and our life is this journey that leads us to God.

(...) Our God who calls us his friends has the habit of approaching us in the guise of a stranger. Abraham and Sarah were quietly going about their business when three strangers showed up and they treated them to sumptuous hospitality. Jesus himself accepted to become incarnate by taking on the human condition. God is one of us. If God has made himself close, how can we keep at a distance those who are of the same flesh as us? Jesus himself took on the face of the stranger. At the end of John's gospel, the risen Lord appears as a stranger to Mary Magdalene in a garden; to the disciples fishing, he is a stranger on the beach; and to the disciples on their way to Emmaus, he is the stranger they meet on the road.

For us, it follows that if we wish to meet him, let us make

friends with strangers. In these times of rising populism, there is no more important question than whether we can befriend strangers. The future of our civilization depends on whether we can. Our world is torn by terrorism and war; millions of people are nomadic, and the planet is facing displacement on a scale not seen in millennia. Will fear of strangers lead us to close our minds and hearts or will we dare to see them as close friends of God?

(...) Our mission is to tear down the walls that separate and break down the borders that isolate. Our work is to grow in brotherhood and to become one people. The Kingdom of God is waiting for our commitment, now is a favorable time.

Fr. Benoît GRIÈRE  
General Superior



## My joy of serving in Mexico

The Province of North America has set up a volunteer program for lay people. Here is a testimony.

I'd like to sincerely thank the Assumptionist community for the opportunity to serve with the Congregation in Mexico and encounter God's love during my time there. I spent eighteen days at the Assumptionist parish center in Tlilapan, Veracruz. Throughout the volunteer work and the cultural immersion, it was a joy to serve, learn, and share life with all the people I met.

With the sun inching over the rolling mountains, drawing curtains of warmth in the still-cool air, each day started with morning prayer and Mass in the chapel, followed by a shared breakfast. In the late afternoon, from Mondays to Fridays, I taught English to locals from the youth group in a parish classroom. We started each lesson with either an informal speaking exercise to warm up, or with a recap of what we had worked on the previous day. With each new topic, we completed exercises and played a speaking game in order

to practice the concept in a more engaging way. I appreciate how receptive and eager the students were to participate.

While I wasn't teaching English, I accompanied some of the priests to their ministries in the area. In the few weeks while I was there, I attended a wedding, two *quince años*, a baptism, a last rites ceremony, a funeral, as well as a celebration of the Feast of the Assumption of Mary. Through all these sacraments and events, it became clear to me that God is at the center of the familial love that thrives in Mexican culture, whether it's through joy or sorrow. I saw His love's steadfastness in a woman's unbroken care for her sick husband, heard its guidance in an uncle's bittersweet speech to his *quinzeañera*, smelled its heartbreak in the incense that lifted up the prayers for a departed son, tasted its unity in a wedding cake, and felt its triumphant power through the bursts of fireworks.

The gift of new friendships transcended the differences in customs and language, without diminishing the richness of this diversity. It was a joy to find new neighbors to love and with whom to share adventures, from jumping into rivers to climbing mountains, from visiting bustling Orizaba to exploring the small-town culture in Tlilapan, and from learning how to dance *cumbia* to teaching the Cotton-Eyed Joe.

Many thanks again to the Assumptionist community for this volunteer opportunity and for the cultural immersion. I keep their mission in my prayers and hope that my experience inspires others to discover and share through this program, all for the glory of God. Saludos!

Veronika JASTER

For more information about the Assumptionist Volunteer Program, please contact [tomasz.jaster@assumption.us](mailto:tomasz.jaster@assumption.us)

# It has been 100 years since the death of Mother Isabelle

Les Orantes de l'Assomption célèbrent cette année le centenaire du dies natalis de leur fondatrice. Voici le message que leur Supérieure générale leur a adressé à cette occasion.



This year the Orantes of the Assumption celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their foundress. Here is the address given by their General Superior on this occasion.

On July 3, 1921, Mother Isabelle of Gethsemane, foundress of the Orantes of the Assumption, passed away suddenly at four o'clock in the morning, in Sceaux, France. She was surrounded by some of the thirty sisters of this unique monastery that was part of the congregation. It was founded 25 years earlier in an environment of religious persecution. She joined Fr. Francois Picard who was the co-founder of the congregation and five sisters who predeceased her.

A death is an Easter, a passage from death to life, and that is why it is called *Dies natalis*. In Latin, this expression means birthday, a birth to heaven and the full meeting and praising of God. For religious and for Christians seeking union with God, the *dies natalis* is the accomplishment of this

union and compares to a spiritual wedding.

The words of Mother Isabelle that were remembered from that morning, spoken in her final moments, can serve as a message for us today.

« **Tell them I love them** »  
---These words were directed toward her Orante sisters: I love them all. . .all. . .! She continued to add words of affection for those close by. In this centenary year which we are approaching, we memorialize her Easter through the action of grace. I invite you to join through her love offered to all---concrete, delicate and attentive . . .

Attentive to poverty and misery both material and spiritual, Mother Isabelle feared that a contemplative life was too closed within itself for the Orantes. She wanted prayer and charity to be synonymous. Such was the origin that her contemplative way of life was revealed to the world. Prayer and charity converge when the life of the Orante is generously given: a contemplative life welcoming all the paths of God; a life of prayer persevering and disinterested, comprised like a communion in the Church and a contribution in praise of all; an interior life, deepened by the Word of God and by spirituality; a seeking of unity, turning toward God together in communities; a fraternal blossoming in their contacts . . .

As Orantes, our vocation is not to establish works but to pray and work by offering a presence of prayer and sincere love toward all . . . the manner of this openness toward all is varied, whether it be in shared prayer, some visits of encouragement, the work of manufacturing and sales, the external jobs...

*Tell them that I love them*--  
---These words today go beyond the first sisters, to all the sisters and communities, to the associates, to our brothers and sisters in Assumption. They reconnect our places of presence, our churches, our priests . . . These words resonate at the same time like a word of God that fills us and sends us forth: *Tell them that I love them*. We are all called to be intermediaries. To deal with personal relations that we cherish to maintain with the Lord. It is the care he has for the whole flock that is being prepared and that passes through us, each according to his grace.

« **How we are joyous to go to heaven!** » ---These were the last words of our foundress before giving up her soul to God. It is the happiness for the meeting with Him toward whom she was oriented for so long, the One to whom her life was given and consecrated, set aside for Him, the One with whom and for whom she responded to his calls, with whom she lived out her joys and her pains . . .





On July 3, 2021, the Orantes of the DR-Congo Region celebrated the centenary of the death of their founder

The beatitude of heaven corresponds with the beatitude of the gospel of the day ( July 3): *Happy are those who believe without seeing---Jn. 20, 29---*and that of the Virgin Mary: *Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord---Lk 1, 45.* One must believe, to trust Him, to have confidence in spite of appearances, difficulties or trials. That is what our foundress did, wherein she was not spared in life and while she was also tested along her spiritual path.

She clung to Christ, the interior master, and to companions along her journey to advance along the way. She gave of herself for the advancement of the flock, encouraging several hundred sisters since the foundation of the order. Even today, it is with her blessing that each sister clings with

faith and confidence to Christ to commit with each step and to persevere with the fervor of the Holy Spirit until the end. The older sisters, those who have been religious for 25 or 50 years, know that in the fulfillment of their vocations, it is like a march--- of one step that leads to another along the path, the cliffs, and the green pastures. It is reassuring to know that we are guided by the same faithful Shepherd, who does not forsake us and who knows through which inner transformations he leads us, seeking to make us all come to our true identities, which reveal a complete belonging to God.

Among us, as among you, brothers, sisters, and friends, many are not saved from difficulties or hardships. We ask for each of us the continued grace to believe, to love, and

to hope in all circumstances, and to emerge strengthened from the ordeal when it cannot be avoided. Each one of us, should try to open up the pathways of the Gospel. Let us not spare our efforts to live the message in relying on the witnesses who speak to us so that the Lord can lead us to where he wants.

We hold you in our prayers and our fraternal affection. Together, pray and give thanks to God, always, for the paths he opens for us on our way.

**Sr Anne HUYGHEBAERT**  
**Superior General of the Orantes**  
**of the Assumption**

## Base communities, a pastoral ministry of proximity

As in other countries, Christian life in Madagascar is increasingly practiced at the local level. A testimony from the region of Fianarantsoa.

In Madagascar, as elsewhere, more precisely in the diocese of Fianarantsoa, our archbishop has given as a pastoral orientation the building up and

realization of evangelization through small Christian communities. Thus, this sharing will focus on the activities of the basic Christian communities in the district of Nasandratrony.

The sector of Nasandratrony is located about 17 km west of the city of Fianarantsoa, on the national road N°42. It is composed of 20 churches, including three centers: Nasandratrony, Natao and Ambondrona. The mission is entrusted to our Congregation. The testimony of life is the first apostolate of our community, which is based in Nasandratrony since last year to better extend the Kingdom of God through direct pastoral work and to be closer to the faithful.

As a pastoral agent in this district, I would like to share what I have experienced in a basic Christian community, known in Malagasy as “A.P.F: Ankohonam-Piangonana Fototra”. It is made up of about ten households to form a small Christian community, meeting regularly to share their lives and to pray together. The objective is to encourage Christians to pray more and to give good examples to those around them. The time and place of prayer should be taken into account to feel like a family. In this district, there are 132 base communities, each with a patron saint. The catechist of each base community prepares a program with the priests at the beginning of the pastoral year to set the dates for the rounds where the

Eucharist will be celebrated in their respective places.

The pastoral team appoints a person from the base community to be its catechist, who will be trained to animate this community. They also oversee the smooth running of human and spiritual activities within their community. This family spirit corresponds to their great hunger and thirst to meet, to exchange and pray together, despite the situation linked to the health emergency. And one can truly see the faith of the people which leads them to live the Word of Christ: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18, 20).

The presence of the base community, within a village, allows people to pray in small groups, especially during the confinement when the church was closed. It also allows the members to have a sense of responsibility by being part of the organizing committee, by preparing the liturgy together, by ensuring the readings of the Word of God. Thus, they show that they are able to overcome their shyness by having a dynamic and daring spirit in their environment.

Thanks to these regular meetings, they have the opportunity to share their daily life before or after the celebration. The spirit of “God’s Church” promoted in Africa and Madagascar is really manifested in their way of being. It is a good model of the Church for them, because they



feel really close to each other, sharing a family spirit, according to their own testimony. To show their cohesion, solidarity and fraternity, they share with each other the joys and sorrows experienced in their daily lives; this is truly human (cf. *Gaudium et spes* n. 1).

As for the economic life, one of our challenges is the self-help of each church (or autonomy) according to the recommendation of the diocesan synod. Basic communities are moving in this direction, to support the livelihood of their ministers and pastoral workers. Christians bring something from their harvests as donations to the Church, we auction these products in order to replenish the Church's coffers, sometimes they donate money for the repair of pews, chairs, tables, etc.

These sales even attract the non-believers of the village who come to participate in their own way to show the spirit of solidarity and fraternity in their neighborhood. It is because they are attracted by the importance of human values that consolidate their social cohesion.

The priests are grateful to these catechists of the A.P.F. of Nasandratrony, because the collaboration and the solidarity help a lot to the good functioning of the Church as well on the human and spiritual level. Indeed, the difficulties, relative to the COVID-19, have pushed all the village to encourage each other, to support each other at the material, emotional and spiritual levels, thanks to the faith. The existence of the basic community also reduces social insecurity because people know each other better and feel like they are part of the



same family, so they do not dare to do acts against the unity of the villagers.

The time of prayer and meeting in the basic Christian communities is a privileged moment of fraternal and friendly communion, reinforcing the family spirit, unity and solidarity. Living the Christian faith means first of all witnessing to Christ and practicing charity with friends and family. Then, it can extend a little further when the spirit of listening, dialogue and exchange is cultivated in their Christian life within these basic Christian communities.

Personally, I believe that the conviction to share the good news and to extend the Kingdom of God must be concrete and manifested in the sensitivities, by caring for the human and spiritual life of all within the A.P.F. with whom one shares the same faith.

That is why Saint Paul said in his letter to the Galatians: “As long as we have time, let us work for the good of all, especially those close to us in the faith” (Gal 6:10).

The fact remains that, despite the benefits and virtues brought about by the life of the basic Christian community, certain situations of sin and poverty are still present. This should challenge us as pastors to invest ourselves more with the flock that God has entrusted to us, so that they may always walk towards the path of holiness. The same is true for people of good will, who should be helped to commit themselves more to this noble task.

**P. Parfait Elysé ANDRY NIRINA**  
(excerpt from an article published in the *VaoVao* bulletin n° 45, summer 2021)

## 150 years ago, Fr. d'Alzon founded Notre-Dame des Châteaux



By going to Savoy to find vocations for his young congregation, our founder had an incredibly fruitful intuition.

The Assumption has never been lacking in projects or works. Rather what has been lacking is personnel to the point that the congregation might be said to resemble a « High Command without troops ». D'Alzon dreamed of an elite congregation, formed of the sons of good families and of a certain intellectual level. This was consistent with the educational vision of the *collège* of Nîmes. The founder hoped that young people from « Assumption College » would become Assumptionists. But there was competition and many of the well-bred youth (often encouraged by their parents) would instead enter the Jesuits, the Dominicans or the diocesan clergy of Paris. So it was that, in 1868, nearly 25 years after the foundation, there were only 39 Assumptionists<sup>1</sup>. Even though many entered, many left.

Rather than counting on potential candidates who would prob-

ably not materialize, d'Alzon's close collaborators (the Bailly brothers and Picard) urged him to think creatively. Something else needed to be done. They imagined founding « apostolic schools (écoles apostoliques) », a kind of minor seminary where older children would be formed with the hope that they would with time become religious. The founder approved of this idea, but, once again, money was in short supply.

### The foundation of the first alummates

In March 1871, it was decided to conduct a novena in order to find a solution. Even before the novena ended, a Savoyard priest, at the time a novice (he would leave soon thereafter), spoke to Fr. d'Alzon of an abandoned chapel on a small promontory in Savoy (some thousand meters high), in the middle of the ruins of an ancient chateau. The owner was

willing to hand it all over, provided Mass was celebrated in the chapel dedicated to Notre-Dame des Châteaux.

Immediately this was seen as an act of Providence. For Fr. d'Alzon learned as well that many youth of modest peasant families wanted to become priests, but were unable to for lack of means. Taken together, these two phenomena led him to go forward with the project. The property was acquired in April; the house was opened on August 28. To be sure, the structure was in ill repair and everything needed to be redone. So it was that Notre-Dame des Châteaux became the first alummate. Tradition maintains the story of the « six stone water jars »: at the time of the opening Mass, Fr. d'Alzon turned around and saw six youth before him in place of the five that had been foreseen. He didn't need much more to compare them to the six

stone water jars of Cana. Yet one of these was not an alumnist but a young shepherd boy who was passing by and came in out of curiosity. He became a symbol of all those who entered the aluminate but did not persevere.

### Formation and vocation

So the alumnates were schools where one welcomed youth between 12 and 18 years old, often coming from families of modest means. They were selected on the basis of intellectual and moral, and not financial, criteria. The goal was to give them a solid formation all the while fostering priestly vocations. Other particularities: these youth lived far from everything (the alumnates were located in rather remote sites, especially in the beginning) and they lived as « little monks ».

At the end of their formation, the students could choose: enter the Assumption, a diocese, another congregation, or remain a lay-person. The teachers would be mostly Assumptionists, and in order to maintain a family spirit the schools didn't have a lot of students<sup>2</sup>. The beginnings were modest, but very quickly this work grew, the alumnates multiplied, and fed the novitiate as well as diocesan seminaries. In 1950, France had 19 alumnates and Fr. Guissard, who retraced the history of the alumnates, estimated that some 5,000 priests came out of them<sup>3</sup>.

### A crisis and its solutions

In hindsight, what factors conspired to resolve the earlier crisis of vocations? Several: prayer; the good luck of a free house in spite of its ill repair; the realization that it was necessary to change the pool of those recruited and count on youth of modest means and not



the elite. Nevertheless, d'Alzon did not modify his vision of the Assumption; in order to announce the Kingdom of God, to know theology, to refute the adversaries of the Church, and to launch new works he wanted religious who were well trained and with a certain level of aptitude consistent with a « doctrinal congregation ». It would have been easier to select them from among the refined and well-educated, but since that was not possible, they would have to be formed at the Assumption. Financially, the project would be viable thanks to a network of benefactors known as the Procure Notre-Dame des Vocations.

However, this development would have consequences on the spirit of the Assumption, even if this was not sought out, and rarely commented on afterwards. For more than 100 years, the majority of religious would come from poor backgrounds, where the lifestyle was much more simple. Having religious live close together in small houses would foster a « family spirit » that would be valued and demanded. D'Alzon wanted

a community life that was characterized by transparency, simplicity, and affection. The alumnates favored this.

Furthermore, without it even being sought, they constituted our first work in the domain of welcome. This spirit of hospitality was handed down to the vocational communities of the 1970s, to the youth residences, then to the youth hostel, to seminaries, to the « Péniche » (barge community), etc. And it is found in the Rule of St. Augustine: « First of all, since you have come together in community, live in a household of perfect harmony (Ps 67:7), having but one mind and one heart intent on God ». So it was that the vocational crisis of the years 1860-1870 allowed an entire dimension of the charism to develop.

**Fr. Nicolas POTTEAU**  
(Saint-Lambert-des-Bois)

Extract of a conference at the *Journée des œuvres* (June 15, 2021), reprinted in the *newsletter of the Province of Europe* #31 (July 2021)

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Dossier Vie et Vertus*, vol. II, t. II, p. 824.

<sup>2</sup> In January 1957, the 16 French alumnates housed 798 students, an average of 50 per school.

<sup>3</sup> Polyeuete Guissard, *Histoire des alumnats. Le sacerdoce des pauvres*, Paris, Bonne Presse, 1954, p. 482.

## The “Great Catechism in pictures” of the Pèlerin (2nd part)

Patrick Zago’s presentation of this monumental work by Fr. Vincent de Paul Bailly, which was an international bestseller for the Maison de la Bonne Presse and marked generations of Catholics.

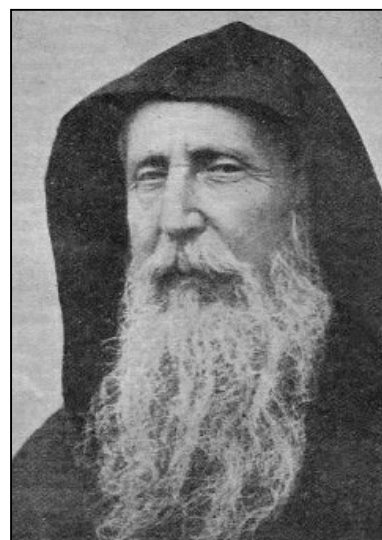
In a letter of July 1882, Fr. Bailly summarized his project of the illustrated catechism in one sentence: *“The image is a real book, and it wants a real author, even more than a drawer.”* (1) And he ends by saying: *“We have partly solved this problem, by looking for these rare men.”* Indeed, at that time, he met an artist, and he was seduced by his work, which was practically completed, because he had already drawn the 70 paintings (2) that were to compose the catechism. And he made the presentation of the whole. It is really a catechetical project.

### An author and his publisher

His name does not appear once in *Le Pèlerin*, but only in the Letters. His name is Philippe Faure de Sardiges (circa 1824-1904) living in Camaret (Vaucluse). *Le Pèlerin* reports: *“A Christian artist, modest but of great talent, has worked for several years on the drawings, theologians have guided the work, whose plan is the plan of the Catechism of Trent.”* (3) *“We wanted a good Christian to pass his faith in this work and it is indeed a work of faith.”* (4)

Thanks to his correspondence with Fr. Bailly, (5) we can follow in detail all the negotiations that took place, with obviously the inherent difficulties: the relationship of a publisher with an author is always delicate, an author holds his work as the apple of his eye and cries out as soon as one changes an iota of it! But the genius of a publisher is to know his public, to meet its expectations, its needs, to be able to distribute and sell his work. So the relations were tumultuous. (6)

The first point of friction, from the beginning in 1882: the price to be fixed. Father Bailly wrote to him very clearly: *“Therefore,*



P. Vincent de Paul Bailly

*if the catechism that I do not want to depreciate is in your eyes a fortune for your children, it is better to look for a big publisher and to wait for opportunities.”* (7) But to wait for the opportunities is precisely what Mr. Faure de Sardiges has been doing for 20 years. So they agree on the price (8): a main price of 30,000 francs, and a 5% discount on the proceeds of sales, up to 70,000 francs. The interest of the author is that the work is promptly finished and sold. But this is not the case, the first paintings take two years to appear and the whole, ten years.

### Alterations to the paintings

Another point of friction is the modifications made to the paintings. Touching the paintings meant becoming the owner, even though the payment had not yet been made. On April 24, 1893, when Mr. Faure was on the verge of a lawsuit, (9) an agreement was signed: Mr. Faure withdrew his complaint, and Father Bailly agreed to pay him what he

still owed in remittance rights. And, according to the terms of the treaty, “Mr. Faure recognizes Father Bailly as the full and complete, exclusive and unreserved owner of the Catechism in 70 paintings ceded by the agreement of September 19, 1882. Consequently, he renounces the right to criticize the modifications that have been or could be made to the said paintings.” (10)

So what did Fr. Bailly change and why? Isabelle Saint-Martin has identified 54 retouched paintings, 24 of which are significant. (11) Fr. Bailly is a publisher, so he has to sell to break even, and first, to adjust his commercial policy, to make a market study. The first changes are motivated by the reactions of the public and its expectations: “Letters and observations arrive, some to be accepted, others to be rejected. I show the paintings, especially those in color, I collect the impressions and I share them with you.” (12) His method is similar to a commercial method of today, where we test a product before launching it on the market, to find the heart of target.

Let’s take the example of the costume of the characters in the paintings. A missionary in Cochinchina said, in a letter published in *Le Pèlerin*: “The current European costume would have the disadvantage of not being that of the natives, moreover it would displease them a lot, because they would have met certain characters dressed in the same way, leading a life that was much less than Christian.” (13) And Fr. Bailly comments: “This letter and others like it made us decide, in order to really speak to all nations, to remove some paintings where Europeans were drawn, we will not say with the new fashions, since the readers

of the fashion magazines who saw them, already found them dead, even though our drawings had hardly been born. The author of the drawings will certainly do wonders to make the very removal of this inconvenience the occasion for a new improvement... We will redo the drawings with the ample, simple, decent and at the same time majestic clothing of the ancients.” (14)

The missionary’s second idea: to serve the missions, this catechism “would require that an explanation of the subject be printed on the back of the image in any language.” This idea was retained by Father Bailly, who had this explanation done by Father Fourrière. (15) In the black and white editions, format *in quarto*, the explanations will be opposite the engravings.

### A coherent project

Through these changes, a coherent catechism project is affirmed. From the very first decisions, his difference with M. Faure is affirmed: “The catechism is almost entirely biblical and of a high style.” (16) Thus, he had the paintings of the commandments modified, substituting biblical examples for scenes from daily life. And for the sacraments, he kept their administration to the faithful, but placed in the center the emblematic scene that founded their meaning. In almost every painting, he gives great importance to biblical references (words and representations of scenes).

On the other hand, the very particular technique of chromolithography requires changes for a greater visual efficiency: to privilege the essential of the message without overloading it with accessory details, to make it clearer and more readable.

1.) Underlined by Fr. Bailly.

2) The work of Philippe Faure de Saliges, entitled *Exposé de la doctrine chrétienne*, included 70 tables. The catechism of the BP in its 1893 edition includes: the summary, which is No. 67; No. 4/2, which brings the number of paintings to 68; the Sacred Heart of Jesus, No. 69; the Sacred Heart of Mary, No. 70. These Sacred Hearts are not part of the album. They are given to be framed separately, contrary to the Images of Father Lacoste (Jesuit); for him, they are an integral part of the doctrine of his catechism.

3) *Le Pèlerin*, October 28, 1882, N°304, p. 702

4) *Le Pèlerin*, November 11, 1882, N°306, p. 738

5) Isabelle Saint-Martin, op. cit. p. 132 note 51

6) Isabelle Saint-Martin, op. cit. p. 141, note 86: “Father Lacoste seems to have had on several occasions conflicting relations with his publishers or printers [...], as can be seen from some letters, found in the Jesuit archives of Vanves, whose tone is often polemical.”

7) Letter from Fr. Bailly to Philippe Faure, 15 September 1882

8) Deed dated September 19, 1882.

9) “M. Faure claims 20,000 francs in damages for the delay and as much for the modifications made without authorization.” (I. Saint-Martin, op. cit., p. 138)

10) See I. Saint-Martin, op. cit. p. 139.

11) See op. cit. p. 145.

12) Letter from Fr. Bailly to M. Faure, 21st October 1882.

13) *Le Pèlerin*, 1882, no. 304, p. 703, letter from Cochinchine, September 2, 1882.

14) *Ibid.*

15) Abbé E. Fourrière, *Explication du Grand Catéchisme en images*, Bonne Presse, 1900, 271 p. Letter from Fr. Bailly to Philippe Faure, September 15, 1882

16) *Le Pèlerin*, November 1, 1882, No. 306, p. 739.

17) “We ask if there will not be a cheap reduced edition. That is our wish; but for that, the placement of the large editions must be somewhat assured.” (*ibid.*)

18) Most of the engravers sign their works and are known in the world of engraving: the brothers Bauchart, Peulot, Soupey, Guillaume.

19) Out of 70 of these paintings, 30 are preserved in the Provincial House of the Assumptionists in Paris.

20) At the beginning, in 1882, he spoke of "the costly manufacture of 980 stones on which the different colors of this catechism are drawn", which makes an average of 12 stones per painting (Le Pèlerin, n° 307, p. 758). But in 1884, after the setbacks of the first paintings, which had to be redone, he would say 1,400, that is to say 20 stones per painting (Le Pèlerin, n° 391, p. 423).

21) Le Pèlerin, n°308, p. 768. Letter from Abbé Simonis, a great friend of the Bonne Presse and member of the German Reichstag for Alsace: "It seems to me that you are caught between a rock and a hard place: Make it beautiful - give it cheap. Let me say: Neither beautiful, nor cheap. But VERY BEAUTIFUL. It is the condition to be or not to be... If it is excuse the word, junk, the sale will stop quickly..."

22) Le Pèlerin, November 4, 1882, N°305, p.755.

23) The 1914 catalog mentions more than 500,000 paintings sold, which would make 7,500 complete series. However, the paintings are listed in the catalog until 1941. I. Saint-Martin estimates the total sale at more than 10,000. Not to mention the missions, whose churches were among the first buyers: "The Lazarist fathers, Marists, Oblates, etc. taste them and still ask for them." (Le Pèlerin, September 3, 1887, No. 558, p. 528). There are many other references

24) General catalog of publications, 1934. Idem in 1935-36, p. 44.

25) "The printing and establishment of 12,000 copies, it is a colossal affair that will cost everything included, even your royalties [...] a little more than 800,000 francs, when it is finished. That is also the price it will be sold for. (letter from Fr. Bailly to Mr. Faure de Sardiges, October 21, 1882).

### A complex manufacturing process

Three distinct stages of production were necessary, with their different actors: engravers, painters and colorists. The first were responsible for re-drawing and engraving Faure's original drawings on wood. These engravings of the black edition, smaller than the large paintings, were not marketed immediately, for fear of competing with the large paintings. (17) Then, so that these engravings (18) are used to prepare the chromolithographs, it is necessary to paint oil paintings to test the colors. (19)

Only then does the technical and artistic audacity of chromolithography begin, a demanding technique that was difficult to master at the time. The chromolithographers had to copy the drawing on large limestone stones of very fine grain, using pens, brushes and grease pencils. An image could require up to 20 lithographic stones covered with different colors. The process involved reproducing the images by manually pressing the paper onto the stones, sheet by sheet. "A total of 1,400 stones were needed." (20)

Fr. Bailly was encouraged in this ambition by the demands of the subscribers, (21) and sometimes sought other houses to remake a painting that was not successful, even in Germany and Holland,(22) or in Paris, at the Maison Jéhenne, which is the best specialist on the square. It took a long time, since this large catechism in pictures, begun in 1882, was not finished until 1893. The paintings have the beautiful size of 66x48 cm.

### Huge print runs and costs

Then began the publication and sale of the catechism in black, of reduced size. And immediately afterwards, the catechism on glass plates for light projections. And the wall paintings, covered with canvas. One loses oneself in conjecture about the print runs. Figures are lacking to estimate the circulation of the large paintings. The catalogs of the publications of La Bonne Presse (23) do not update the figures. Isabelle Saint-Martin estimates it to be less than 10,000 copies.

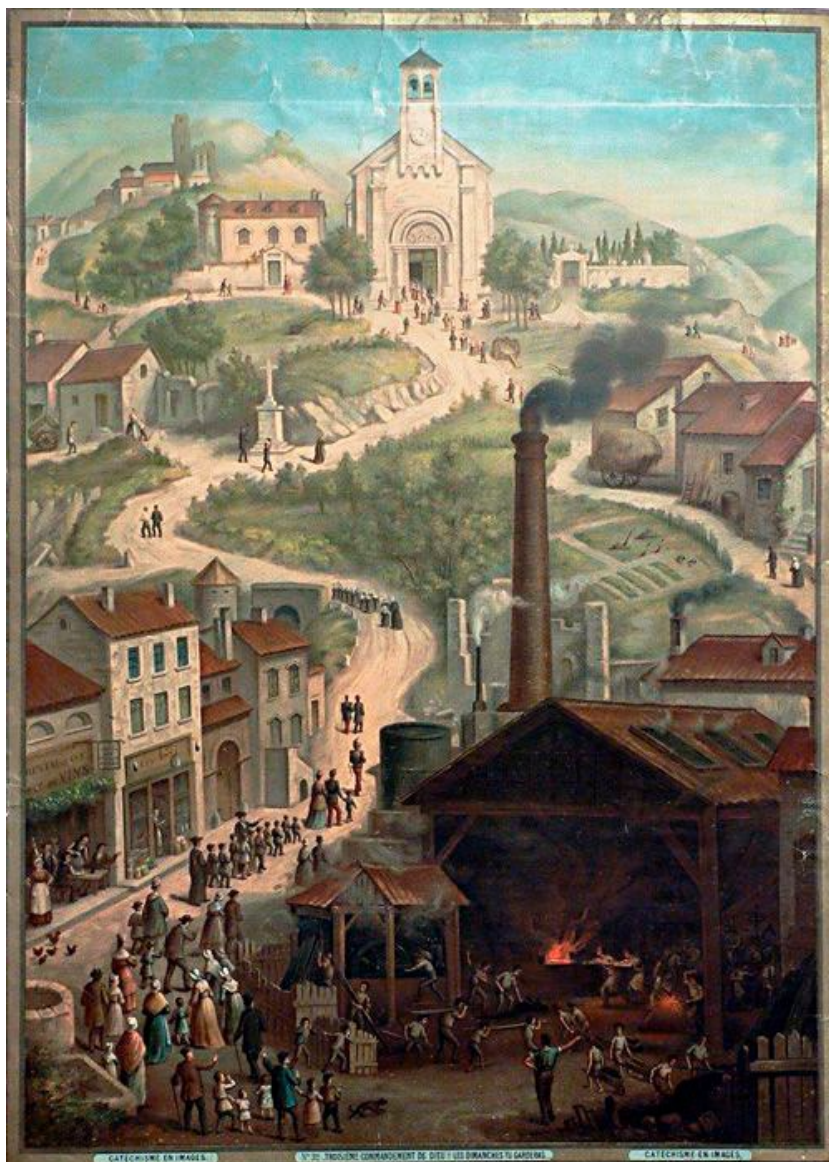
On the other hand, for the edition in black, one supposes reasonably the million copies, since in the years 1930, (24) the catalogs give the figure of 620th thousand. However, it will be offered for sale until the 1950s. On the other hand, one must also take into account the number of editions in different languages.

The price of this adventure is colossal, (25) says Fr. Bailly. Fr. Vasseur, a Jesuit, makes the same observation, which is why he renounced chromolithography for his large paintings: "It is necessary to reflect that the expense of the beautiful catechism in color by the Maison de la Bonne Presse was not far from one million francs." (26) According to the scales, 100 F of 1882 = 250 €, and 100 F of 1900 = 237 €. But this calculation is theoretical, because many other parameters are needed to take into account the cost of living.

### The second life

As far as heritage is concerned, we have two or three requests from country communes that recover catechism paintings in their churches or sacris-





*the time of the writing of this catechism, the newspaper La Croix, (seen in the picture opposite) was Catholic, but half a century later it became modernist.”*

To conclude, let us give the word back to Fr. Bailly: “*The monument of the Catechism in pictures opens its splendid porticoes to children happy enough to participate in the benefits of this new gift from heaven. It is heavy, they say, to buy. It is true, but when one builds a church that must last for centuries, one does not use bad materials and ugly sculptures for economy; one tells the artists: it is for God, do your best.* (30)

**P. Patrick ZAGO,**  
**Archivist of the Province of**  
**Europe**  
**(end)**

ties that have been abandoned. They ask for information, have them restored and consider them as a heritage to be preserved.

On an artistic level, a Breton artist, Yann Jalaber, discovered this work by chance and fell in love with it: these paintings became for him a source of inspiration for a modern and original work. (27)

It is pleasant to note that a specialist in religious imagery such as François Boespflug mentions “*the famous catechism in images of R.P. Bailly*”. Even Régis Deb-ray points out the enterprise of Fr. Bailly in *Vie et mort de l’image* (Gallimard, 1992, p. 101). And Isabelle Saint-Martin (p. 119, n. 1) points out that this catechism is frequently reproduced in the

catalogs of exhibition on the religious XIXe century and even in the school books.

On the catechetical level, Bayard today remains faithful to La Bonne Presse of yesterday in its vocation to provide children and young people with good quality catechetical means, not only doctrinal but also artistic.

On the negative side, there have been several pirate editions of the catechism in images by fundamentalists in Canada (28) and in France. (29) These are obviously people who are in the wrong century and refuse the openness of Vatican II. An amusing detail, in the picture of the corporal works of mercy, we see a young man selling the newspaper La Croix. Editor’s note: “*At*

26) Quote reproduced by I. Saint-Martin, op. cit. p. 157.

27) Yann Jalaber. See the explanation of his method: *Le catéchisme*

28) Éd. Saint-Raphaël, Sherbrooke, 1978 and Éd. C.G.C., Sherbrooke, 2000.

29) Éd. Expéditions pamphiliennes, Strasbourg.

30) *Le Pèlerin*, November 17, 1884, n° 411, p. 751.

# African Perspectives on the Founder

Father d'Alzon, a legacy to be put to music. This work of interpretation is that of young West African Assumptionists in a book directed by Fr. Jean-Paul Sagadou.

From Fr. d'Alzon, the 13 West African Assumptionists gathered in this book (1) retain the Christian virtues; his threefold love, of course, and especially his faith, for “*faith opens us to the action of God (...) and makes us bear before God the joys and sorrows of this world*” (Yves Atidepe) and his hope, marking a desire for unity and his openness to the world. Disciples of their founder, they want to meet the Christ who is already shining in others and to go wherever his image is threatened, to announce the Kingdom in a divided world which still resists him.

Should they privilege a religious heritage from Europe or their own traditions? The choice of one can lead to the fear of losing the other. “*When cultural differences intermingle, things get complicated, because one does not relate to things and beings in the same way in Africa and in Europe.*” (Blaise Bonou-Yehouenou) They all emphasize that the Assumptionist - a man of faith and communion, in solidarity with his neighbor - is “African” in his own right. Solidarity, hospitality and fraternity announce the Kingdom of God from realities that Africans are already living. But, for Jovic Kouepou, the great challenge remains inculturation: the congregation must become “*the symbol of a simple life, shared and dedicated to the service of the work of evangelization.*”

“*A charism is a free gift from God that gives joy to those who receive it.*” (Blaise) The vows have a great place in discernment. They are a path of freedom verified daily. “*One assumes the vow of chastity, renouncing the project of founding one’s own family*”, but sometimes “*one remains attached to the family of origin...*”. Choosing religious life risks cutting oneself off from the realities around one. Also, “*the aptitude for manual work represents, among other things, an important element of verification of vocations*” (Yves). Finally, “*the young African who arrives fresh in religious life, where obedience is lived in dialogue and responsible participation, can find himself a little disoriented*” (Blaise).

The charism offers to enter into the joy of God. The vows liberate us from worldly logic, including European logic: “*We should dispel prejudices from our minds and recognize that we can in turn propose values that enrich religious life. (...) We can, starting from Africa, bring our stone to the construction of a strong intercultural and international religious life.*” (Blaise)

With the “Ubuntu” anthropology, Jean-Paul Sagadou offers an innovative hypothesis: “*The no-*

*tion of Ubuntu can be put at the service of this challenge to dare to think differently (...). In the multiplicity of the world that is ours, we must now assert the diverse, the multiple, the particular, the different.*” To think the universal by breaking down the partitions that isolate our particular riches. To honor our differences in the link (or “rhizome”) that unites us to God.

For our West African brothers, the charism of the Assumption is not difficult to live or to transmit. Aware of their responsibility, they want to continue its inculturation and show that it has already begun. They are signalling us to invent a way of enriching ourselves in the reciprocity of cultures. A book to read to meet new brothers, to hear them tell their story at the Assumption. To help them realize their dreams.

P. Vincent LECLERCQ  
(Rome)

1) *Héritiers africains du Père d'Alzon. L'esprit assumptionniste, 175 ans après !*, under the direction of Fr. Jean-Paul Sagadou. Bayard Africa, 283 pages, 14 euros.



# Lectio divina and health crisis...

Fr. Vincent Kambere Kaghaniryo, a Congolese religious in Togo, has just published two works, both of which are very topical. Here is a presentation, taken from the bulletin “VAO” (n° 2) of the Vicariate of West Africa

Vincent’s first book is on “Lectio divina”, also called “Mental Prayer”, which is carried out on the basis of the Holy Scriptures (1). Even if it is an essentially intimate and personal prayer, the faithful who apply themselves to it are never locked in isolation. By reliving his encounter with God during the day, he becomes the light in the midst of his fellow men while giving them a taste for life in this world. Lectio divina” is a sure way to come into regular contact with God and enjoy his friendship by listening attentively to his Word. The praying person’s interventions spring spontaneously from his heart under the action of the Holy Spirit. They express his adhesion to the will of God who wants to save all men through his only Son, Jesus Christ.

This book deals essentially with the importance and application of mental prayer in the Christian life. It contains interesting exercises of “Lectio divina”.

Faced with tragic events in life, human beings always find themselves at a loss. He even allows himself to rebel against God. According to Fr. Kambere’s second book, this has been verified in the first five months of the Covid-19 deployment throughout the world (2). According to the man, the firm silence of God in the face of the calamities that strike the latter is proof that he is powerless, even

non-existent. In this book, which is intended to be an arbitration between man and God, the author pursues a triple objective: to bring the former to rehabilitate the latter in his rights, while renewing his faith in him since he is never the author of his misfortune; then, to educate him to sincerity in his approaches to his God, and finally, to invite him to take seriously his resolutions in view of a just world. In the light of the Holy Scriptures, the author shows that God speaks to man at all times, and that he is always with him. An invitation to be serene in life, whatever the situations we have to go through.



1) 'Lectio divina'. Importance and application in the Christian life.  
 2) The human being in front of the impasse of life and his questions about God. Covid-19: one more calamity in the history of the world.  
 Both books published in Sokodé (Togo) in 2021.

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# Our Deceased Brothers

† **Brother Félix LÓPEZ**, of the NS community in Lourdes (Andean Province), died on August 11, 2021 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. His funeral was celebrated on August 12 at the Lourdes Shrine, followed by burial in the community crypt. He was 79 years old.

† **Brother Arsene MARTENS**, of the Zepperen (Prov. of Europe) community, died on October 10, 2021, in Sint-Truiden, Belgium. His funeral was celebrated on October 16 in the Sint Genoveva Church in Zepperen (Belgium). He was 94 years old.

