

# #ASSUMPTA

Religious of the Assumption magazine

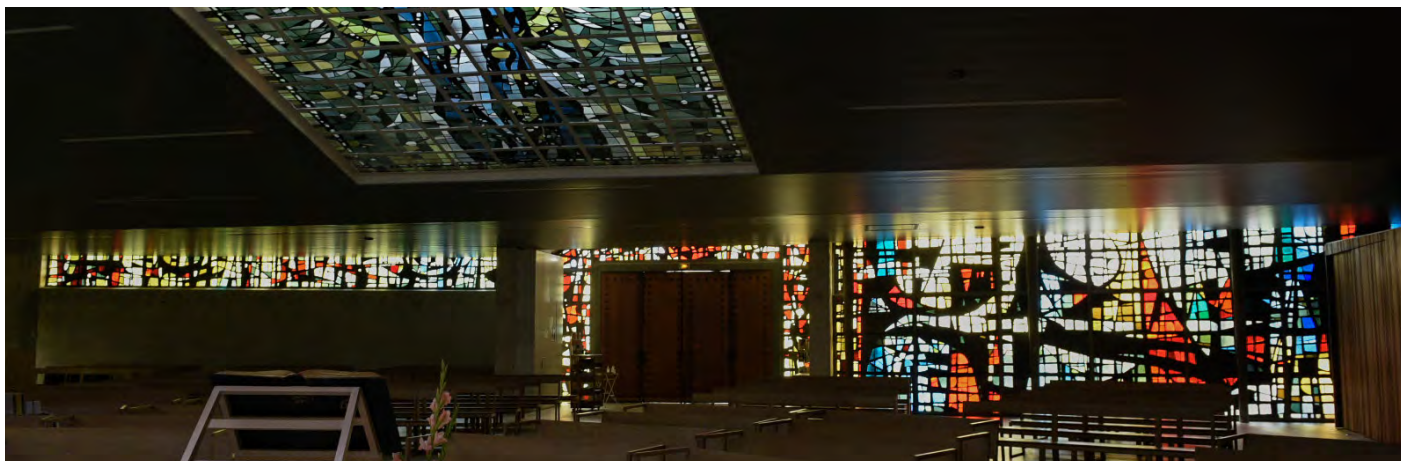
December 2023 - N°10



**Putting communication at the service of communion and mission**

# summary

"Each one of us has a mission on earth" (Marie Eugenie's credo)



## #ASSUMPTA

Year 2023 - n° 10

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# editorial

## ***#Assumpta - Putting communication at the service of communion and communication***

**T**his issue of #Assumpta marks the tenth edition of this project, which began with the first meeting we had, the communication team with the commission leaders, [Education, JPICS and BGSD, Youth and Vocation, Archives and Finance] and the General Council. We were just starting the 2019-2020 academic year in Auteuil to look together at how to respond to the General Chapter's call to "put communication at the service of communion and mission".

At this first meeting of the mission fields, we did not yet have a clear vision of how each commission operated at a general, continental, provincial-regional and local levels.

For instance, our Communication team did not plan to re-launch paper publications, except for books containing, for example, the circulars of successive General Superiors, in link with the Archives.

But we felt that a light, colourful publication, in three languages, would make it possible to give visibility to the experiences of living and extending the Kingdom in the various places where the Congregation embodies the charism. Throughout these ten issues of #Assumpta, coordinated by the people in charge of the mission fields, lay people and sisters have shared experiences, resources, intuitions... which they are carrying out with creative fidelity, in continuity with the dream of Saint Marie Eugénie "to make the earth a place of glory for God".

The content - text and photos - of #Assumpta brings our magazine to life. None of this would have been possible without you, both authors and translators. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Together, we also baptised this project with a name that unites the old and the new: "Assumpta", our Marian mystery in Latin, which avoided having to choose between one of the three modern languages of the congregation, and the hashtag "#" which, in digital vocabulary, makes it easy to find us on social networks.

We began by publishing three issues a year on symbolic dates for our Congregation: 30th April (anniversary of the Foundation), 28th August (feast

of Saint Augustine) and 25th December (Christmas, anniversary of the profession of the first sisters).

Around two years after the launch of the first issue, given the difficulty in finding sisters or lay people to write articles, the Plenary General Council meeting in Madrid in March 2022, took the decision to reduce publications to two issues a year, on 25th December and 30th April.

We would also like to thank the provincials for the support they have given to the communication teams and the launch of a communication plan in their province.

The International Communication Session held in Auteuil in May 2023 was an opportunity to celebrate the network that continues to unfold at the Assumption.

We are weaving a network of communion that is at the same time an instrument for announcing the Good News of the Kingdom of God into which small and big fish can enter (cf. Mt 13:47).

We are gradually entering into the communication culture. We know we are invited to do more by inviting greater number of our partners to express themselves. By doing so, we will strengthen our collaboration and bonds of communion.

Whether we are writing, translating, revising, editing or laying out each issue of #Assumpta, we are not professionals. Yet, we are committed to a family spirit. Many of you have contributed to this project, which you have welcomed with gratitude and joy. Many thanks for everyone's commitment.

We are pleased to be celebrating the tenth anniversary of this project at a time when the Church is in the midst of a Synod and the Congregation is preparing for the 2024 General Chapter. Let's continue to put communication at the service of communion and mission.

**ALMUDENA DE LA TORRE, ISABELLE ROUX, LINDA PLANT AND MERCEDES MÉNDEZ**

Technical team for #Assumpta

*Original Spanish*

# general community

**“We feel called  
“to refocus  
our gaze on  
God, to be  
a Church  
that looks  
mercifully at  
humanity”.”**

**O**n October 4th, 2023, feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, the General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops opened. In the troubled times in which the world and the Church find themselves, Pope Francis, in his homily, invites us to start with the eyes of Jesus: “In the moment of desolation, then, Jesus has a gaze capable of seeing beyond: he praises the wisdom of the Father and is able to discern the good that grows unseen, the seed of the Word welcomed by the simple, the light of the Kingdom of God that shows the way even in the night.”.

That’s what we’re going to try and do by sharing with you the news of the last three months. There is no shortage of challenges, but we feel called “to refocus our gaze on God, to be a Church that looks mercifully at humanity”. It means feeling the need to implore God for the situations of distress in so many countries such as Nicaragua and Guatemala, the terrorist attacks in West Africa, the migrants who flee at the risk of their lives without finding asylum, the renewed violence in Israel and Palestine... and never ceasing to believe that God is committed to working alongside us to humanise life, never ceasing to commit ourselves, however modestly, to peace wherever we are.

## **Visit to Madagascar from 10 June to 7 July 2023**

Returning to Madagascar after 4 years allowed us to witness the work of God and the way in which the charism of the Assumption continues to grow and take root in this young province of the Congregation. The liturgy itself is a sign of this inculturation, with an emphasis on local traditions and an openness to the international scene. Sisters studying in other provinces and welcoming missionary sisters has encouraged this reciprocal influence. We are blessed to have so many young sisters and, at the same time, we have a responsibility in terms of initial and professional formation.

We were impressed by the simple lifestyle, close to people and close to nature, as well as the real know-how and hard work in terms of breeding and cultivating the land with a view to self-sufficiency.

We sensed a spirit of synodality in the Malagasy Church between pastors from



*Group photo of the Provincial Assembly - Madagascar*

*Provincial Assembly - Madagascar*



*Formators' session - Rwanda*



*Retreat with the Province of the United States*



*Junior Sisters Session - Rwanda*



different churches, religious and lay people.

The time has come to find other communities in response to the call of several bishops in new dioceses. There have been many requests, both in the educational and socio-pastoral fields! This means discerning new forms of presence in outlying areas that are sometimes isolated because they are not easily accessible. The generosity of the sisters is not lacking. Cyclones, pandemics and various forms of poverty contrast with the richness of the soil, the diversity of the landscapes, the beauty of the songs and the smiles of the children along the way.

#### **Formation session for the Junior Sisters of Africa-Madagascar followed by a session for the formators in Rwanda**

With a view to fostering a sense of the body and forging the Religious identity of the Assumption, Sr Marthe Marie and Irène accompanied the formation session organised by the continent of Africa-Madagascar. This was the 7th meeting on formation on the continent and the second in Rwanda (18 July to 5 August). The theme of the session was: Young RA, in dialogue with your reality, build your identity for a prophetic RA life.

For the 29 young sisters present, it was an opening to the international dimension of the Congregation and to the cultural roots of the continent. The resource speakers were all very good. Some of the topics covered included "Living interiority in a fragmented world", African identity in the following of Christ, and Religious consecration and fidelity in the African context. The exchange of experiences and immersion in different social and religious contexts created communion. This encounter was followed by a formators' meeting (6 to 12 August) with the aim

of harmonizing the Formation Program (Ratio) at a Continental level.

#### **Retreat in the US Province**

Isabelle had the joy of giving a retreat to the sisters of the US province in July. "I first spent five days in Lansdale, where the sisters were actively preparing to move to West Philly, a move to be lived in thanksgiving for all the years of mission and presence, and also in detachment for having left a part of themselves there. Daylesford Abbey, an abbey of Premonstratensian canons living the Rule of Saint Augustine, was a very appropriate place for the theme of the retreat: "The Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is present, there is freedom". The beauty of the liturgical hymns accompanied on the piano and the discreet, fraternal presence of the brothers created a wonderful atmosphere. Above all, it was a privileged moment to feel with the province this stage whose future is still unknown; a time that invites faith and trust in order to remain open to a promise. This union of missionary dynamism and vulnerability made me feel the presence of God in the midst of my sisters."

#### **Four days in Belgium**

After a month of not being together as Community, we were happy to gather again the day after August 15th to spend 4 days in Belgium, on a community holiday. We were made very welcome by the Boisfort community. Thank you to the sisters who took wonderful care of us: a visit to the centre of Brussels, dinner with the Etterbeck community, a visit to Val Notre Dame and the magnificent park of La Hulpe on the outskirts of Brussels. The visit to Val Notre Dame was like a pilgrimage in the footsteps of our ancestors. The comments and anecdotes from Marcienne and Katrin, as well as the director,



Sister Marcienne and Sister Katrin with Ghislaine Simon, Director of VND

Ghislaine Simon, brought the place to life. We also took the opportunity to reread our life together and build our community project for this final year. Finally, it was a good opportunity to visit Isabelle's mother together.

**World Youth Day in Lisbon**

At the end of July and beginning of August, the World Youth Day was held in Lisbon. The eight junior sisters from Auteuil took part in various ways: 2 with the parish group, 2 with the Assumption family, 1 with Belgium, another with Lithuania and 2 with the vocation group booth. Each group took a different route. For all of them, it was a very positive experience of the universal Church and a profound discovery of the world of young people and their capacity to listen and to be silent in prayer. There are many testimonies on the Facebook pages of the provinces and on the Congregation's website. New contacts are continuing.

After Lisbon, the juniorate had the joy of being welcomed by the community of Tournai (Belgium) for a ten-day holiday. This was followed by community days with the entire Auteuil community. The sisters recount: "With the arrival in Tournai of 4 sisters from Auteuil, we spent the last 3 days evaluating our 2022-



Group photo - Belgium



Meeting with Isabelle's mother - Belgium

2023 community project. Then we had the chance to discover all the nooks and crannies of the house (seminary) and garden, as well as the city."

Back in Auteuil, during a vespers service, the two communities thanked Sr Marie Yvonne for all her service over the past year and welcomed Sr Illuminata as leader of the Auteuil community.

**In September, Sr Cécile spent 15 days in Madagascar**

We let her speak: "The visit was a great joy. As time was short, we made the most of every minute: sessions with the bursars, with the bursars and superiors, with the novices and postulants and with the juniors; working time with the finance and patrimony commissions, with the provincial council and with the bursar. During this second visit I was able to see the evolution of the province, its desire to grow in self-sufficiency and responsibility for this economic dimension of our life. It was a great joy to see my sisters so resolutely on their way!

**On-line sessions with Sr Véronique**

Several provinces held on-line sessions with Sr Véronique in September-October. Educators from West Africa met for three days "at the sources of Assumption Education". This was an opportunity to



Val Notre Dame

build projects rooted in the heritage of Marie Eugénie. Then the Superiors of Asia received formation on Marie Eugénie and accompaniment: being accompanied and accompanying, two inseparable experiences for following Christ. Finally, the novitiate in Central America, followed by Europe, discovered the schools of spirituality that have influenced the identity of the Assumption since its origins.

### Third Year Session

“Abide in me, as I abide in you. (John 15:4a)” is the theme of the Third Year 2023. It was a great joy to welcome our sisters to the Mother House for the session. They arrived at different times, bringing with them their different stories of visa applications, but all these experiences have deepened their faith in God’s abiding love. We have a wonderful group of 24 sisters from 10 provinces on four continents. In the first week of the session, we have already experienced a deep level of sharing and communion. We are grateful to the Holy Spirit for guiding the group. The sessions and experiences are flowing smoothly, helping each sister to draw on the Scriptures and our roots, while dialoguing with personal experiences and current realities. You can find out more about the experiences of the third year by reading the Newsletters that the sisters have shared on our website. On October 11th, the sisters will enter the 30-day retreat which will be preached by Father Noël D. Vasquez, a Filipino Jesuit who has been here for the last two 3rd Year sessions.

### Visit to the South Atlantic.

This was also the second visit that gave us the grace to see the inner movements of the province in 4 years. After their visit to the two communities in Argentina, Sr Rekha joined Sandra and Isabelle in Brasilia. Rekha

had just returned from Kerala, where she had joined her family for a final A-Dieu to her father, who died on September 5th.

Stepping on Latin American soil enables us to feel the vitality of grassroots ecclesial communities inspired by theology of Liberation or the theology of the People. It’s a living face of the synodality to which Pope Francis is inviting us! Lay people, sisters and pastors are sowing the Good News with the aim of restoring dignity to the most marginalized. There is a strong resistance from another fringe of the Church, a conservative, inward-looking Church that is fiercely opposed to Pope Francis’ options. We have kept alive the memory of the martyrs and witnesses to the faith who are part of the heritage of this Church.

In each of the six communities, we were introduced to the Assumption Together groups. We admired the diversity and commitment of each group. Today, the CNBB (National Conference of Bishops of Brazil) continues to provide a solid formation that accompanies the pastoral processes of faith and life in the various dioceses. One example is the fraternity campaigns during Lent, whose theme this year is Hunger and Fraternity. Lay people and sisters take an active part in these campaigns.

During the restructuring process, we witnessed a religious life in search of something new, with the experience of the older sisters and the desire of the younger ones to leave a space for something new. Vocation ministry remains a challenge and we have faith that, supported by the community, the fruits will not be long in coming. We thank the sisters of Argentina and Brazil for their warm welcome and their passion for the Kingdom.



World Youth Day in Lisbon



Auteuil Community - Tournai



Third year 2023

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South Atlantic Assembly



Assumption Together - Miracema, Brazil



Sister Rekha with the teachers and students of the Vincentian Faculty - Brazil



On October 3rd , Sr. Rekha gave a talk at the Vincentian Faculty of Curitiba in southern Brazil on the theme "Biblical Trends in Mission for our Times". Rekha shares in a few words the content of her talk to students and teachers: "Our participation in God's mission is inspired by the self-sacrificing love of Jesus, by the passion and commitment of the prophets, and the life-witness and the innovative missionary zeal of the Apostles; it is impelled by the Holy Spirit and concretized in our response to the emerging realities of life. Transformed by our personal experience of God's grace, the Church is called today to be a catalyst for spiritual renewal and social transformation." (see also her article on mission published in 2022).

General Chapter.

**SISTERS REKHA, SANDRA, ISABELLE, MARTHE AND IRENE**  
General Community

Previously, on August 21st, 2023, World Day for Migrants and Refugees, the FABC invited Rekha to give an online conference. The theme was "Free to Choose Whether to Migrate or to Stay" With a Specific focus on opportunities and services provided to create a fair world to all. You can find the lecture on the Congregation's website.

Once again we borrow the words of Francis: " In such a complex time as ours, new cultural and pastoral challenges emerge that call for a warm and kindly inner attitude so that we can encounter each other without fear. In synodal dialogue, in this beautiful "journey in the Holy Spirit" that we are making together as the People of God, we can grow in unity and friendship with the Lord in order to look at today's challenges with his gaze; to become, using a fine expression of Saint Paul VI, a Church that "makes itself a conversation" (Homily, 4 October 2023)

This is our wish as we journey together towards the



# education

## *Active listening at the service of transformative education*

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**“Education at the Assumption is a process of personal liberation with a view to the transformation of society.”  
(Reference text page 29)**

**T**he Notre Dame des Apôtres Rwaza School Group (GSNDA Rwaza) has adopted “Active Listening” as one of the strategic axes of its educational project to be a secondary school that adapts to the needs of young girls to support their growth and success. Faced with various problems relating to bad behaviour, lack of motivation, and poor performance in class, active listening was proposed as a tool to develop our pupils’ intellectual, emotional, and psychosocial skills. In this short article, we would like to share our practical experience of active listening, while highlighting a few challenges and prospects for the future.

Firstly, it should be noted that at GSNDA Rwaza, active listening is a cross-cutting subject that teachers are encouraged to integrate into their classes to help young people develop their listening skills, express themselves freely, and create opportunities for rich, structured conversations in small groups. The Competence-based Curriculum in use in Rwandan schools gives students more time and space for personal and group work. In fact, our teachers have been able to exploit this flexibility in the curriculum to engage students in a variety of interactive and listening/dialogue activities and to help them reap the benefits of active listening. According to the students, these practices have improved their learning. “When a teacher shows you that he’s listening to you; and gives you time and space to express yourself, you feel loved and motivated. You love him back,” said one of our pupils. Teachers also testify that active listening helps them to achieve their teaching objectives. “These groups for dialogue and listening enable us to build relationships based on trust and kindness between us and the students. This is very important. We feel at ease, and we can see that the students are no longer distracted,” said one teacher.

Secondly, active listening takes a prescribed format every day after classes in a room reserved for this purpose by a resource person trained in the practice of active listening for the students who are interested. Several themes are addressed, but it has been noted that the subjects of family life (parents’ conflicts, a sick parent; poverty in the family); spiritual life, conflicts with others at school (teachers or pupils), reproductive health, and the difficulties of succeeding in school are often first and foremost the subjects that trouble our young people. According to the testimonies of our students, these sessions are actually “a moment of relief and rejuvenation”.

Thirdly, as we try to become a school that listens to its students, we encourage and educate our young people to acquire active listening skills. The students who don’t have good active listening skills don’t pay attention to what’s going on in class; they want everything to happen quickly, and for the lesson to be over as quickly as possible. In such a situation, the student becomes passive in class even though they are pretending to listen. This does nothing to encourage productive learning. On the other hand, a student who has active listening skills participates actively and voluntarily in lessons by listening to the instructors, asking questions, and participating in group discussions. This enables them to learn more productively.

At GSNDA Rwaza when we train our students in active listening, we emphasize cognitive, affective, and psychomotor strategies. Among the cognitive strategies, we emphasize the art of paying attention, taking notes, making associations and analogies, asking questions, and integrating information. In terms of affective strategies, we emphasize the “art” of being punctual, motivated, having goals, staying calm, and being positive about the lessons. As for psychomotor strategies, we focus on the “art” of knowing how to choose a suitable place in class, attentively following the lesson, knowing how to comment and give ideas,



and being able to understand body language (tone of voice, facial expressions, etc.).

It is also worth noting that the students practise their active listening skills at meetings of Catholic Action movements, where they learn to find solutions to problems or to help others by simply listening actively and being present.

The students often organise internal visits to meet, listen and support others, which also produces good results. "When others visit you and give you time to listen to you, you feel relieved. It helps a lot," said one student.

### Some Challenges and Prospects

In conclusion, it should be noted that our discussion groups identified several challenges relating to Active Listening in the school.

We can simply list a few here: For teachers and administrative staff, a lack of in-service training in active listening, the overburdened training in active listening, the intense curriculum, and a lack of sufficient time to listen to students in the way they would like, a lack of resources, tools and teaching materials, of motivation, and the fact that they are often overwhelmed by the seriousness of the subjects or problems the students want us to address.

The students also identified the following challenges including fear of the consequences that may arise after saying or sharing everything that troubles them, insufficient time set aside for active listening, limited staff available for active listening, as well as a lack of free and confidential spaces that can foster greater serenity and openness.

Faced with these challenges, several strategies were adopted to strengthen active listening in GSNDA Rwaza. Firstly, the school will continue to

strive to become a place that encourages and enables active listening. The entire GSNDA Rwaza educational community is aware that active listening is an important element in achieving our goals of transformative education. To this end, teachers and administrative staff will be trained in their key role of developing active listening skills in our young people, and methods to promote active listening in the classroom. Students will also continue to benefit from moments of active listening where, with the help of the staff in charge, they will be guided, encouraged, and even relieved. Pupils will also be given more opportunities to practise active listening in and out of class to develop active listening skills.

### MR. JEAN DE LA PAIX IMANIRAGABA

Lay Assumptionist and former teacher  
Province of Rwanda - Chad  
*Original French*

# echo of the Archives

## *The Community of Archivists*

**“Sister  
Rekha (...) invited us to consider that the Museum and the Archives were a sanctuary enlarging that of the Chapel.”**

**T**he month of April 2023 was an important moment in the long work of reorganizing the Archives. Participants in the Archivists’ session arrived from all over the world. There were very experienced archivists and those who were just discovering the profession. The ages were varied too. Two lay persons, Rosa Ana from the Central American Province, and Corinne, French, brought their particular grace. Thus was born the “Community of Archivists”.

The discovery of the places, in Auteuil, was the common thread of a great experience: Sister Rekha, after proposing a “conversation” with Marie Eugenie, invited us to consider that the Museum and the Archives were a sanctuary enlarging that of the Chapel. From then on, so many emotions were aroused each time we opened a new door! Through the sharing of experiences, professional formation, spiritual moments, pilgrimages and hard work, we have tried to formulate what could help our Provinces take seriously the work of the Archives, essential to its being embedded in our memory and to stimulate the actualization of the charism. We also became aware of the importance of the links between us, with strong moments such as that of handing over documents to the Province of Rwanda-Chad whose Archives were destroyed. As a result of our meeting, after the work of the international team (Corinne Blanc, Sr. Regina Victoria, Sr. Katrin Goris and Sr. Véronique), a vade mecum will soon produce the orientations.

### **The Museum and its exploratory visits**

Visitors to the museum aging from 4 to 95 years, coming from many countries, followed one another throughout the year. The Heritage Days, in September 2023, gave us the joy of welcoming 60 visitors from the outside, in addition to all those who had already visited in previous months: Sisters attending Congregational Sessions, parish groups, teachers and Directors of educational establishments, former students, occasional visitors... Booklets for the visit now exist in English, French and Spanish. Audio guides are available, as well as a QR code allowing access to the online audio guide. Visitors usually say that they have an “experience” while exploring the Museum and that they really “meet” Marie Eugenie. In fact, a great



*Session of Archivists - April 2023*



International Team of Archivists

interiority emerges from their attitude, often silent and recollected. For people in the neighborhood, it is an opportunity to learn about a little-known slice of history: the Château de la Tuilerie, the construction of the great Monastery of Auteuil and the Petit Couvent, the Villa Saint Michel, the expulsion of the Congregations, the destruction of the Monastery and of the Castle/Chateau... Others became aware of the great apostolic fertility of Marie Eugenie. The Archivists of the Church of France, in formation, also came for an immersion to reflect on the topic of promoting the Archives. All visitors agree that Marie Eugenie exudes great passion, a stimulating spirituality and real modernity.

### From Session to Session

In addition to the numerous sessions which took place in Auteuil, online sessions have multiplied: in West Africa, for the first time, all the educators of the Province, Sisters and lay, met to deepen the sources of Assumption education. From the experience grew the desire to work on Marie Eugenie's intuitions in order to transform current practices by including in the programs of schools and dispensaries the social orientation of Marie Eugenie. The novitiates of Central America and Europe were able to discover the richness of the Assumption through the different schools of spirituality which influenced Marie Eugenie. Marie Eugenie invites us to be "rich in the spirit of the Church" but not to be afraid of being undeniably Religious of the Assumption, while being open to other institutes, like so many branches attached to the one trunk which is Christ. Respect for other branches is an essential condition for living harmoniously in the Church.

### Retreat for the Laity

It is on this topic that Marie Eugenie wrote one day to Father d'Alzon (August 28, 1844, n°1630): "Nothing is difficult (...) like harmonizing respect for the spirit of others with the "energy of one's own spirit..." In Saint

Gervais, in August 2023, participants during a retreat with Marie Eugenie meditated on this quotation. 11 lay persons and 1 Sister sought to understand what it means to "maintain your soul in balance", as Marie Eugenie says. The theme of the tree was the common thread: the trees in the gardens that Marie Eugenie took care of, the tree as a symbol of the Church, the tree of our personal lives... A beautiful experience which led each participant to draw their own tree, enrichment for our common land.

### The Seekers

After the difficult years of the Covid pandemic, the reading room of the Archives reopened its doors to researchers who enrich us while relying on the documents kept at Auteuil. Father Arthur will finish soon his thesis on Monsignor Gay and Mother Therese Emmanuel. This will be a great grace for us because his perspective renews our way of understanding the mystical life of our co-foundress. He shares his discoveries with passion and we will not fail to give you news as soon as possible. A researcher is working on the stained-glass windows and is particularly interested in those in our Bordeaux chapel. Another looked at the Archives of the Augustinians, in order to explore the topic of the first orphanages. Sisters are starting to plan to work with the documentary collections from our Archives. Our sources are alive! All this sharing is proof of this!

### SISTER VÉRONIQUE THIÉBAUT

Archivist of the Congregation,  
*Original French*

# youth

## Supporting young people

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“Each of us has a mission on earth,” said St. Marie Eugénie.

**H**ow can we help young people discover this mission: not only what they have to do for God, but WHO they are for Him? How can we help them meet the One who awaits them, welcomes them and gives them a unique name? Collective experiences (pilgrimages, gatherings, retreats, WYD, etc.) are necessary and often a decisive starting point. But nothing replaces personal support. Here are some thoughts on this essential but delicate service which takes various forms. These reflections are based on our experiences in Vilnius: “Samaritan” community (the girls who live in our house for a year or two); work in school; “Samuel” group; support service offered by the diocese.

It is very important for the guide to understand their role and to situate themselves in their right place. The best evangelical image is that of John the Baptist. In Jn 1:35 he is described as the one who “stands there” – where the disciples are with the quest of their hearts and where Jesus passes. Jesus walks, John stands like a faithful landmark, a step, a signpost. His body and his words point toward Jesus, not toward himself. He speaks little and “decreases”. However, being the friend of the Bridegroom, he knows him by experience and he knows what are the signs of his presence and his action. He shares all this so that others can enter into this same intimacy. And that is his joy. A sign that we are appropriately in our place as companions is this joy that burns the heart when a young person discovers Christ, acquires his freedom and makes his way perhaps by leaving us. Jean Baptiste, the one decentered from himself...

Every guide is threatened by the temptation to play the savior, to unconsciously put himself at the center of the life of the young person he is supporting. And all the more so since young people often, without realizing it, seek to relieve themselves of the responsibility of directing their own lives. Temptation for the companion to always know more, to investigate where it is not necessary, to mother, to play psychologist. You have to know how to distance yourself and also direct yourself towards other forms of help when necessary. For example, in Lithuania, it is often good for a young person to participate in an Adult Children of Alcoholics group.

But, of course, there is always a dimension of human education which mixes with truly spiritual accompaniment. The young people we meet often live in a certain inner chaos: complicated and evolving family relationships as they transition through adolescence and young adult life; studies that involve a lot of stress – succeeding, keeping up with the pace, constantly checking whether you have taken the right direction, etc.; moreover, most work to meet their needs with the fatigue that this implies. Added to this is the relational life sometimes complicated by emotional wounds, hobbies and... social networks. Very busy lives, but where there is nevertheless a hollowness, an emptiness. Very fragmented lives. And among all the fragments, there is God, glimpsed or experienced during strong but unconnected experiences. The guide must provide a space to “unpack” all of this, and thus be able to name the elements and put things in order.

To put things in order, you must little by little develop a personal project. Try to name the utopia that guides me, the final goal of my life. Identify current places of growth, what is “burgeoning” in my life at different levels (spiritual life, studies, personal development, studies, etc.) and decide on directions accordingly. Also identify obstacles and obstacles, both interior and exterior. And then choose concrete means.

**SISTER BENEDICTE ROLLIN**  
Province of Europe  
*Original french*



# treasures of the archives

## Marie Eugenie and the Visitation

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**“We must therefore draw inspiration from it without adopting all its forms.”**

**A**t the Museum of the Sources, in one of the drawers of Mother Therese Emmanuel's desk, there is a small paper with her handwriting... this is the regular schedule of the Visitation Monastery, the one followed by the first Sisters in rue Férou, then in rue de Vaugirard. What is the origin of this paper?

### Anne Eugenie at the Visitation of the Côte Saint André

At the time of founding the Assumption, after a few months spent with the Benedictines of the Blessed Sacrament in Paris, Anne Eugenie was looking for a place to undergo her novitiate. While she was receiving treatment in Aix-les-Bains, during the summer of 1838, she met the chaplain of the Visitation of the Côte Saint André who helped her to be admitted as a novice in August. During her stay, she was guided by the Superior, Mother Marie Therese Marmonnier, and by Mother Caroline Blanc, Mistress of Novices. In a letter to Father d'Alzon dated December 5, 1846, Marie Eugenie designated Mother Caroline as "one of the persons in whom [she] had the most confidence." In the Archives there are several letters from Mother Marie-Therese Marmonnier to Father Combalot, in 1838, as well as letters sent later to Marie Eugenie (1839-1846 and 1882). We also find documents containing "memories of Mademoiselle Milleret's stay at the Côte Saint-André", touchingly testifying to the joy and simplicity of the young girl.

The future foundress thought that it was important to become acquainted with the Rules and way of life of the different Religious Orders and took the opportunity to draw from the richness of the Visitation: "...I am taking advantage of my last days to make notes about all the things we might need for ourselves. I observe the way of reciting the Office, the ceremonies, I have them explained to me, I read the works of the house, I finally try to make provision for our Sisters to come." (To Father Combalot, March 15, 1839, n°84). A handwritten customary set of practices (a directory of employments: laundry supervisor, nurse, Sisters of the Chapter, keeper of the wardrobe, sacristine, bursar) and notes on the Canonical Visit to the Visitation recall this meticulous work of Marie Eugenie.

### The Rule of the Visitation and the Constitutions of the Assumption

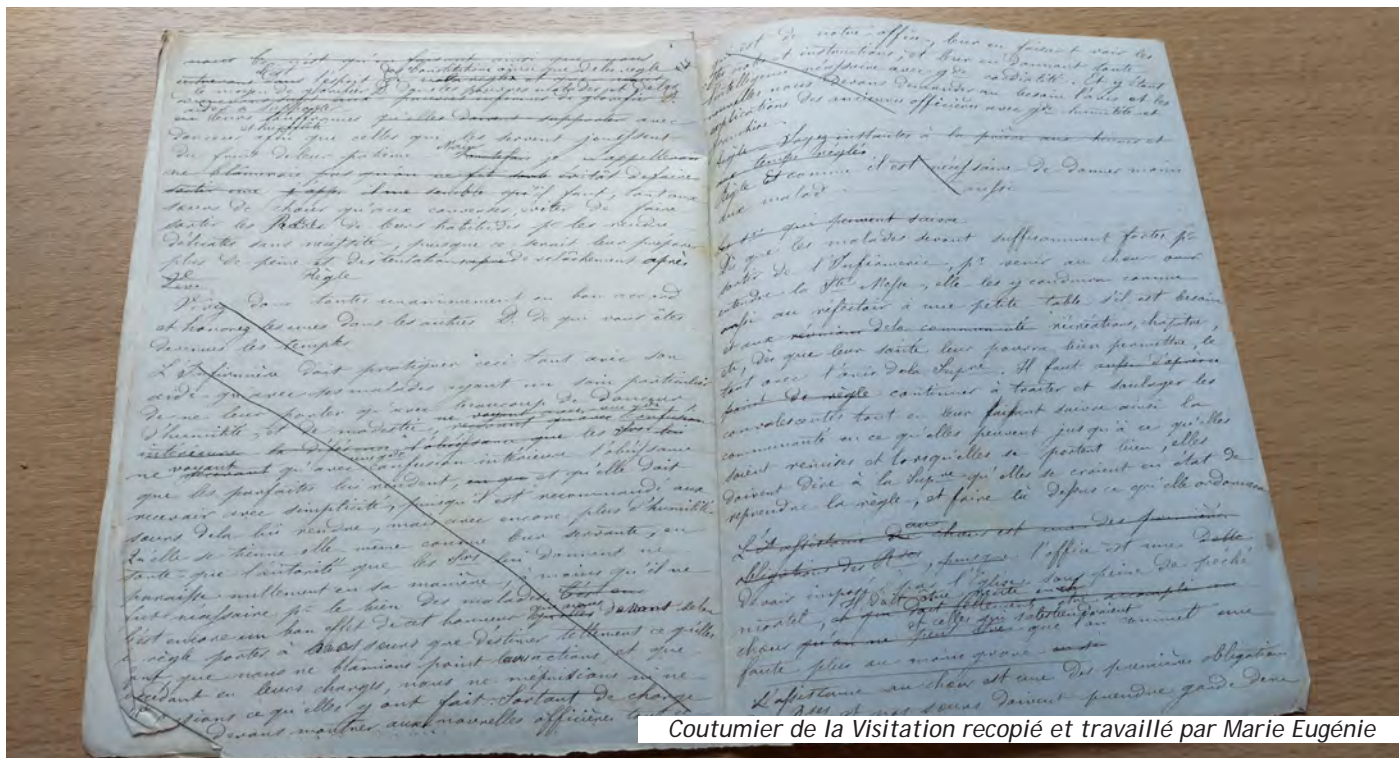
We understand why the Rule of the Visitation, also based on that of Saint Augustine, influences the drafting of the Constitutions of the Religious of the Assumption.

When "Mademoiselle Eugenie" speaks to Father Combalot about "the first plan of conduct that we will have to follow", and the Constitutions which will have to come out of it, she specifies: "Besides, I think, from what I see, that we will do well to borrow from the Visitation everything we can." (to Father Combalot, April 2, 1839, n°88) Moreover, the First Constitutions, those of 1840, were inspired by the spirit of the Visitation. We find explicit mentions in chapter 5 (on the parlors), in chapter 10 (on the Office), in chapter 31 (on the ordinary confessor). Certain paragraphs dealing with life in common and with relationships are truly inspired by the Visitation. We find their spirit in the current Rule of Life. Several works preserved in Auteuil attest to this research: a Rule of Life according to the method of Saint Francis de Sales, a note on the Daughters of Saint Francis de Sales...

This influence is undoubtedly accentuated by the fact that the Community of Rue de Vaugirard (from 1839 to 1841) lived near a Visitation Monastery where the Sisters frequently prayed. This is where Mother Therese Emmanuel will have one of her first mystical experiences.

### Letter to the Abbé Gros

Among the key documents of this link between our Congregation, we find the letter from Marie Eugenie to the Abbé Gros (August 1841, n°1504). Just after the first



Coutumier de la Visitation recopié et travaillé par Marie Eugénie

vows of the first Sisters, the Ecclesiastical Superior at the time, Abbé Gros, proposed to Marie Eugenie to renounce the foundation and return to the Visitation, leaving each of her companions free to choose the Order that she wanted to join. This "provocation" will allow Marie Eugenie to develop her thoughts in a letter which remains one of the most important texts for the origins of the Congregation.

In fact, Marie Eugenie had been tempted to stay at the Visitation when she perceived the instability of Father Combalot. Her confessor then encouraged her to persevere in her foundation project. Even Abbe Combalot had asked him the question at that time. She responded clearly: "... no, Father, I am not thinking about the Visitation now, and I am too attached to the Assumption." (To Abbé Combalot, September 16, 1839, n°101).

Basically, Marie Eugenie first expresses an essential difference: the Assumption was born from a thought of "zeal" springing from knowledge of 19th century French society. The Assumption project therefore comes in response to a social need. In a context of increasing dechristianization, the wealthy and influential class of Paris wanted a good education but the overly monastic aspect of the Visitation frightened them. We must therefore draw inspiration from it without adopting all its forms. Thus, Marie Eugenie confirms that "for the spirit, for the life of the Community, we have (...) almost everything drawn from Saint Francis de Sales". However, we do not have a grille, like at the Visitation, but this is so as not to be considered as "prisoners of bad will" in the eyes of the world. Unlike the Visitation, "we have the Divine Office: it was the attraction of all the Sisters, and in an attraction of prayers, God can be for something." After having adopted, at its beginnings, a schedule perfectly identical to that of the Visitation, as evidenced by the note written by the hand of Mother Therese Emmanuel, the Community of the Assumption integrated some modifications based on lived experience: the duration of the recreation, the number and times of meals, etc.

Marie Eugenie manages to convince Abbé Gros who will respond to her on November 27, 1841: "...You explain to me your thoughts better than ever before (...) Think no longer of anything that I have told you (...) no point in worrying about your vocation, about your destiny..."

**The Visitation: a permanent reference point for Marie Eugenie**

Later, when a question arises, the practices of the Visitation make reference to the portress, the Community festivals (To Mother Therese Emmanuel, May 24, 1851), the mail (To Mother Therese Emmanuel, October 25, 1852), the teaching of dancing (To Father d'Alzon, December 4, 1842), etc. At the time of the construction of the

Auteuil Monastery, the foundress went to the Visitation to get ideas for the interior design (To Father d'Alzon, March 6, 1856).

Furthermore, she easily stayed in the Convents of the Visitation during her travels. She receives news and gives it. One day, in a letter to Mother Therese Emmanuel, she implies that going to Annecy to venerate the Founders of the Visitation is an obvious obligation for a Religious of the Assumption who passes near this city: "For, one day, unless you do not wish it, you will have to go to Annecy to venerate the holy Founders of the Visitation, could you not know in advance how to go about it and where to stay?" (To Mother Therese Emmanuel, January 27, 1871) In 1882, Marie Eugenie herself returned to the Visitation of the Côte Saint André with Mother Marie du Christ. The Archives also contain the memory of this visit, plus poems written by the students of the Visitation on this occasion.

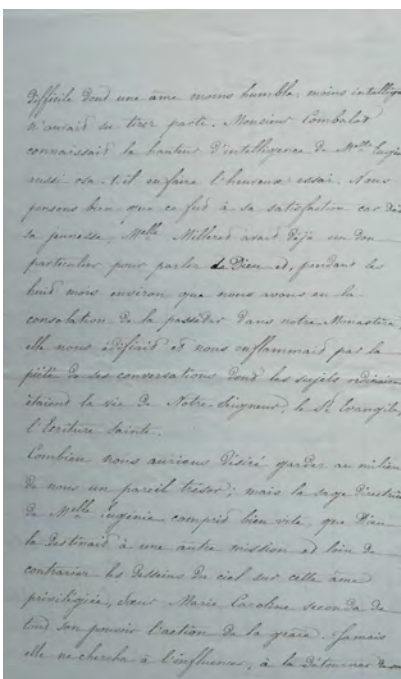
### Quotes from Sain Francis of Sales

In her Chapters, Marie Eugenie never stops quoting Saint Francis de Sales whom she knows and appreciates. It is impossible to list all the citations, which number in the dozens in each volume. However, we can find recurring themes which help to identify Marie Eugenie's desire for the Assumption: love of God and faith (Chapter of 1853 - V, undated, vol.1), the need to make acts of love during the day (Chapter of November 7, 1875), the habit of putting oneself in the presence of God (Chapter of 1870, for the sick Sisters, without precise date), life in common - kindness, charity, humility (Chapters of November 23, 1873, November 7, 1875), abandonment and peace that must be constantly cultivated (Chapters of September 14, 1873, July 25, 1874)

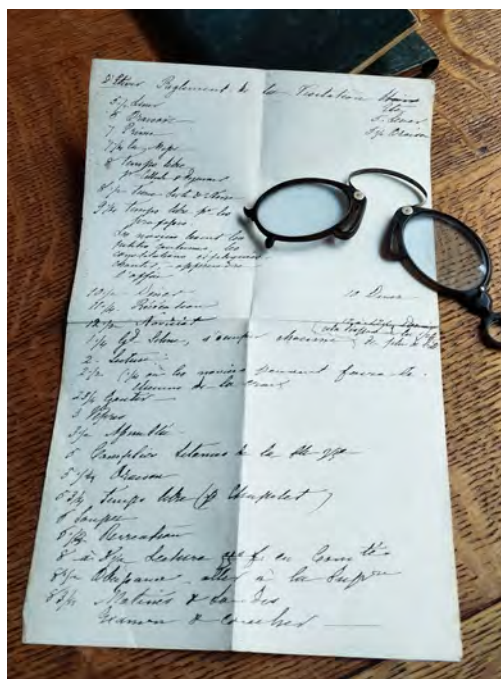
Marie Eugenie also draws many images from Saint Francis de Sales: wax that can be modeled, the wings of love, the work of the watchmaker, plant and animal images... Going through the Chapters where this Saint is mentioned is an encouragement to love: "It is the love of God which must be the incessant aspiration and like the breathing of the Religious soul..." (Chapter of November 7, 1875)

### SISTER VÉRONIQUE THIÉBAUT

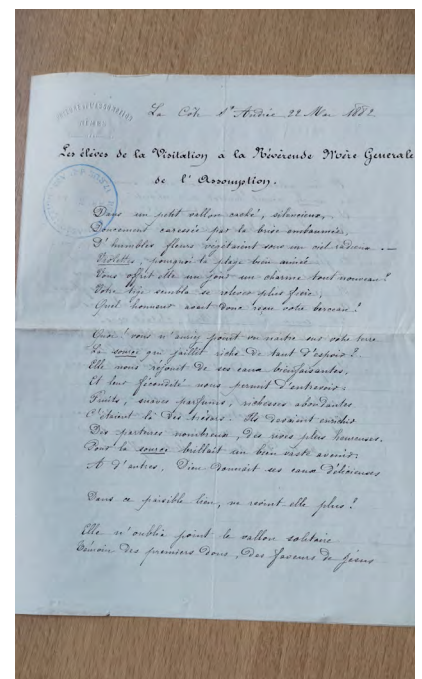
Archivist of the Congregation,  
Original French



Souvenirs of the visit in 1882 by Mother Marie du Christ



Schedule of the Visitation handwritten by Mother Therese Emmanuel



Poems written by the students of the Visitation



# spirituality

## *The loving Gaze of God*

**A**s little children our catechism classes taught us that God is everywhere and that He is present in everything. Yes, it's true and the most important learning is that God is in us and we are in him, for we are made in his image and likeness (Genesis 1:27). God finds his home in our heart and he makes our heart his resting place. God knows our true self, and we don't have to pretend to be what we are not. We don't need to prove ourselves, for he sees and loves us as we are and he wants us to become what he wants us to be, the best version of ourselves. For him, our being is important. He wants us to work for his Kingdom, but more than that, he wants us to grow in our relationship with him through our being. This is the being that we offer in prayer. Psalm 46:10 speaks of God's invitation to constantly be in his presence. "Be still and know that I am God."

We are living in a world moving on a very fast phase. Everyone is in a hurry, trying to finish many things, to achieve success in haste. Our thoughts are full of occupation and worries. Our eyes are focused on the things that are not essential. We look at things that are external. There are people who are trying to find reasons for everything but do not find meaning. Sometimes we don't even know what we want because we are bombarded with so much - material things, loud voices, sounds, overload of information, and many more. We forget to pause, to reflect and to pray. We forget "to be". We forget to be what God intends us to be and to just be. We forget that God is looking at us lovingly. We ignore God's gaze and we have no time to look at God.

We are called to be mindful of God's loving gaze in our life. The invitation for us to be still, to be quiet, to spend time with him, in prayer and silence. The loving gaze of God is always there, waiting for us to experience it, only if we find time to pause and be still. We can only gaze back at Jesus when we recognize his loving gaze on us. And when we do, we will be filled with his presence and our heart will discover God's beauty within us and be filled with immense joy of knowing that God dwells in us. Seeing the goodness of others begin with seeing the goodness in us. Marie Eugenie says: "to see the goodness of others is a great gift", but it begins within.

Like a coconut fruit whose interior is soft and white, with water that refreshes and satisfies every thirsting mouth, so is our heart, where God finds his home and where he sees only beauty and goodness. Only in silence we can listen to God and grow in his knowledge. Prayer makes us present in God's loving gaze. This loving gaze is always available, whether we are aware of it or not.

It is this loving gaze that will allow us to gaze at our

suffering world with compassion and love. It is this loving gaze that will allow us to accept, understand and love our brothers and sisters. It is this loving gaze that will give us the wisdom to know the truth of our life and to give back to others the same loving gaze that we received from him. We need to find time to be still and to gaze at God. This is a great gift we have in Assumption.

Assumption Spirituality focuses on the centrality of Jesus in our life. Our prayer life flows in our relationship with people and our encounter with people is what we bring in prayer. Assumption Education forms our students to be women of faith and women of action. In the words of Mother Marie Eugenie: "Totally given to God for others and totally given to others for God." Living God's gaze in our life so that we can lovingly gaze at the world with the same loving gaze that we receive from him. In Assumption adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is an integral part of our spirituality. We spend moments of prayer in silence gazing at Jesus and enjoying his presence. We look at him and he looks at us. As we look at him, we grow in our relationship with him. We gaze at him and he gazes at us and we grow together in love.

Our prayer: Lord, give us the grace to be mindful of your loving gaze so that we can also share the same loving gaze to all the people we encounter. Amen.

**SISTER MYRNA EUGENIA MALUYAO**  
Province of Asia Pacific

# Assumption Student Network “Educational Village”

**“We are living in a time when it’s not the pupils who have to adapt to the school, but it’s the school that has to adapt to the pupils” Sister Rekha**

**A**village is a group of dwellings between which there is mutual interaction and influence. In the African tradition, a village is the first place where education is initiated and a place for pooling forces for more important actions. It is often under a tree where meetings are held to share ideas, carry out research together, and solve problems. “Educational Village” is a term coined by the International Session on Education 2023 to envisage collaboration between Assumption Schools. In the same vein, a village is like a network that brings together the students from our schools, while the tree under which we meet is like the Internet.

While Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are rapidly making their way into our cultures Rwandan and Chadian people are having to grapple with two contradictory trends: Firstly, an attachment to cultural values and a rejection of the novelty of ICTs. For these people, ICTs only lead to useless distraction, indiscipline, addiction, and wasted time; in short, they are a danger to be avoided. The other trend is a recognition of the benefits of ICT in reducing distance, enabling open-mindedness, increased speed of work, and efficiency in technical and intellectual activity. However, it’s an openness that comes with risks, because many people, especially young people are at risk of getting lost in its web. This calls for constant discernment, and that’s the aim of our “educational village” network. It calls for constant discernment and is the aim of our “educational village” network, through which we want to help our young people acquire an aptitude for and a habit of using ICT, while at the same time providing them with a place where values can be transmitted.

Intending to adapt our educational mission, the educational village aims to update our education system but is also a response to some of the exhortations we identified. The international meeting on education in Manila from Saint Marie Eugénie: to take the time to look at our times, to contemplate them, to understand them, ... to let our hearts beat to the rhythm of our contemporaries, to share

*In-person meeting of students in their schools: Students of the Our Lady of the Apostles School Group of Rwaza.*



in their aspirations and their struggles. According to Pope Francis, "...the Gospel reveals to us that God does not dwell in sanitised, quiet places, far removed from reality. That He walks with us and meets us where we are, on the often-difficult paths of life".

If the digital world is being more and more visited, we are obliged to ask ourselves some important questions. What are young people looking for on social networks? How can we be close to them in this quest? How can we quench their thirst? We need to feel out our society and find young people where they are without forcing them to withdraw from this digital sphere. It's a form of solidarity with our world, which is opening to a new paradigm, and a new way of thinking. It offers the means of being close to them and evangelising them with a new language forged by ICT. This is both a requirement and a challenge for our mission of transformative education.

The experience of communion gained during the COVID-19 pandemic thanks to ICT, the call received from the international session on education in March 2023 to "establish stronger links between schools in different provinces/regions to share resources and possible collaboration", the limitations linked to the distance between our schools in both Rwanda and Chad, our young people who master the use of communication tools and are interested in how they can reach out to others... these are all facts that have encouraged us to take the path of ICTs for more sharing between our schools while training our young people in the proper use of ICT. At the same time, it's a way of opening up our young people to our mission of education and evangelisation, to make them agents of a better, fairer, and more fraternal world with that transformed society of which Saint Marie Eugénie de Jésus spoke, because "transformative education enables people to discover their vocation to commit themselves to the transformation of society." We see our project as the beginning of a greater openness to other Assumption establishments schools beyond the Rwanda-Chad region.

This project, devised during COVID-19, for a long time remained only a dream. Several attempts to implement it were botched for reasons such as the poor quality of the images when published or the problems of the poor quality of the sound when the videos were published; we ourselves had noticed that without quality our publications were not appealing. But our financial resources did not allow us to buy the appropriate equipment. So, we turned to the BGSD (Bureau de Solidarité pour le Développement) for financial support. We received EUR 4,250 (four thousand two hundred and fifty euros). We bought a camera and accessories, a computer, a keyhole microphone, and a loudspeaker to get the project off the ground. For the moment, our pupils from the following schools: Collège Lycée Notre Dame de l'Assomption in Chad; Groupe Scolaire Notre Dame des Apôtres Rwaza, the Assomption Secondary School in Birambo, and the Assomption Craft Centre in Kabuye make up the educational village that has already been established. They connect on the

same Facebook account, YouTube channel, Twitter, and Instagram. One school or another publishes its experience, and at the same time, on the same page, can find publications of other schools. Each group has found its own means to constantly remind itself of the general publication rules and ensure that what is read on the networks reaches the rest of the pupils in the same school. The joined hands gesture represents the gathering of Assumption students. In each school, the group is accompanied by two teachers (one literary and one IT) and a sister. For more intelligent, responsible, and educational use of the networks, several measures have been taken in advance: visiting sites that put us in touch with other students and teachers from Assumption schools; posting only positive, uplifting items for those who read us; aiming to portray an image of ourselves that is in line with Assumption values and to transmit these same values; always arming ourselves with the weapons of faith.

Let us conclude this contribution with these words from Sister Rekha, Superior General of the Religious of the Assumption, during the international session on education: "We are living in a time when it's not the pupils who have to adapt to the school, but it's the school that has to adapt to the pupils".

This requires adaptation and transformation on the part of everyone involved in education. Our Assomption student network is the African village that responds to the expectations of our young people. It aims to make them both the beneficiaries and the providers of the transformation that we envision – the promoters of the better world we long for.

#### **SISTER MARIE ROSE MUKAMANA**

Province of Rwanda- Tchad

*Original french*

# finances

## *The Treasurer's Blessings*

**I**t is with a grateful attitude that I would like to share with you the experience of my years of service at the Provincial Treasury.

When I look back over the 13 years of my service as treasurer, I see nothing but blessings and how the Lord took me by the hand, with the certainty of his promise: "Do not fear, for I am with you". Is. 41,10

Yes, He has been with me through very close human mediation, given that I have always counted on the support of the treasury's office team, made up of sisters and lay people who worked unconditionally. All that's left for me to do now is to give thanks for everything I've learned working in the Treasury.

I thank the Lord for allowing me to be trained in this service, through courses, diploma courses and meetings at the General House with the General Treasurer, Nicole Willem and Cécile Franquin, and the Provincial Treasurers. Through these meetings, we became familiar with the different criteria of the Universal Church and the Congregation.

Among other things, we based ourselves on the document "The Treasury at the Service of Charism and Congregation". This is a set of guidelines for financial management. I quote below two extracts relating to significant issues:

- "Fidelity to charism and mission therefore remains the fundamental criterion for evaluating works, rather than profitability, which must not be the only criterion taken into account".
- Careful discernment is how the treasury must be considered, i.e. listening to the Word of God and history". (# 15)

In another paragraph, it talks about the importance

of formation for us: In the encyclical *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis said: "All Christian communities have an important role to play in ecological education. It is my hope that our seminaries and houses of formation will provide an education in responsible simplicity of life, in grateful contemplation of God's world, and in concern for the needs of the poor and the protection of the environment" (#214). The entire document is very concrete for the treasurer's office.

I want to share with you one of the principal sources of joy I had in this sometimes somewhat dull service, where I sometimes got lost among so much information coming from the communities themselves and from the province. Over time I discovered that behind the figures and the paperwork, there was the life of the sisters and the communities entrusted to me; and that from the treasurer's office, I could offer them my support through the intricacies of accounting.

I got the satisfaction of being associated with several construction sites, where I learnt to ask questions about plans, calculations, procedures with government bodies, the hiring of construction equipment, the quality and strength of materials, the calculation of workers' wages, authorisation procedures, inspecting work progress, finishing, the types of flooring best suited to different spaces, colours and styles, as well as looking at the plumbing connections, taps, showers, electricity, sockets and switches, gas and rainwater drains.

The first project I worked on was the renovation of the María Eugenia Milleret primary school in the south of Mexico City. The daily work was gruelling and I had to leave my job at the Provincial House for a few months to devote myself fully to accompanying this project. It needed documents to be at hand and a record kept of the expenses incurred as well as, of course, the evaluation of the construction.



In addition, there's a custom here in Mexico that on the day the construction of the entresols is completed, a meal is offered to all the masons, and of course, we had to prepare the meal for these special days of intense work for them; we had lunch together with them.

I've also learnt that you shouldn't change a project once it's been approved because although we'd indeed save money by not levelling all the refurbished classrooms, it would cost us more in the long term. After all, if it rained, water would seep in, affecting the budget and the tuition fees, bearing in mind that this school is in an area where low-income families live.

Puebla is the second building project I've assisted. It involved the purchase of the house, the procedures for the deeds and other implications involving offices of the notaries, as well as the authorisation procedures with government bodies to obtain renovation permits that had to be extensively revised because it was a 'cultural heritage' site, with the façade and the entire building having to be preserved.

It was also a question of redeveloping an old and half-finished house so that the sisters would have a larger and quieter space to encourage the contemplative aspect of the Assumption. This is why the chapel was placed in the centre of the house while also being located at the periphery. In contrast, our previous house was at a crossroads of very noisy streets, right in the centre of town but far from people.

During this remodelling work, I had to go to Puebla very often to check on the building work and after several months, I was also obliged to go and live in the community for the final touches. We were in a hurry to move into the new house because two young people were arriving to do part of their formation and we had no more space in the old house. We moved without waiting for the spaces in the new community to be finished. It was very useful for us because we were able to identify first-hand all the things that weren't working well.

We arrived on the 6th of August 2016 and the sister in charge of this community had said, "Let's move everything today and we won't return here". It was very hard to make several trips all day with the move, but we did it; and the next day, much to our surprise, we had no water in the whole house; there was a leak in two bathrooms and the water tank was emptied... and, of course, we had to go back to our old house to shower!

León is another building that I also attended, but this time from a distance, through photographic reviews, and videos from the architect in charge of the work. There was a weekly report in which I had the opportunity to ask questions and make suggestions. I only went there twice. While developing the procedures to be followed, I learned several important lessons that I should never forget:

1. Keep in mind the criteria of the Rule of Life and those of the Church, as well as the Treasurer's Manual. Work in liaison with the team for any determination.
2. Not to register property in the sisters' name, but in

the name of the Religious Association.

3. Being linked to a Religious Association has helped us handle financial matters, as this guided us in everything to do with taxes and tax payments (CIRM - Inter-religious Conference of Mexico).
4. I've learnt that all maintenance and alteration work must be covered by a written contract.
5. I learnt how to take care of the formalities for the sisters in the hospitals for surgical operations or treatments to be carried out, and to keep track of the medical expenses to be reimbursed by our Health Insurance. This allowed me to experience the pastoral care of health.

Being a treasurer also has its challenges: you must be disciplined about recording expenses at the time. You must be tidy, know how to find documents and have a good memory to retain as much information as possible so that you can settle each case.

In this service, like in so many others, there are conflicts, arising for example, from having to remind the sisters and our designers to ensure our style in the houses and buildings is respected, as stated in our Rule of Life n°21, "Founded in great poverty, the sisters want to keep that stamp of austerity and simplicity which speaks of the absoluteness of God and the relativity of everything else... everything about them must show that God is the only wealth they seek".

A few important points for those who are not familiar with this mission:

- Consult the financial adviser about investments and work with the team in a dependent and complementary way.
- Follow ongoing training to keep abreast of the country's tax laws.
- Take care of the assets entrusted to the province.
- Be disciplined, orderly, generous, and fully devoted to the service of the Kingdom in this work of the Provincial Treasurer's Office.
- Be open to changes and unforeseen events and try to resolve potential issues resulting from them.
- All this is possible if we are sustained by faith in the various services that are asked of us.

I will end this testimony by thanking God for the knowledge and learning I acquired and for the trust of the sisters during my time as treasurer. So, keep it up and stay strong when coping with the new favours that are asked of us!

"Each one must put the charism he has received at the service of others, as a good administrator of the manifold grace of God" (1P 4,10).

**SISTER MARIA GUADALUPE BARAJAS LÓPEZ**  
Province of Ecuador - Mexico  
*Original Spanish*

# assumption together

## *Marie-Eugénie has much to tell us!*

Last January, Sister Patrizia and I were sent by the Province of Europe to participate in the international session "Assumption Together" held in Auteuil, retracing the footsteps of Marie-Eugénie.

### Discoveries

The simplicity and depth of sharing, the recognition of the "indisputable hallmark" of the spirit of the Assumption, through exchanges where fraternity, joy, and mission are rooted in the love of Christ, listening to the cries of the world, each giving their best corresponding to their talents and calling...

- The experience of a unified depth of calling, vision, and prayer, highlighted by the diversity of cultures, priorities, and situations in the four corners of the world. It's the same family spirit and the same Lord whom we want to serve, but the congregation's charism unfolds and inculcates itself in different ways. And that's such a beautiful thing!

- Retracing the footsteps of Mother Marie-Eugénie, to deepen the charism bequeathed to them by their foundress and which is now for the whole Church, the sisters have dared far and wide to draw in their wake lay people who have been gradually inspired by the spirit, the charism and the missions of education and evangelisation undertaken by the congregation. Among the lay people involved today alongside the nuns in various services or commitments, (for example, Assumption Together), many have a long association with the Assumption, often going back

to the school benches, the catechesis, the social commitment or the neighbourhood, that has left a deep impression on them and guided them towards life choices and Christian values to which they are happy to bear witness today.

- This is where the natural feeling of belonging to the Assumption family lies. For others, it is more a question of a particular calling, a founding encounter, or a desire to listen to the Holy Spirit through what they discover of the charism entrusted to the congregation "for the good of the whole body".

What does "Our belonging to the Assumption" mean? How can we situate our mission as baptised Christians in the Church's current synodal reflection? In what way are we, or how can we become a more charismatic family (i.e., one that shares the same charism)?

These are fascinating subjects to be explored "together, lay people and religious", so that we can position our belonging to the Church as accurately as possible without erasing the founding principle of belonging to Christ by the grace of baptism. The current synodal process in the Church is inviting all baptized persons to make this same effort in this rapidly changing world.

There are, in fact, many ways of feeling "part of the Assumption family". In Auteuil, an image of a house was evoked within which community life, contemplative life, and apostolic mission are deliberately oriented towards the world. This house would have multiple



entrances and exits ... From the outside, everyone can enter, by choosing the entrance that suits them best and leaving through the same door, or a different one, depending on what they have found within whether it be mutual service, a support request, a trial entrusted to prayer, participation in the services, daily adoration, occasional help given to the sisters, sharing a meal, working with young people or in a poorer neighbourhood... lending a hand for a parish project, a commitment to Assumption Together, a reflection group...and so on.

Sometimes, the encounter will be the strong and definitive conviction that a life given to Christ can bring real happiness! All these experiences are precious and can nourish evangelical fellowship and an awareness of the importance of the collaborative ministry to which the Church calls us. The commitment of lay people and the religious working together to better serve Christ in his people will always be a source of inspiration and joy.

Nevertheless, it is important to find the right balance to avoid the risk of fusion-confusion between the responsibilities and functions linked to the specific vocations of religious and lay people. Even if they claim to belong to the Assumption, lay people, friends, and relatives of the congregation, must of course respect the rhythms, discernments, decisions, and modes of governance specific to religious life and to the internal workings of each community.

By officially recognising the sanctity of Marie-Eugénie, the Church is inviting us to come ever closer to it, as an example of life, love, and fidelity to Christ which can inspire us in our personal lives.

It was therefore an excellent idea to set off for Lorraine in the footsteps of Marie-Eugénie, to pray with her, discovering her life experience in the land of her childhood and youth which paved the way for the great "Yeses" that followed.

And there were some surprises!

- A few kilometres from the finish line, our coach got bogged down in a rain-soaked field, and we had to continue on foot. We shared a few scarves, hats, and jumpers because it was cold in January, even if the sun had chased all the clouds away! Immediately, this unexpected experience plunged us into the "joyful detachment" that was so dear to Marie-Eugénie. Yes, on the muddy ground of Preisch, we ended up in fits of laughter. Marie-Eugénie had many things to say to us that are essential for our lives today!

- The invitation was clear from the outset of this pilgrimage to the roots: Let's be daring, let's listen, and let's savour the inner life of Marie-Eugénie's spiritual experience and her rereading of the major events of her childhood and youth to better reread our own lives. Let ourselves be inhabited by what dwelt in her heart in the trials and joys of her youth, in the grace received at her First Communion, at the time of her "conversion" in Notre Dame, in the struggles, the discernments, her daring determination in the

foundation and her "unshakeable faith in Christ".

- Another surprise: A few years ago, by a stroke of luck, I came across a photo in a family album. The photo was of a beatification of a nun in Rome in 1975 to which my family had been invited. After the death of my husband, with more time on my hands, I became closer to the community of sisters in Tournai, regularly attending weekday Eucharist in their beautiful chapel. I was amazed to discover that without many exchanges of words, a real fraternity had developed through the sharing of their prayer. My impression was that the community was becoming a bit like my second family! One day I was thinking back to that nun who was beatified in 1975, and I realised that it was Marie-Eugénie! So, we had family ties! I was delighted! The golden thread of my life was complete...

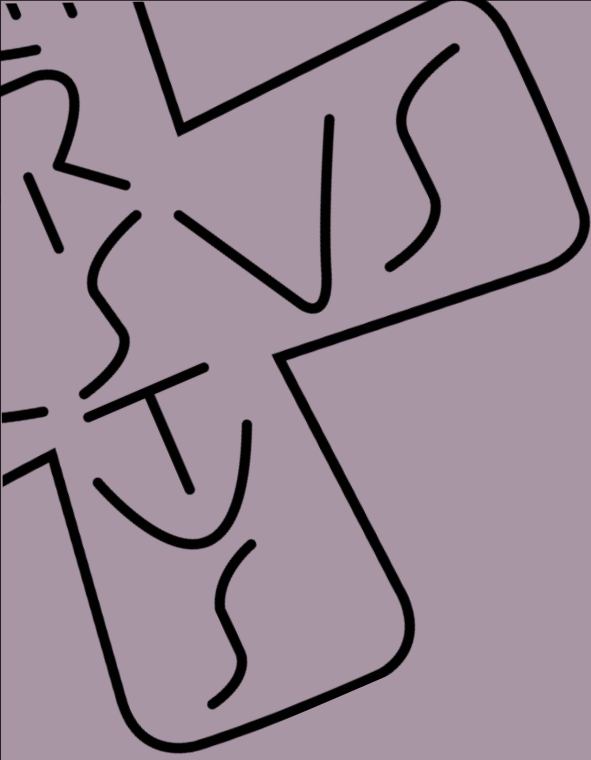
- Then, in Preisch that winter, when the sisters and friends learned of this family relationship, (Véronique, the Congregation's archivist, doesn't let anything slip!) they were somewhat enthralled! As for me, I was very touched to discover the immense affection and the depth of the spiritual ties that bound each sister to Marie-Eugénie. I realised that spiritual filiation could be much more vital and profound than blood kinship, and that gave me a great desire to become even closer spiritually to Marie-Eugénie.

- This was confirmed for me when, at the Archives, I felt the emotion of the few sisters who touched and kissed Marie-Eugénie's habit with respect and tenderness. Their "yes" to Christ in the Congregation of the Assumption also seemed to be based on a deep affection for Marie-Eugénie. Truly, there are moments of grace when heaven and earth are very close. I am so grateful!

- There will be more surprises awaiting us, that's for sure...

#### **MS. VIVIANE LE POLAIN**

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