

#ASSUMPTA

Religious of the Assumption magazine

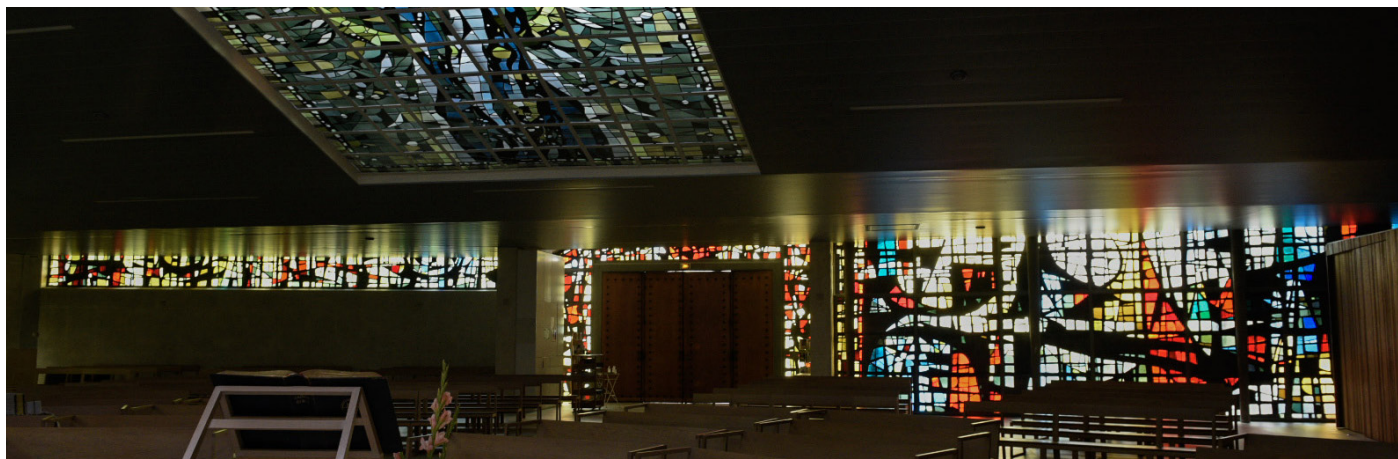
December 2024 - N°12

**“Mens sana
in corpore sano”
Juvénal**



summary

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



#ASSUMPTA

Year 2024 - n° 12

Equipo de edition

Mercedes Méndez

Linda Plant

Almudena de la Torre

Cover Photography

Religious of the Assumption,
Almudena de la Torre, Mathieu-
Lehanneur

Translation and proofreading

Benedicte Rollin

Brigitte Coulon

Catherine Cowley

Cristina Massó

Magdalena Morales

Stella María Sanz

Véronique Thiébaut

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editorial

Citius, Altius, Fortius



The motto of the Olympic Games, "Faster, Higher, Stronger," embodies the spirit of excellence. It is not a call to glorify performance or victory, but rather an invitation to give the best of oneself, to progress, and to surpass personal limits—both in the stadium and in life. Interestingly, this iconic motto was not coined by Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympic Games, but by his friend, the Dominican Father Henri Didon. A passionate educator, Father Didon believed deeply in the power of sport to instil Christian values in young people and inspire holistic development. When Pope John Paul II arrived at the Stade des Princes in Paris in 1980, Cardinal Marty called him "God's sportsman". The Pope, as a true "sportsman of God," echoed the Olympic motto with these words: "Let us give thanks to God for the gift of sport, in which man exercises his body, his intelligence, and his will, recognising in these capacities so many gifts from his Creator". At the Assumption, this profound motto resonates with our spirit as a call to "achieve fulfilment." Through sport, we too can answer the call to holiness.

During the Paris Olympic Games this summer, we had the joy of participating in the Holy Games initiative - a beautiful mission of solidarity proposed by the Church of Paris. The Church established a chaplaincy to serve athletes and spectators alike, and fifty parishes in the capital joined in, supported by young people from all over France. The atmosphere in Paris during those days was marked by joy, communion, and mutual admiration for the remarkable sporting and human achievements of the athletes. There was a palpable sense of solidarity and respect among supporters, a true blessing in a world often so divided. Encounters on the metro, in the streets, and in the stadiums were infused with an international spirit, celebrating the beauty of diversity. As Nelson Mandela famously said, "Sport has the power to change the world," and Paris truly felt transformed during this incredible month.

The "Holies" - those participating in the efforts of evangelisation - were not only involved in prayer, concerts, and community activities. They also underwent a special training in the virtues. Just as athletes train tirelessly to achieve excellence, this program emphasised that practicing virtues builds the capacity to live well and do good with ease. It highlighted the connection between perseverance in virtue and the path to grace and holiness. "They do it to receive a laurel crown that will fade, but we do it for a crown that will not fade" (1 Corinthians 9:25). This discovery of virtues deeply impacted young participants, many of whom are searching for guidance and meaningful ways to act in the world!

We extend our gratitude to all athletes, sports enthusiasts, and to the Olympic Games itself. It's a unique event where the human family comes together in respectful communion, celebrating talent and dedication. In this spirit, let us embrace St. Paul's exhortation: "Glorify God through your body" (1 Corinthians 6:20)!

SISTER MARIE VALÉRIE LAGARRIGUE

Province of France

Original french

treasures of the archives

The relics of Saint Marie Eugenie in the altar of Notre Dame de Paris

“The relics of Marie Eugenie are in the altar of the Cathedral, the central place, the place where Christ awaits us at each Eucharist.”

On December 8, 2024, the Diocese of Paris, in communion with the whole world, celebrated the first mass in Notre Dame de Paris Cathedral, renovated after the fire which ravaged it in 2019. It was a double joy for the Assumption since rediscovering the new beauty of this place dear to Marie Eugenie. The Assumption was delighted to see the relics of Saint Marie Eugenie and four other saints (Saint Madeleine Sophie Barrat, Saint Catherine Labouré, Saint Charles de Foucauld and Blessed Vladimir Ghika), placed in the new altar at the time of its consecration.

1. What is the origin of the cult of relics?

The cult of relics historically began with the testimony of the martyrs of whom the first Christians wanted to keep as a remembrance to revive their faith and ask for their intercession. At the same time, it became customary to celebrate the Eucharist at the tomb of the martyrs. The still current tradition of placing the relics of a saint or several saints in an altar at the time of its consecration comes from there.

Numerous accounts of miracles granted in the presence of relics of saints had begun to spread in antiquity, including in certain accounts of the Old Testament. In the West Saint Augustine († 430) encourages veneration of the body of the faithful “who served as instrument and mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit for all kinds of good works”. Saint Thomas († 1274) devotes an article in the Summa Teologica to justifying the veneration of relics, because it manifests the affection that binds us to the saints, friends of God and our intercessors with Him. According to him, the bodies of the saints were the temples and mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit and must be configured to the body of Christ in the glory of the Resurrection: they thus remind us of what is promised to us in God.

In fact, even if Saint Thomas recalls that the entire history of the Church proves that God performs miracles in the presence of the relics of the saints, we must always prevent this cult from becoming a superstition or fetishism. The proximity of the saints, materialized by their relics, should above all be an opportunity to renew ourselves in the desire to give our lives.

2. The different classes of relics

As the cult of relics spreads, different classes have been distinguished, depending on the importance of the object and its more or less direct contact with the saint in question:

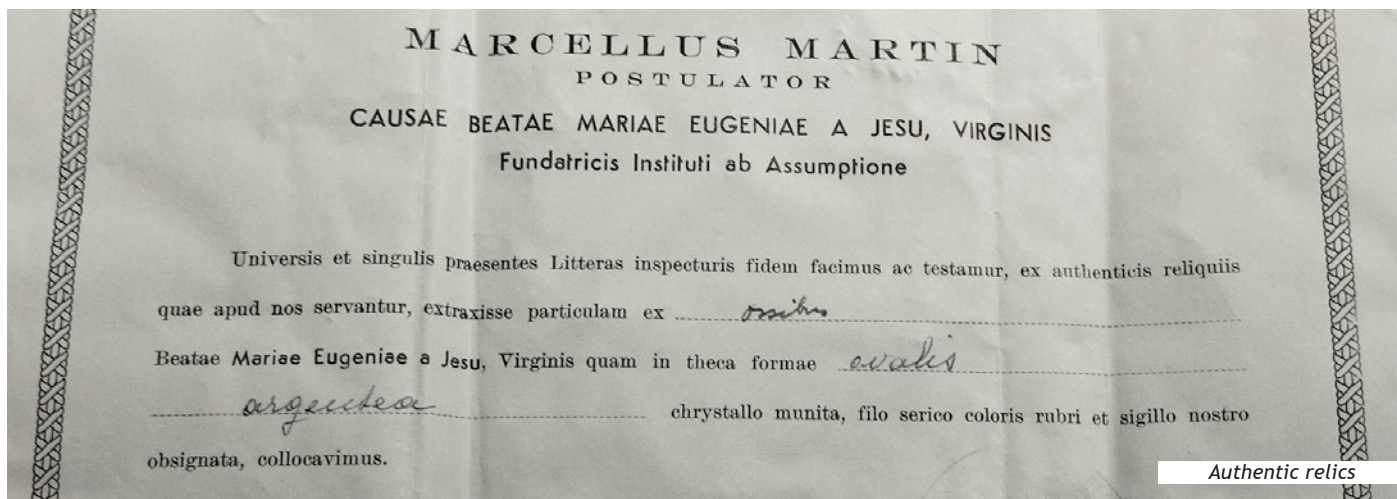
1st class relics: the bodies of saints or important fragments of these bodies (skull, whole pieces of bones), the physical remains of a saint (a bone, a strand of hair, a limb, etc.),



Reliquary of the Beatification



Small reliquary



objects directly associated with events in the life of Christ (nativity scene, cross, etc.)

2nd class relics: objects that belonged to or used by a saint during his life (clothing, jewelry, scepters, bibles and hand tools). For a martyr, it could also be objects linked to his torture.

3rd class relics: any object, new or old, which came into contact with the remains of a saint or pressed against their tomb or reliquary (this may include funeral materials, the ground in which they were buried, the remains of their coffin or more recent objects such as fabrics placed against the grave...)

3. The relics of Saint Marie Eugenie

Family souvenirs

"'He who is fond of someone also reveres the things that that person left of himself after his death,' says Saint Thomas Aquinas. As usual, theology starts from the simplest and spontaneous human experience. When you look at the necklace your grandmother wore or the missal she used, your fondness is not towards the necklace or the missal, but rather the memory of your grandmother herself. You then remember her goodness and her faith, the good advice she gave you and you give thanks to God for having given you such a grandmother. It is in this completely natural human behavior that the cult of relics is rooted."

It is in this spirit that the 1st Sisters of the Assumption, just after the death of Marie Eugenie, preserved memories of their foundress: her clothes, her manuscripts, a lock of hair, multiple objects of daily life (her pen, her prayer books, her rosaries, cutlery, bowls and plates, hand warming stone, etc.)

These objects, preserved with respect and very precisely identified, extended the maternal presence of Marie Eugenie, and made it possible to nourish a certain closeness of the heart, which stimulated those who inherited her project. We also did the same for the first Sisters, such as Mother Therese Emmanuel or Mother Marie Celestine.

The Sisters, planning for the future, had kept quite a few small pieces of clothing and fabrics, having touched the body of Marie Eugenie, intended for the production of 2nd or 3rd class relics. These fabrics made it possible to create the small medals which are still in circulation today.

Relics for the Beatification

When the Beatification process began, the postulator (the one responsible for investigating the process, working on the documents and presenting the elements to the Vatican) must ensure that the relics of the future blessed are recognized as authentic. A reliquary is thus offered to the Pope during the beatification celebration and the postulator must subsequently ensure that a certain number of Cardinals and members of the Curia also receive the relics.

On April 23, 1974, the Postulator received from the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints, the good news of the date of the Beatification of Marie Eugenie, set for February 9, 1975.

Then began the numerous organizational procedures and projects for this great celebration. In the Archives of the Religious of the Assumption, the correspondence between Mother Helene Marie, who was Superior General in 1975, with the postulator, Father Martin, and other members of the Curia mentions the relics several times:

- To ask what is the procedure to follow
- To request authorization to remove relics
- To thank for the interest shown in Marie Eugenie of Jesus

In 1898, at the time of her death, Marie Eugenie was first interred in the chapel in the woods, behind the Auteuil monastery. On March 25, 1926, her coffin was transported to a cemetery in the 16th district (rue Claude Lorrain), before being interred in the tomb in the Chapel of Lubeck on December 1, 1942.

The removal of the 1st class relics from the body of Marie Eugenie took place at the time of a new transfer of the body of Marie Eugenie, from Lubeck to Auteuil, as evidenced by the request for authorization from Sr. Helene Marie addressed to the postulator on June 8, 1974: "As you know, we have the desire, on the occasion of the Beatification of our Foundress, to transfer her body to the Motherhouse, 17 rue de l'Assomption, Paris, by bringing her back from our house on rue de Lubeck, where she is currently. During this transfer, we will also have to remove significant relics of the future blessed." She also specifies in this letter that the diocese of Paris has been informed of this. This transfer took place on June 26, 1974.

The relics thus collected were placed in reliquaries of different sizes, ready to be distributed to those who are devoted to them. Many people, ecclesiastics or not, requested to obtain relics or thanked for having received them after the beatification, which took place on February

9, 1975. Multiple letters kept in the Archives bear witness to this.

Mother Helene replied to Father Martin on December 13, 1975: "Yes, these requests for relics make the February 9 celebrations seem to continue! We have very few pieces of bones left because we gave some to the Holy Father, in a reliquary, as well as to several dignitaries, during the Beatification: but I am sending you what remains. As for clothes, we have a lot left, and it is not difficult for us to give you a good quantity of these pieces."

It is one of these relics, taken at the time of the beatification, which was placed in the altar of Notre Dame de Paris. This is a fairly large bone fragment, in a reliquary similar to the one whose photo in this article.

A celebration that continues

This celebration continued at the time of the canonization, June 3, 2007, which gave rise to the creation of other reliquaries, until today, where requests for relics still regularly arrive from all over the world. Even though two miracles have been officially recognized, hundreds of people have prayed to Marie Eugenie using her relics and testify to the strength they find in this humble and audacious woman.

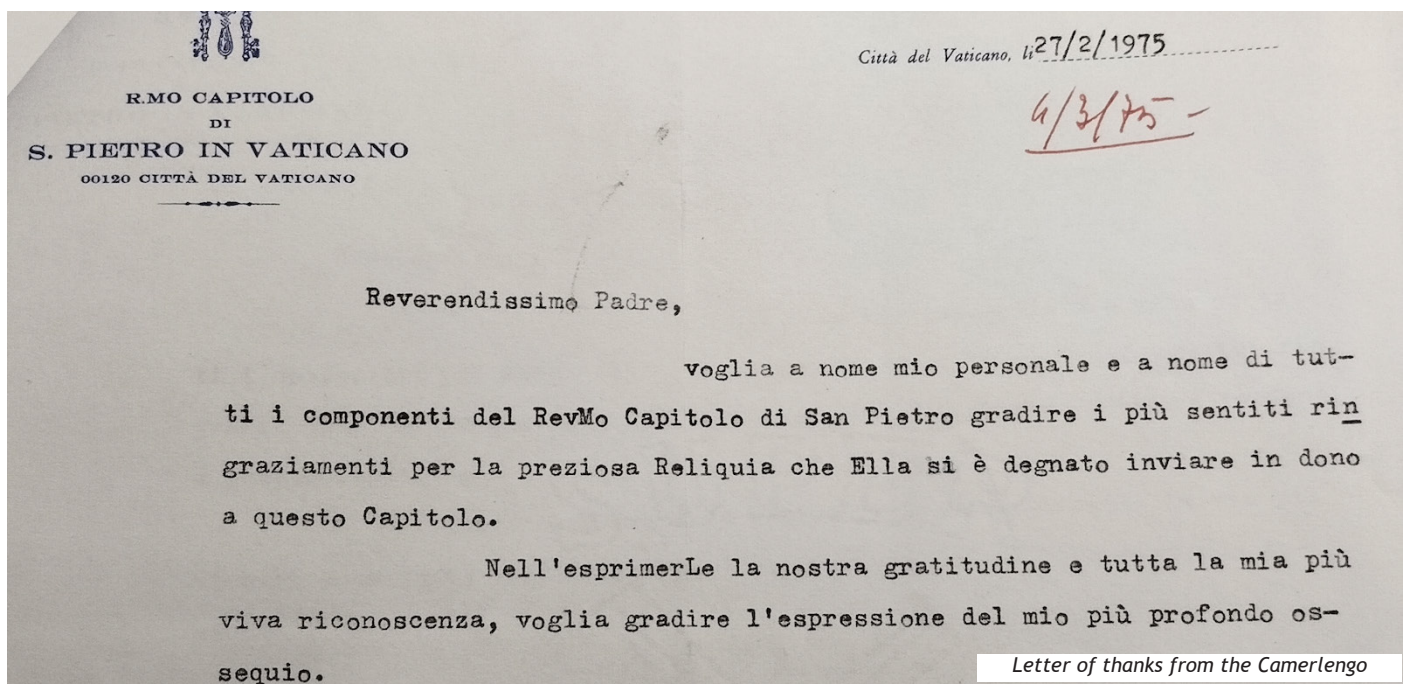
4. Marie Eugénie at Notre Dame de Paris

It is the fidelity to the gospel of the saints and the work of God in their lives that we recognize by placing their relics in an altar: "Thus, the relics of these women, these men or these children are placed in the altars of churches to show on the one hand their intimacy with Christ - whom the altar represents - but also to remind the assembly of its duty to transmit the Good News of Salvation to future generations because the saints of tomorrow are in the assemblies of today."

In addition to the sanctuary on Rue de l'Assomption, site of the tomb of Saint Marie Eugenie, the pilgrimage in the footsteps of Marie Eugenie in Paris takes us to various places, including Notre Dame de Paris, place of her conversion. On June 1, 2014, the joy of the Congregation was great during the inauguration of a plaque commemorating this event. This plaque is fixed on the pulpit from which Father Lacordaire spoke, next to another plaque evoking the Dominican's preaching. On December 8, 2024, another joy was offered to us: the relics of Saint Marie Eugenie now rest in the new altar of Notre Dame de Paris. What does this mean? The relics of Marie Eugenie are in the altar of the Cathedral, the central place, the place where Christ awaits us at each Eucharist. They were placed there with those of other saints who form a community, a sign of the broad ecclesial community. It is truly the closeness with Christ that the Church invites us to experience. Marie Eugenie of Jesus built her life on Christ and with her, like her, we can walk with Christ, through a life where our intelligence, our heart and our actions are harmonized, in the light of the Gospel.

SISTER VÉRONIQUE THIÉBAUT

Archivist of the Congregation
Original French



education

Education is life itself

“Learning
is a lifelong
process ”

Education, is an important element in one's life, whether formal or non-formal. It is the key to success in the present and the future as it opens up many opportunities. All of us began our learning at home, our parents and grandparents being our first teachers. Learning is a lifelong process that ends when we die. Education is the foundation of development and change. Education sharpens our mindsets. Education benefits not only the individual but also the community, society, the country and eventually the whole world.

In Assumption. “To educate means allowing the good that is in a person to break through the rock which imprisons them and lead it in the light where it can flower and shine forth.”(Education in the Assumption, Reference Guide, Chapter VI- 3. Educational Aims, July, 1998)

Sangiti Secondary School, is one of the Catholic schools in the Catholic Diocese of Moshi, Tanzania. The school is under the administration of the Religious of the Assumption, East Africa Province since 1992 to date. We have three hundred and twelve girls and twenty eight boys.

It started as a technical school owned by parents of the surrounding twenty six villages. It did not progress well, and therefore the parents requested Bishop Amadeus Msarikie to take over the school as the Manager. He accepted on condition that it would be a normal secondary school. The Bishop then requested the Religious of the Assumption to be the administrators of the school. For two years, 1990 -1992, two sisters were assigned there as teachers. It was not easy to get students since the people had lost hope of good education of their children who study in Sangiti.

The presence of the Assumption Sisters who were well known educators of Mandaka and WeruWeru schools before nationalization in the early 1970's brought a radical and positive change in the life of the students and the school environment.

In our school, a variety of subjects as directed by the Ministry of Education, for example, History, Chemistry, Geography, Mathematics, Physics, Biology, English are covered. Optional subjects include Home economics, Information and computer studies, Music, Fine Arts, Islamic studies and Bible Knowledge. We receive students from all regions of Tanzania belonging to different denominations (Catholics, Protestants, Adventists, Muslims, and Pentecostal Churches) and those who may not belong to the mentioned beliefs.

As Assumption Sisters, we feel that this diversity is a richness and an opportunity for us to achieve our goal of “Transformation of the Society through Gospel values”. The seed of faith that is already planted in them is an environmental base for us to guide them towards the one TRUTH.

The academic strategic plan, collaborative learning whereby experiences are shared with neighbouring schools, working collectively, that is, administration, teachers, parents and students are means that have made Sangiti excel to the present height.

Thanks to the transformative education in Assumption that aims at transforming the whole person in all aspects, intellectual, social, spiritual, physical, psychological...

We have witnessed positive changes, gradual but excelling movements of students from the first to forth or sixth year in their secondary school life. This important time in their life, we are careful as educators, “not to cut their wings but re-direct their flight” so that they remain focused in what they want to achieve



in life.

In Assumption we believe that there is good in every one: "Hidden even in the worst natures, there is always something good. This is what we believe in, what we persevere in seeking out, and if we do not find it, we blame the idea of our own excellence which is blinding us". (Education in the Assumption, Reference Guide, Chapter VI- Points of Departure, July, 1998). This is clearly seen and lived because; time is given to slow learners, students are kept connected to each other through their study groups, calm caring teachers listen to the students and the team working spirit among the teachers non-teaching staff and parents.

Parents are witnesses of the transformation of their children when they go for their holidays. "My child has changed, she is more responsible, she takes good care of her younger siblings, she uses more time in studying and not on watching television, she is now more focused and knows what is expected of her, now she has the ability to break from bad company, her self-awareness leads her to make better choices "..... the list goes on and on.

Once a Form Two student, Doreen Lang'o said, "We never think that there is a tomorrow. You may be a zero today, but a hero tomorrow. Never give up when you fail today".

Our students also have the opportunity to explore more knowledge outside their classroom learning and reading of books. The extracurricular activities include; care of the environment, arts and creativity ,sports and academic clubs, interfaith meetings, security education and planting maize for our school self-reliance project. Sometimes these activities involve competition among the students.

These activities offer opportunities for personal

and academic development as they pursue a specific interest, develop additional skills as well as discovering the passion and interests of the students. These activities enable the student to master skills that go beyond school curriculum; for example teamwork spirit, critical thinking, leadership skills and spontaneous volunteering.

The interfaith fellowship are moments when all the students come and pray together, giving alms and going to the peripheries to reach out to the needy, a moment when the students go beyond the external observance and practices of their religion so as to encounter God. They have a deeper understanding that we come from God, we belong to God and we must be for God regardless of our religion. The students also come together to share their differences. Instead of putting them aside, they bring them together to enrich each other. This requires a firm ground in the knowledge of one's faith and that's why each group has a religious leader accompanying them.

From the entrance of the school gate, one is welcomed by the beautiful green environment of the school. Trees and flowers of all kinds help clean our air, students have good shade and space for recreation.

Education means, living a great life, so seize every opportunity whether formal or non-formal and learn.

SISTER ROSE MARIE LASWAI

Province of East Africa

Original English

echo of the Archives

Consecration of the new altar of Notre Dame de Paris

“The first movements of my vocation came to me under the vaults of Notre-Dame during the conferences of 1836 (...)”

“The first movements of my vocation came to me under the vaults of Notre-Dame during the conferences of 1836 (...) The long hours that I spent waiting for him (= Fr. Lacordaire), and the Church itself where so many Christian generations had passed through and its depths which seemed to me reserved for the footsteps of those whose lives are entirely devoted to God, also had a profound effect on me.” These words, written by Marie Eugenie to Father Picard, on November 8, 1862 (Letter no. 1509), resonated in me, on December 8, 2024, as I passed through the doors of Notre Dame de Paris to participate in the Mass during which the new altar would be dedicated. I was seized by the mystery of Christ's call... I saw Anne Eugenie Milleret, a young woman a little lost, in search of the meaning of her life, passing through these same doors, full of questions and uncertainty... I saw us leaving Notre Dame, seized by the call of God, with other questions and a path that was beginning to take shape. I was overwhelmed by the immensity of God's work in her, of his love, which led us, 188 years later, to welcome with emotion the relics of Saint Marie Eugenie intended to be placed in the altar during of the celebration.

Community

The box of relics, in which Marie Eugenie forms a community of holiness with Madeleine Sophie Barat, Catherine Labouré, Charles de Foucauld and Vladimir Ghika, solemnly carried during the entrance procession, placed her at the heart of the Church, a Church with broad and open ideas, a Church called to participate in the transformation of society through the Gospel.

Around me, in the first rows of the Cathedral, many political leaders, rich donors, but also artists, members of the diocese, some parishioners representing all the parishes of Paris, people helped by solidarity associations, and my Sisters, Catherine and Illuminata also present in this crowd... people with a thousand faces... This was for me one of the great impressions of this historic moment: the communion which went beyond all social separations, the fact that all were seized by the same grandeur, the same emotion, drawn from the sources of history and faith. I had the almost physical experience that the transcendent brings us together,



Community



Unction



Clé de voûte



Prayer with the relics

that the roots connect us and that faith goes beyond us.

Intimacy with Christ

When the rite of consecration of the altar began, another reflection from Marie Eugenie, this time addressed to Father d'Alzon in a letter dated August 23, 1844 (Letter no. 1630): "The tree trunk alone can carry all the branches (...) Be a branch, if you want to be something, and even believe that you will never be better disposed to charity towards all than by being humbly taking your place in Jesus Christ." The trunk, Christ... the altar, Christ... And all of us around this altar, associated with the saints of all times, like branches which take their sap from the total gift of the Son of God... I have been touched by this deep intimacy between Marie Eugenie, placed there, as close as possible to the Eucharistic act, and Christ, who seduced her and to whom she belonged. When the name of Marie Eugenie resonated in the litany of saints and when Mgr. Ulrich, Archbishop of Paris, prayed at length with the reliquary in his hands before inserting it into the altar, this intimacy with Christ, to which we were all associated, filled me with immense joy.

Mgr. Ulrich then put on the appropriate vestments to anoint the altar with holy chrism. The slow and gentle gesture with which he spread the holy oil over the entire surface of the altar reminded me of the anointing at Bethany, the homage of human love attracted by the greatest Love, that of Christ. Once again, I felt that with Marie Eugenie, all of us, the great Assumption family, were associated with this gesture, invited to adore Christ throughout our lives, knowing that adoration and love are the same thing. To simply be what we must be, like our foundress: through all our life, a perpetual "yes" to Christ, a tribute to his love. All the symbols then prolonged this gesture: the incense which transformed the altar into a fragrant bush, the light recalling the mystery of the Resurrection and the table set for a communion banquet.

Source of hope

Looking up, I saw, above my head, the vault of the Cathedral in the very place where the sky opened 5 years ago, under the effect of the flames. New emotion. The image of the gaping hole that had traveled around the world replaced for an instant the perfect, luminous vault that now stood. I could sense the immensity of the sky through the stone. Easter mystery which allowed a cathedral to emerge from the flames, even more beautiful, thanks to the common work of thousands of people. A fantastic sign of hope which made me pray for peace, which made me pray for unity everywhere to be stronger than evil and violence. I felt drawn upwards and I prayed to Marie Eugenie to help me, to help us, to never forget that our common roots, stronger than all divisions, reach into the sky.

Yes, "I saw the source become an immense river, Alleluia! The assembled sons of God sang their joy at being saved, Alleluia! I saw the temple now open to all, Alleluia!" It is difficult to express in words the immense emotion of this day, the feeling that by this unexpected sign of a relic placed in an altar, the Assumption received as a gift the pressing call to keep the heritage of Saint Marie Eugenie alive. To the plaque which commemorates her conversion, firmly in place on the pulpit enthroned in the middle of the nave having also escaped the devastating flames, is added this invisible and permanent presence at the heart of the altar. May she remind us at every moment that our lives are "hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:3).

SISTER VÉRONIQUE THIÉBAUT

Archivist of the Congregation,
Original French

ama

AMA in the United States: More than just volunteering

**“For decades,
our AMA
volunteers
have been
transforming
lives”**

Hello, friends! I'm Sandy Piwko, the Director of the Assumption Mission Associates (AMA) program, and I'm thrilled to take you on a journey into the heart of our wonderful volunteer program here in the U.S. For decades, our AMA volunteers have been transforming lives—both for those we serve and those who choose to serve with us. AMA offers individuals the chance to step into communities and ministries in the U.S. and abroad to make a meaningful difference.

A Bit of History: AMA in the U.S.

The AMA program started in the United States in the early 1990s, with a vision of sending volunteers to work in various ministries sponsored by the Assumption Sisters. Our volunteers currently serve in Worcester, MA, Chaparral, NM, and international locations in Newcastle, England, and the Philippines. We also partner with a L'Arche program in Cork, Ireland.

The Purpose of the AMA Volunteer Program

The AMA program at its core, seeks to live out the Gospel call to love and serve one another, especially the most marginalized in society. Volunteers are sent to a variety of ministries and communities where they are invited to live simply, grow spiritually, and serve those in need. Whether they're working in a classroom, a food pantry, or an after-school program, the purpose is always the same: to bring the compassionate love of Christ to all, while living in solidarity with the communities we serve.

The Benefits to Volunteers

One of the greatest aspects of the AMA program is the mutuality of the experience. As much as our volunteers give, they receive so much in return. Volunteering with AMA is not just about helping others; it's about growing personally, spiritually, and professionally.



Personal Growth: Volunteers often tell me that they leave the program as different people. Living and serving in a new environment, especially one that challenges your comfort zone, can be transformative. Whether it's learning how to work with diverse populations or finding new ways to connect with others, AMA volunteers leave with a deeper sense of who they are and what they want to contribute to the world.

Spiritual Growth: Being part of the AMA program is an invitation to deepen your faith. Volunteers are encouraged to reflect on their experiences through the lens of faith and spirituality. Whether you're Catholic or come from another faith tradition, the program offers opportunities for spiritual reflection, prayer, and discernment often alongside our RA sisters.

Professional Growth: The skills you gain as an AMA volunteer are invaluable. Many of our volunteers go on to work in fields like education, social work, community organizing, and ministry. Whether it's honing leadership skills, learning to manage a classroom, or working with at-risk youth, the experiences you gain are applicable to any career path you choose.

Global Awareness: Volunteering with AMA often opens your eyes to the global nature of social justice. Whether you're serving in Worcester or Chaparral, you become part of a broader conversation about inequality, poverty, and the call to work for systemic change.

The Professionalization of the AMA Program

We want to make sure that our volunteers are well-prepared for the ministry they'll be doing, and that they have the support they need throughout their service. We offer a 3-day orientation in Worcester, MA before volunteers begin their placements, as well as ongoing formation and support during their time in the program. We lean on our sisters in Worcester to help facilitate workshops and provide hospitality while our volunteers are visiting. It is a joy to see the interactions as the volunteers get to know the sisters!

Our training covers everything from practical skills—like self-care, dealing with homesickness, and building resilience to communication skills and journaling. We also provide opportunities for spiritual formation, and monthly check-ins to help volunteers reflect on their experiences.

Challenges Facing the AMA Program Today

The AMA program has faced some challenges with recruiting volunteers to our domestic sites in Worcester, MA and Chaparral, NM. The pandemic and the variety of options for service are some of the challenges we face. Also, many young people are carrying a large amount of student debt to pay for their university degrees and feel the need to join the workforce as soon as possible. Parental concerns or pressure to get employment are also a factor in

determining whether a young person will consider a year of service. We remain grateful that we have had volunteers in place throughout these struggles, maybe not the numbers we would like, but we remain hopeful God will bring forward new young people to join us.

We are also finding that young people want to participate in our program but often a year is too long of a commitment, so recently we have provided a short-term option at our Worcester site. Also, in conversations with our partners in the Philippines and England a short volunteer option may be considered since these directors are also struggling with filling positions.

The Main Benefits to Volunteers and Communities

Ultimately, the AMA program is about building relationships—relationships between volunteers and the communities they serve, and relationships among volunteers themselves. Our volunteers often tell me that the friendships they build are some of the most meaningful aspects of their experience. They leave with a deep sense of connection to the people they've served, and to each other. We have many alumni who have served in Chaparral, NM return to visit the sisters and friends they made during their year of service. The people in these communities stay close to their hearts.

Conclusion: Why AMA Matters

At the end of the day, the AMA program is about more than just volunteering. It's about living out a vision of the world where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, where we care for one another, and where we work together to build a more just and compassionate society. St. Marie Eugenie said "what matters for the coming of the Kingdom is the life of each one of us." We're proud of the fact that our volunteers are making a real impact in the communities where they serve. But we're also proud of the fact that we're helping to form the next generation of leaders, educators, and social justice advocates.

MRS. SANDY PIWKO

Responsible for AMA in the USA Province
Original English

The humanitarian crisis along the Canary route

“Addressing the migration crisis requires focusing on people”

Europe is currently experiencing the largest humanitarian migration crisis in recent history, with numbers continuously rising.

The Canary Islands face the greatest danger and are experiencing the most intense migratory year in their history. This summer alone, over 2600 people in small wooden boats arrived on the islands. This represents a 19.4% increase from the previous year, making it the busiest summer in the 30-year history of the Atlantic migration route.

According to the Ministry of Interior, 9229 people arrived in Spain during the summer. Other sources report over 12000. The number of lives lost remains unknown, but it is estimated that one person dies every 45 minutes, which corresponds to one in every five persons attempting to reach Europe. Those who survive endure unimaginable suffering, while European countries argue over sharing responsibilities. Proposed measures remain mere discriminatory and inhumane “band-aids”.

The causes of migration vary and not all migrants are managed equally:

- Armed conflicts, corruption in public administrations, and climate change drive people to leave their countries in search for a better future. Although life in Europe is precarious for many migrants, their rights are at least acknowledged.
- Migrants primarily come from sub-Saharan Africa, but some also come from Asia.
- The Mediterranean route is increasingly monitored since an agreement between Spain's president and Morocco's king was reached. Spain recognised Western Sahara as Moroccan territory in exchange for Morocco's stricter migration enforcement. As a result, traffickers have shifted to the more perilous but less monitored Canary route.

Mass arrival on the beach with bathers.



Red Cross worker Luna Reyes



Circle of Silence against the dehumanisation of displacement



Salvamento Marítimo tows the cayuco to a Canary Islands port



- Migrants travel in overcrowded boats designed for coastal fishing, sometimes carrying over 100 people. These boats, often running out of fuel, drift in the ocean and capsize due to the waves. Migrants suffer from hypothermia, malnutrition, exhaustion, and immobility, often leading to death or lasting consequences.

- Migration numbers continue to climb and surpass the peaks observed in 2006-2007. In 2023, 40000 people arrived in Spain. That number represents 70% of all migration to the country.

- The situation is also getting worse with unaccompanied minors. Over 5500 unaccompanied minors are housed in shelters. This is putting a strain on the educational system in the Canary Islands. Many children, unfamiliar with Spanish but often fluent in French, lack basic literacy skills. They want to learn Spanish to work, repay travel debts, and support their families.

- Most migrants do not intend on staying in the Canary Islands or Spain. Their goal is to reach northern Europe. The EU funds efforts to keep them from leaving southern islands like Lesbos, Lampedusa, and the Canaries.

- Many migrants are repatriated or redistributed across shelters in Spain and Europe.

The European Pact on Migration and Asylum adopted on the 10th of April by the European Parliament, aims to manage migration flows more efficiently and restore order in a dysfunctional and conflictual system. Nonetheless, behind its façade of order and control lies a dehumanising reality that undermines the dignity and rights of migrants and refugees:

- It prioritises border externalisation.
- It increases police presence at borders and criminalises irregular migration.
- It uses dehumanising language which fosters hostility, xenophobia, discrimination, and racism among the local populations.
- It fails to address structural causes of migration such as poverty, war, violence, climate crises, loss of livelihoods, and persecution. It ignores the desperation that compels migration.

Mame, a young woman from Senegal who migrated to Spain in 2013, describes how heartbroken she feels when her fellow Senegalese perish at sea or while crossing borders. She questions the fairness of a world in which Europeans can freely travel to Senegal while Senegalese people face life-threatening barriers to enter Europe. She highlights the exploitation by foreign companies that deplete Senegal's fish stocks, leaving locals without resources to sustain their livelihood and their families. Despite these challenges, she values her move to Spain, where she studies, works, and hopes to support her family before eventually returning to Senegal.

Addressing the migration crisis requires focusing on people, not on what can be extracted from them. Migrants want to work but need more than mere employment. This cannot be resolved solely with circular migration: where do they return afterward? Under what conditions will they work? Solutions must include: WELCOMING migrants with dignity, PROTECTING victims, PROMOTING individuals, INTEGRATING the cultural wealth they bring. This is the only way to respect human dignity.

Every second year, religious groups, NGOs, and individuals working in southern Europe and northern Africa gather in Málaga at the "Southern Border Forum" to share their experience and shed light on this harrowing reality.

The Assumption congregation, recognises the gravity of the situation and has committed to responding with its available resources. Following a suggestion from the province of Spain, it plans to establish an international community in the Canary Islands to address this reality.

SISTER MAGDALENA MORALES

Referent JPIC of the Province of Spain

Original Spanish

spirituality

The Culture of Care: An Essential Vocation

A few days ago, I had the opportunity to attend a symposium on the inclusion of people with disabilities, held in the city of León, Mexico. It was a beautiful event that resonated with the calls of GC 2024.

Imagine yourself surrounded by people who share the same conviction, that individuals with disabilities have a unique gift to offer the world. Many of them, young people and adults with disabilities, are already involved in various fields such as the arts, film production, commercial design, etc. They share experiences through which they contribute with professionalism and creativity. I am filled with admiration, seeing how, supported by an attitude of respect and care, they are already offering their gifts to society. This reminds me of the call from GC 2024: to be pilgrims of hope in our wounded world. I see that they are already embodying this, inspiring many others who, despite fear and pain, are setting out on that path.

Amid so much news that reveals contempt for human life, environmental degradation, and exclusion, GC 2024 suggests that this hope should be the fruit of an authentic culture of care.

In *Laudato Sii*, Pope Francis was already expressing an urgent call to "Take care of our Common House". After the pandemic, in 2021, he emphasised that this is the path to peace, a path of metanoia, another call from GC 2024. "Either we learn to care, or we perish", wrote Colombian philosopher Bernardo Toro in 2020. Metanoia is an inner revolution, described by Professor Luis Aranguren in four steps:

1. We first need to slow down the frantic pace at which we live, and listen—listen to the cries of the planet and of humanity.
2. We also need to wake up from certain existential illusions, those of the "conqueror" who believes "we can do anything" that "we are the centre of creation."
3. Thirdly, learn to refer to the Source, to the Other toward whom we journey.
4. Finally, with these new references, identify how to be and to teach, within an ethical framework that prevents harassment and abuse and ensures care for all.

Beyond the prevention of harm, care also means "watching over," staying attentive to someone or something, healing, tending to, helping grow, and serving. Care is an intimate and committed concern for others: people, the environment, oneself. Those who love take care. The attitude of care is eminently educational; it involves profound respect, allowing others to be and grow with the greatest sense of fulfillment. This means acknowledging their autonomy and responsibility: not doing for them what they can

or should do for themselves (subsidiarity). This is why a culture of care is demanding; it requires discernment and a certain detachment so that the other can access what they need at their life stage and in their situation. Only in this way will they learn to care for themselves and for others. Caring does not mean minimising risks to shield others from suffering. On the contrary, caring is like "offering fertilisers", as we do for the soil: providing the necessary nutrients so that what germinates and grows develops its own potential, defences, and inner resources, allowing it to blossom and bear fruit.

Marie Eugénie dreamed of "a social reality in which no one would suffer from the oppression of others". To work towards this, each person should be able to contribute to this utopia according to their vocation and talents. Achieving this requires a fundamental revolution in education, a paradigm shift that would lead to a way of being and acting in line with the Gospel. For her, this profound change would arise from a deep spiritual experience. She revisits this experience in her own story: "I don't know if it is permitted to think, as I sometimes do, that God is guiding me with special care..." This is how she discovers her vocation to care: "The world is not big enough for my love; I want to gather all the storms of weary hearts and pass on to those who do not know this light and love that I enjoy."

This depth was present in her care for the sisters, students, and people she accompanied, yet it was also practical, firm, and energetic: "Faith illuminating the mind is a great thing, but it isn't enough if it does not elevate the soul. It is like a root that will not yield many flowers or fruit if character, deeds, and life do not change to be in line with the beliefs."

She based her existence and actions on a positive, dynamic vision of God: "It is difficult for me to see earth as a place of exile; I see it as a place of glory for God..." and "To give light, we must nourish ourselves with light... our freedom is that which moves within Light and Good".

The culture of care is an urgent challenge taken up by GC 2024, in response to the cries of the world, Mother Earth, and the ecclesial community. It is also a demanding call that we inherit from our Assumptionist charism.

May Saint Marie Eugénie help us enter into this culture of care through a human and spiritual experience that transforms our way of being, seeing, and acting, making us attentive and wise guardians, wherever we have been sent.

SISTER ANA SENTÍES
Province of México
Original Spanish

communication

Artificial Intelligence: An Ally in Everyday Life

In the digital age, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become an essential tool, transforming how we live, work, and connect. Increasingly, AI integrates into our routines, making them more efficient and personalized. This advancement is not only fascinating but also highlights the potential of technology to improve our quality of life.

What is AI and how does it benefit us?

AI refers to a machine's ability to mimic human cognitive functions, such as learning and decision-making. Through algorithms, AI can analyze vast amounts of data, identify patterns, and make predictions. Its value lies in its ability to learn and adapt to our needs.

One of the most appealing aspects of AI is its support in daily activities, from simple tasks to more complex ones. Let's explore some examples of how AI is already part of our lives.

AI at Home: Smart Assistants

Smart homes are a domain where AI has made a significant impact. Virtual assistants like Alexa and Google Assistant allow us to control aspects of our homes using voice commands. A simple "OK, Google" lets us check the weather, play music, or add items to our shopping list.

These assistants don't just follow commands; they also learn from our routines, optimizing our daily lives. They can adjust lighting, regulate temperature, and even suggest recipes based on available ingredients.

AI at Work: Optimization and Efficiency

In the workplace, AI is revolutionizing how we work. Tools like Microsoft Office 365 and Google Workspace include assistants that suggest writing improvements, correct errors, and organize time more efficiently.

AI also excels in data analysis. Platforms like Tableau enable professionals to visualize complex data, identifying patterns that would otherwise go unnoticed. This saves time and enhances decision-making.

AI in Healthcare: A Silent Ally

The healthcare sector greatly benefits from AI. Algorithms for medical imaging analysis can detect diseases at early stages. Apps like Apple Health help users track their physical activity and receive recommendations to improve well-being.

Medical chatbots are becoming increasingly common. They can answer questions about

symptoms, suggest appointments, and track medication adherence, reducing the workload for healthcare professionals.

AI in Education: Personalized Learning

With the help of digital tools, teaching methods can be tailored to each student, progress tracked, and materials provided to reinforce learning. For instance, AI can adapt lessons to individual needs, offering exercises and reading suggestions based on comprehension levels.

Why Integrate AI into Your Life?

AI's potential is vast, and we are just beginning to discover what it can achieve. Using AI doesn't mean relying on machines but enhancing our abilities and freeing up time for what truly matters: creativity and well-being.

AI can help you better manage your time and personalize your experiences, whether at work, at home, or during leisure. By integrating AI into your life, you optimize your routines and take part in a technological transformation promising a smarter world.

Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence is reshaping how we interact with the world, providing tools to simplify our lives. From home automation to improved healthcare services, AI is becoming an indispensable ally.

AI is not just a technology of the future; it is a tool of the present, ready to transform every aspect of our lives. Are you ready to let AI help you live better?

CHATGPT & COMMUNICATION TEAM

Original Spanish

assumption together

Assumption Together in the Philippines: A Journey of Shared Mission and Friendship

**“...is more than
just a concept;
it’s a way of
life”**

When I joined the Provincial Lay Team back in 2007, I honestly didn't know what to expect. Baby Herrera had just been elected Provincial Lay Representative during Sr. Marjo's time as Provincial Superior, and the invitation caught me off guard. But looking back, I realize I was already living the spirit of Assumption Together, and that the call to share in the Assumption mission was woven into my life in ways I hadn't yet fully seen.

Assumption Together is at the heart of Mère Marie Eugénie and Père d'Alzon's vision, where religious and laypeople work side by side. In the words of Mère Marie Eugénie's biography, "...in such a community, religious and laity will find...a help that is at the same time spiritual and intellectual." This is something I've come to experience over the years, and it continues to shape and enrich my life.

From those early days, Assumption Together has grown. National Gatherings took place in Assumption San Lorenzo, Antipolo, and Iloilo, where different communities came together in profound ways. Bonds were formed, friendships blossomed, and we built relationships that went far beyond the work we did. When COVID hit, everything changed. Meeting in person became difficult, but Inez Polotan, the Provincial Lay Representative at the time, found creative ways to bring us together. She organized online "Kumustahan" sessions to check in and listen to how each community was doing. "Kumustahan" comes from the Spanish phrase "como esta," which means "How are you?" These sessions created a much-needed space for everyone to feel heard and supported, and they led to other online activities like retreats, a First Saturday Rosary, and gatherings where Assumption communities took turns leading.

Today, our Assumption Together Core Team includes Inez, who serves as the Provincial Lay Head, Bubut Neri representing us at the Marie Eugénie Institute, Gina Bautista Martin as the Philippine Reference Person, Tina Nakpil from the Assumption Alumnae Association, Mary Rose Damaso of CLAY (Community of Lay Assumption), Sr. Sheryl representing the sisters, and Chinit Rufino and I from AMA. Our weekly prayer circles have grown into a beautiful space where we not only share spiritually, but also support one another through life's ups and downs.

Assumption has been part of my life since childhood. I studied at the Assumption Socio-Educational Center (ASEC) in Barrio Obrero, where I was blessed to experience the care of the sisters firsthand. Years later, I came back as a volunteer for AMA, which eventually led me to serve in Sweden. Living with the sisters there, I discovered my lay vocation and the power of lay-religious collaboration. It was here that I recognized my gifts and saw how working alongside the sisters could enrich my own sense of mission.

One of my most recent and meaningful experiences was attending the General Chapter. This was unexpected for me because I wasn't originally chosen as the delegate to the Provincial Chapter. Candice Bismonte, the AMA President was unavailable at the last minute so I was the substitute. Being elected to the General Chapter in that provincial chapter the opportunity surprised me again. God is really the God of surprises. Representing the Asia Pacific Province as a lay delegate, and carrying the stories, hopes, and experiences of our community, felt humbling. In the General Chapter, there were 14 lay delegates, including 9 men and 5 women. We bonded quickly and were warmly welcomed by the sisters who knew and remembered so many familiar people and places. Sr. Marthe recalled Sr. Josefina and her time in San Lorenzo, while Sr. Honorata spoke about the International Educators' Congress (2018) where she felt really taken care of, and Sr. Delphine who studied at the Assumption College and observed our work with the Marie Eugenie Institute. I began to understand that I represented not just

The responsible team of Assumption Together with Lerma and the Bishop of Antique



Assumption Together regional assembly in the communities of Visayas



Farewell and thanks to Lermahumanos



myself but also the many people and experiences I carried with me.

The Chapter experience itself reflected a “culture of caring.” The schedule had a thoughtful rhythm, with time for silence, reflection, and even some humor. As Sr. Marge said, “When you are in a hurry, walk slowly.” This resonated with me. There was time for prayer, which was one of my favorite parts of each day. One memorable moment was when Sr. Veronique opened the cabinet containing St. Marie Eugénie’s garments. I was reminded of the Gospel story about touching the hem of Jesus’s garment for healing, and although I didn’t expect physical healing, something within me felt comforted.

Reflecting on the Chapter, I remember Fr. Paul’s words about the future of the congregation. He shared the concern of declining vocations but emphasized that as long as we transmit the charism, the mission will continue. This realization brought “metanoia”—a change of heart and spirit. Transmitting the charism means transforming ourselves and passing on more than words; it’s about passing on the heart of the Assumption.

When I returned from the General Chapter, I felt a profound sense of joy and gratitude. I knew that I belonged to this beautiful, international community. This joy and gratitude were felt in our recent Assumption Together gatherings in the Philippines, including the regional assembly in Iloilo last August. Communities from Barrio Obrero, Passi, and Sibalom came together to connect and recommit to our shared mission. After this assembly we traveled to Antique where we celebrated the blessing of the new convent in Sibalom, Antique. The presence of Sr. Lerma, the former Asia Pacific Provincial Superior, and the Bishop of Antique made the moment even

more special. Sr. Lerma’s upcoming assignment as a General Councilor in Paris reminds us of the deep connections and support that Assumption Together provides.

This sense of “Assumption Together” is more than just a concept; it’s a way of life. It’s where we share a meal, pray together, and create bonds that unite us. Sr. Marjo once said, “Today, it is no longer possible to speak of Assumption without speaking of Assumption Together.” This has become real for me through every Kumustahan, every prayer, and every conversation. It’s in these simple yet profound moments where I see the Assumption charism alive, and it’s in this community that I continue to experience the joy, hope, and transformation that comes from living Assumption Together.

MRS. MARIA TERESA (GAMAY) SOLIS

Lay Delegate to the Chapter of the Asia-Pacific Province

Original English

Solidarity

Solidarity and vocational training: a call for help from the C.P.A. of Bafoussam

“During critical moments in the life of our institution, we have experienced the benefits of solidarity, which has enabled us to move forward.”

The Beginnings of a Unique Educational Journey

Assumption has been present in Bafoussam, a city in western Cameroon, since 1996. We initially worked in diocesan educational programmes and parish pastoral care. We noticed that despite a demand for it, there was a lack of vocational training. Meanwhile, school failure among girls was more frequent. This resulted from a variety of factors which included: traditional perspective on women who are less considered than men, household chores which are imposed on women, early marriages that are arranged by parents, to only name a few. Such factors are detrimental to the education of girls. They often lead to school dropouts as early as at the end of primary school.

We were moved by this situation, which persists to a lesser extent today, and chose to establish a Technical Institute to provide undereducated young girls with more comprehensive education and vocational training. Modelled after our first foundation in Baham, 20 km from Bafoussam, it aimed to offer qualifications beyond the basic CAP diploma. In 2006, the Assumption Technical Institute (ITA - Institut Technique Assomption) opened its first E.F.S. (Économie sociale et familiale / Home Economics and Family Science) programme, approved by the Ministry of Secondary Education, in new school facilities built with the support of a Belgian NGO.

Our Mission make us men and women in continuous pursuit.

Starting in 2010, ITA took a new turn with the introduction of an F8 programme (Health and Social Sciences and Technology), followed two years later by an F7 programme (Biological and Medical Science and Technology), as well as a General Education high school. The admission of boys increased the student population. In 2014, the “Assomption-France” network and, on several occasions, the “Assomption Solidarité” association supported us with funding for adequate equipment for the new programmes and the high school. ITA subsequently expanded and was renamed “Collège Polyvalent Assomption” (CPA).



The current challenges in preparing the future of a growing youth

Dieudonné Kamdem, a teacher at CPA, assesses the current situation: "Youth employment is a recurring issue in public policy. Efforts are being made to improve their prospects, because they are more affected by unemployment than other groups and this phase of life is regarded as pivotal one. What do young people expect from work and employment? How do young generations envisage their professional integration? What are institutions doing to help them? We are convinced that our programmes equip young people with learning and adaptability skills that give them access to better-paying jobs. One of our main goals is to further develop vocational training. The two programmes—F8 and F7— which were previously opened, remain crucial for employment."

The F8 BAC opens the door to higher education for careers in paramedical or social fields such as nursing, medical analysis technician, social worker, specialised educator, or medical secretary. It also allows entry into faculties of biological and medical sciences, psychology, sociology, law and educational sciences.

The F7 BAC - Biolab facilitates employment in laboratories of medical, chemical and biological analysis. Graduates can work in agro-food production units, biomedical industries, or become independent producers of chemical and biomedical consumables. With further training, they can pursue careers in medical, pharmaceutical or agro-food sectors as: biomedical analysis technicians, food quality controllers, analytical chemists, biologists, dietitians, or radiotherapy technicians. F7 graduates can join faculties of biological sciences, medical sciences and pharmacy, biochemistry, physiology and agronomy. Both programmes encourage learning through practice with company visits and internships during the studies.

A Call for Solidarity

To provide quality education, we have equipped CPA with laboratories and specialised classrooms. However, maintaining the equipment represents a significant challenge. Defective electrical generators, frequent and unpredictable power outages from the city's grid, and electrical surges have damaged our IT equipment. The school's perimeter fence is too low to deter burglars, whose visits are becoming less rare.

This situation requires urgent solutions. We believe that acquiring a generator or, better yet, installing solar panels would provide regular and more affordable electricity. Additionally, raising the height of the perimeter fence could enhance security for both people and equipment. Nonetheless, the total cost of these two projects - between €15,000 and €18,000 - surpasses our financial capacity. We must rely once again on external financial support.

During critical moments in the life of our institution, we have experienced the benefits of solidarity, which has

enabled us to move forward. It is with this confidence that we hope to receive the needed support.

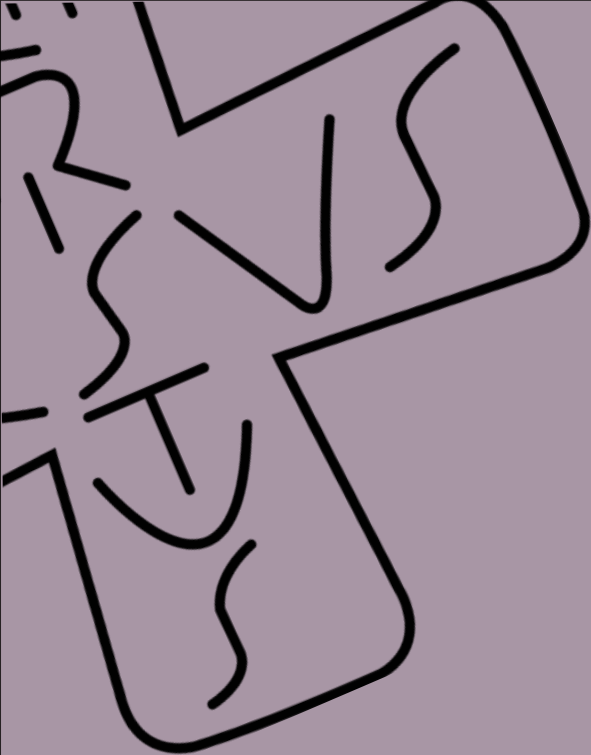
SISTER KELLY BIBIANA LONGA

Managing Director of CPA

MR. KAMDEM DIEUDONNÉ

Responsible for Assumption Together

Original French



Direct their flight, but don't clip their wings



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