

# #ASSUMPTA

Magazine of the Religious of the Assumption

August 2021 - N°5

生きがい

Ikigai - "One's reason for being"





# summary

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



## #ASSUMPTA

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*Explanation of the sentence on the cover: the concept of IKIGAI or "one's reason for being" which in the Catholic faith we may call one's VOCATION. This is what Marie Eugenie meant when she said, "each one has a mission on earth." IKIGAI is an important, "timeless" concept for the Japanese.*

# editorial

## *Timeless and Relevant Assumption Education in Japan*



*Sr. Matias Maria Josefina with school principal Naomi Tanzawa*

**A**ssumption Education in Japan today means mining the riches of an ancient culture that is rooted, at its best, in pristine beauty, dignity and honor, as well as an interiority that rests in deep silence and sacrifice.

Here at Assumption Kokusai, as we remain committed to safeguarding the timeless, cherished traditions of the culture and the fundamental elements of Assumption Transformative Education, we seek to be attentive to our current realities that challenge our mission today.

### **Cherished, timeless tradition**

Assumption came to Japan in 1952, to a nation seeking to rise from the ravages of war. And faithful to the spirit of our beginnings in the Assumption, EDUCATION was the life-giving response that we offered.

Today, almost 70 years after, through its avowed CORE VALUES of LIFE, TRUTH, FREEDOM, GOODNESS, and ONENESS, Assumption Kokusai stays committed to looking for ways to make God visible and tangible in a non-Christian milieu.

### **Relevant 21st Century Assumption Education**

Always attentive to what will prepare all learners to face constant change and a future that is most uncertain, Assumption Kokusai is convinced that now more than ever, is the time to foster a strong community spirit that recognizes each one's place and unique contribution in building a learning environment of harmony and complementarity. "Towards ONE Assumption Kokusai" is our School Thrust for this year. The pandemic eloquently teaches us, that we belong to each other and that if we are to move forward at all, it will have to be TOGETHER.

Thus, as we undertake the demanding educational reforms of the 21st century, we are mindful of the call to work together for a better tomorrow.

As sons and daughters of Marie Eugenie of Jesus and of our father Saint Augustine, always faithful to that which is timeless and enduring, we stand as voices of HOPE at the threshold of the promise of a meaningful LIFE for all.

**SISTER MATIAS MARIA JOSEFINA**

President of Asunción Kokusai  
Provincial Councillor  
of Asia-Pacific Province  
*Original English*

# general community

“... the  
certainty that  
I will continue  
to accept life  
and find it  
good, even in  
the worst of  
times.”

« I have in me an immense confidence. Not the certainty that life on the outside will turn out well for me, but the certainty that I will continue to accept life and find it good, even in the worst of times.» These words of Etty Hillesum, a young Jewish woman and Christian mystic who died in a concentration camp, resonate strongly in this global context of great change. It is difficult to speak of the pandemic in general terms, as it is affecting people here and there with different intensity. One thing is certain: if the virus remains unchecked around the world, it will continue to cross borders, mutate and have serious consequences for the global economy. How can we make the COVID-19 vaccine a global public good, available to everyone, everywhere?

Life goes on and thank you for the news we receive from your provinces. We keep in our hearts the hope that the Light will prevail over the darkness.

We had the joy of visiting two provinces in Europe: Spain and France. Both are marked by the contrary currents that are present in Europe, with nuances depending on each culture: a growing secularisation but also new expressions of faith. In both provinces we perceived a desire for greater openness to internationality and exchange and a more sustained attention to the families of young people who attend the schools.

The visit to Spain took place from 16 March to 19 April. Due to health restrictions, the first part of the visit was virtual. Again, we experienced a great openness and a spirit of faith which enabled real in-depth encounters beyond the screen. The professionalism, creativity and dynamism of the Province's communication team allowed us to feel connected not only within the country but also with the entire Congregation.

We had the blessing of going to Madrid to celebrate the Easter Triduum with our sisters in the community of Olivos and the surrounding parishes. This was a lovely interval along the way and we continued the visit in person with the communities near Madrid. Similarly, Rekha was able to visit different places: Malaga, the communities close to Madrid and the northern region of the province: Sarria, Ponferrada and León.



CPP of the Province of Spain



Sr Rekha with girls



Sister Rekha in the Community of El Olivar - Madrid



Sister Rekha in Pedralejo - Malaga





Sister Sandra and Sister Isabelle with the sisters of Issoudun



Eucharist with the children of Notre Dame des Anges (Lyon Primary School)



Sisters of the Province of France in assembly at the chapel in Lübeck

One significant meeting was a Eucharist and meeting with Cardinal Carlos Osoro, Archbishop of Madrid. He spoke about the two pillars of the Church for our time: Laudato Si and Fratelli Tutti. This dialogue with a true pastor was a source of great hope in these difficult times for our Church.

Spain is a province of great apostolic and missionary dynamism, with its own challenges. Transformative education is at the heart of the projects of the schools and the missions where the sisters are very involved in Caritas as well as in the inter-congregational project of "Bridge of Hope", a network for migrants. Everywhere the spirit of Mother Marie Eugénie was very present, with both sisters and laity deeply rooted in the charism of the Assumption. Together, they allow themselves to be propelled by the Spirit towards the frontiers in the service of Life.

A month later, from May 20 to June 20, it was the turn of the Province of France, the land where our first sisters dreamed and founded our Assumption. To prepare us for this, the communities told the story of each community from its foundation to the present day. A story full of emotion, because it is the story of our origins, a rediscovery of the land where the first Assumption was born, the place where our Mother Foundress had a profound experience of God and dreamed of transforming society. The charism continues to be embodied in society today, it is a bearer of hope for us, for our friends and associates as well as for those who benefit from the projects of the Assumption.

The mission of the Sisters is seen in a network of schools with very diverse social realities. Their concern for diversity and inclusion shows in the educational innovations and the way of accompanying each establishment in accordance with its uniqueness. The competence, generosity and availability of the

laity is a great resource for the Province. Their desire to understand Marie Eugénie, to be imbued with the charism or to "drink from the same source" is a beautiful testimony of life in the Church. We have perceived profound human values with the face of the Gospel through the depth of sharing and the joy of serving.

Another aspect of the Province is the capacity to hear new calls and to work with others to explore new ways of being present at the peripheries - the project of the Village of Francis in Lourdes - the care of our Common Home - the Campus of Transition in Forges. A team of sisters and lay people is carrying out a bold youth ministry through a redesigned website and joint initiatives with the other provinces in Europe.

A week after the visit of the Province of France, Sr Isabelle celebrated her silver jubilee, 25 years of vows following Christ in the Assumption. The celebration and the glass of friendship were beautifully prepared by the community of Auteuil. Sisters, family and friends gathered in the parish church of Notre Dame de l'Assomption. It was an opportunity to share a word of thanksgiving at the end of the celebration:

« Preparing for a jubilee is an opportunity to reflect on these 25 years following Christ in the Assumption. I would just like to share with you, in small brushstrokes, how the Lord has led me.

It has to do with the faith of the centurion mentioned in today's Gospel. I am touched by the centurion's ability to trust in the word of Christ. He asks for the healing of his sick servant from this Jesus whom he knows only by hearsay. He asks boldly, he trusts, he has confidence.

People who live this trust in Life have always been examples for me. They see beyond appearances,





even when trials and failures occur. Their heart is poor, capable of surrendering to something greater than themselves, without really knowing where it will lead them. It is a hope that is both fragile and tenacious.

Deep down I think I had, as a child, the intuition that, in every person, in every situation, God, who is always at work, never stops creating. The call does not come only once in a lifetime; it is always inside and brings us back to our deepest vocation. It takes a great deal of silence and fidelity to oneself to hear it. It is a narrow path. Letting the Lord be Himself in my life, letting Him come and letting Him do. And thus finding myself. Today, I feel more and more the call to deeply accept reality as it comes and in this reality, to discern in the presence of the Lord: what to do? what to leave? what to say, what to keep silent? True love can only be received and given. It is a free, trusting and joyful love.

St. Marie-Eugénie, the foundress of the RAs, loved her time in the image of God who "so loved the world" (Jn 3:16). As religious, we do not feel removed from the world, even though Marie-Eugénie thought that our Congregation would cease to exist the day we abandoned the values of the Gospel and accepted the values of this world. There is a call for us, religious and lay, to live the Gospel as Good News. This is what I wanted to celebrate in my jubilee year: the Joy that God takes in living among people.

The two Provinces of the Asian Continent – Asia and India - have been journeying together for the past months on the area of formation. The Provincial Councils had two formation sessions: the first was the sharing about the leadership experiences as Provincial Councils, and the second was about our work in the peripheries. The sessions were enriching and at the same time a deeper communion between the two provinces has been growing.

Another significant experience was the formation session for the sisters who made their final vows from 0 to ten years ago. This was held last June 1 – 6, 2021. What is remarkable was the way the session was prepared by the participants themselves guided by two sisters from the two provinces. The theme that

they decided was Zero-10 RAs on F.I.R.E.: F – Fount of Life; I – Identity and Incarnation; R – Reality and Religious Life Today; E – Empowerment. The session was truly successful, well-prepared for several months of reflection, sharing, and planning.

The Auteuil chapel is undergoing work from 7 June until the end of July: the canvas ceiling has been damaged. It will be replaced by metal strips and insulation to improve acoustics and thermal insulation.

Several sisters of the Auteuil community have been given new assignments. The community will be renewed in August. The news will arrive soon.

The JIPCS session « A World in Motion: Migrants-Refugees-Displaced People-Victims of Trafficking. A challenge for the Assumption today» takes place from July 5 to 10. It brings together the five branches of the Assumption Family. The communications teams keep the provinces informed so that sisters and lay people can follow the conferences.

We remain in communion with each of you, your communities and your families throughout these coming months.

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



# education

## *Sharing day with the internally displaced people in the eastern suburbs of Ouagadougou*

**“If serving is a divine act, it must be done with the blessing of the Father. ”.**

**S**ainte Marie Eugenie Private College is located in sector 43 of district 10 of the city of Ouagadougou. Facing the calls of the world, each one of us is called to commit oneself. This has also been the case for the sisters of the Assumption who, for this 2020-2021 school year, remained faithful to their mission of education and transmission of values, in accordance with the orientations and objectives of the institution's educational project.

It is within the framework of the implementation of its orientation 2 entitled, “to be a transmitter of values in the education of our young people”, that in December during the time of Advent, a collection of donations was initiated by the team in charge of pastoral care. In practice, the aim was to raise awareness among the students about the current situation of the displaced and the importance of solidarity. A value that is very dear to the school. Once the information was communicated, the students organised themselves by bringing goods in kind to offer to the internally displaced people in the eastern suburbs of the city of Ouagadougou. On Monday the 21st of December 2020, a delegation was then organised. It was made up of sisters, five members of the students' office, the head of the educational stage, a representative of the teaching staff and many other people who wanted to live this experience of giving, fraternity and sharing with the displaced families.

This action was intended for pupils as a symbolic act of passing on values such as sharing, humility and solidarity. It was also meant to be a moment of personal introspection on our relationship with God and our neighbour.

The students were very touched by the simplicity and gratitude of the families of the displaced. They are ready to get involved in another collection and give joy.

If serving is a divine act, it must be done with the blessing of the Father. So, may God give us the grace and wisdom to continue on steering the boat of education with oars and wings, and with our eyes fixed on Christ, who is, all at once, vessel, goal and compass (Wings and Oars, R. Assomption, 2016).

**Mr. GNOUTOU SEBAGA PHAREL**

History and Geography Teacher and Pastoral Assistant  
Province of West Africa  
*Original French*



Marie Eugenie students interview displaced persons



## Vocation ministry in the Central African Region

**“We have decided to no longer wait for young people in our communities, but to reach out and meet them in their own environment ”**

**Y**outh and vocation ministry in our region is everyone's business!

We have created the Youth and Vocation Ministry Commission, appointing two sisters to be in charge. Moreover, each sister in the region has been invited and made aware of her responsibility towards the vocation ministry and its promotion. We have decided to no longer wait for young people in our communities, but to reach out and meet them in their own environment (schools, parishes, dioceses, universities, etc.).

In our schools, our presence is active. The sisters who teach seize the opportunity of the classes, especially religion (catechesis), to speak about vocation. There are ways of stimulating this pastoral work, through the celebrations of the Congregation and by listening to and welcoming young people. Break times, at 10 am or at midday, give us the opportunity to answer the questions and concerns of the young people about their lives

and their vocation. The key question is always: “Sister, why did you become a nun?”

At the parish, we are present in the various youth groups and movements. We lead monthly recollections and evening meetings during the week of prayer for vocations. We also participate in activities organised at our dioceses (conferences, youth days, etc.). During these days, each congregation presents its religious family. We also take this opportunity to distribute our brochure to our diocesan priest and consecrated friends, as well as to seminarians and young people who wish to receive it. Our aspirants constitute an effective support for this pastoral work.

In Cameroon, we always participate to the diocesan vocations camp, whether in Yaoundé or Bafoussam, or even in dioceses where we are not present. We also talk about the Congregation in the different parishes, either by invitation or by our own initiative.



*The regional, the two young sisters, the aspirants and postulants*





Vocational pastoral care at Mpiko High School - Kinshasa

Social networks like Facebook are excellent means for this pastoral work. The sisters as well as the aspirants and postulants are involved. We have welcomed aspirants through this medium. The videos sent by the RA JC.vivit secretariat and posted on our page raise many questions from the young people, who contact us to get to know us better.

The communities organise a recollection one Sunday per month and welcome aspirants who wish to join in. We also invite them to our retreats in preparation for Christmas and Easter. In addition, our doors are always open to those who want to get to know us. Each community takes time to share and reflect on the way in which youth and vocation ministry is taking place.

We also do pastoral work with families when a young person expresses the desire to join us. We take the time to explain to the parents or the family the meaning of religious life, its demands and particularly our life as sisters of the Assumption.

#### Sharing the experiences of some aspirants

My name is Renate, I am a 21 year old third year student at the Higher Institute of Pedagogical Sciences in Kinshasa. I got to know the sisters of the Assumption through two sisters who were studying with me and was then invited to the recollections. At the moment, I am doing my professional training at the Mpiko high school (School of the sisters of the Assumption). I spend three days a week with them, participating in their prayer and community life as well as in the manual work of the community. I am happy with this experience. I ask God to help me so that one day I will be one of them.

My name is Micheline, I am 22 years old and I come from North Kivu. I have a Bac in Nutrition. I met the sisters of the Assumption through an Assumptionist

brother. The sisters were ready to welcome me but my parents didn't really support my choice. To discourage me, my father forced me to work for a year to help them. So I worked for a year as a salesgirl, applied again and was accepted. In Kinshasa I joined the group of trainees. I am very happy with the life of prayer (adoration) and my apostolate at the school and parish. I am also happy to serve Christ in this congregation.

My name is Myriam. I am from a Christian family and come from the diocese of Idiofa. My cousin put me in touch with a sister of the Assumption. After a period of accompaniment, I am happy to share my life with the sisters and aspirants as well as to work at the school, in contact with the girls.

This is our way of working towards youth and vocation ministry. May Mary, our mother of the great Yes, help us in our daily journey to follow her Son.

#### **SISTERS BIBIANE MARIE AND CLÉMENTINE MYRIAM**

Kinshasa. Central African Region

*Original in French*



# spirituality

## *Together, on the same path.*

**“There are  
two of them  
and suddenly  
a mysterious  
pilgrim joins  
them”**

### **A view of the road to Emmaus, a figure of synodality**

*There were two of them at the start of the journey. A couple, perhaps? ... Cleophas was one of them. His wife, Mary, had been at the foot of the Cross, accompanying her Master to what she thought was the end: the end of her Lord's life and the end of her own hopes...*

*There are two of them and suddenly a mysterious pilgrim joins them. Together, they make their way and talk, opening their hearts to each other. Little by little, a glow appears in them, a warmth in their hearts... And, finally, the moment they recognise the Master in the figure of the pilgrim, they are transformed: from people - like so many others - passionate about the words of the Master, they become proclaimers of the Good News, true missionary disciples: the very first experience of synodality in the nascent Church...*

The word "synodality" is often used in the homilies and texts of Pope Francis.

Based on this text of the pilgrims of Emmaus, we will try to reflect on this reality.

Synodality... but what does this word mean? We know its Greek roots "syn" together and "odos" path: together on the path... but what does it mean? Let's try to find out...

In fact, to speak of synodality is not to speak of a work method. Nor is it to talk about the synods which, following the Second Vatican Council, have marked the history of our Church.

To speak of synodality is to speak of a spiritual process, which, according to the time, is more or less intense, but which belongs to the very being of the Church. This is why we can speak of it from the scene of the pilgrims to Emmaus.

Let us take this account: Lc 24:13-35. Let us try to visualise the scene... Here they are, both leaving, returning home... Their steps are heavy, their hearts too... They are afraid, sad and distressed... They know what happened in Jerusalem, but they have not understood anything... They had followed the Master, they had heard his words which had made them very enthusiastic... They rejoiced when the Master spoke to them of the Father, the Father who infinitely loves all his







sons and daughters and never abandons them... They put their hopes in their Master for a world in which the Kingdom of God could finally be seen in peace, brotherhood, justice... And yet, the "system" rose against the Master, whose word it did not want to hear... And the Master had been taken, judged, condemned, put on a cross... Was it all a dream? They no longer knew what to do... Where to put their hopes... Completely lost, they decided to return home to resume their former life...

The synodal process entails steps. It requires that a group either wishes to come to a common decision, or to take a path together. It is important that these people trust one another so that everyone can speak freely. This is why Pope Francis invites the participants to a synod to speak with "parrhesia", i.e. freely and with courage. There must also be respect for one another, so that everyone's thoughts are received equally, convinced that we can all learn from one another.

Everyone must speak and simply share their thoughts, their intuitions, their vision.

We listen to each other in depth. We reflect on what we have heard. We give ourselves time to review our own thoughts, intuitions or points of view in light of what has been shared. We try to be flexible and humble, so that we can acknowledge what we have received from others that is sometimes more appropriate and right, and then we can change our mind, let ourselves be transformed by the other. We feel ready to change and to join a consensus.

Letting oneself flow into a spiritual movement is a matter of inner work. Synodality is rooted in faith; believing that God accompanies us along the way and helps us understand reality.

We must believe that the Word of God, spoken and written many centuries ago, still speaks to us today, because it is a Living Word that sheds light on current

situations, the reality in which we live. It helps us see the path on which God wants us to set out.

This Word obviously comes to us from the Scriptures, but it also comes to us through the words and lives of our brothers and sisters who are inhabited by the Holy Spirit and by reality.

For this to happen, we need a climate of openness, of sincere quest for God's will and acceptance of what will come of it.

In fact, community discernment is very similar, it obeys these same conditions.

The community is simply smaller than a synodal assembly. We live this same experience when we make our community project or when we have to discern before a new apostolic request.

Pope Francis wishes with all his heart that our Church becomes ever more synodal. The theme of the next Synod of Bishops will actually be synodality.

The process of synodality is moving forward... In our time, a Church "on the move" that takes on new paths, seeking God's will in prayer and sharing what the Spirit says to each individual, is the continuation of the pilgrimage of the disciples of Emmaus.

Let us live this, and just like the Apostles and the Elders, we will be able to say, in agreement with the entire Church, to the "brothers of the Gentiles": "the Holy Spirit and ourselves have decided ..... "(cf. Acts 22-29).

**SISTER REGINA MARIA CAVALCANTI**

Community of Itapuranga, Brazil  
South Atlantic Province  
*Original in French*



# Historical summary of the commitment with migrants – displaced – refugees in the Congregation of the Religious of the Assumption

**“...the Sisters who do not go on mission can also participate, in their humble daily life, in this missionary momentum”.**

## STAGE 1: 1839-1898 – FOUNDATION YEARS

Spirit of openness and the spiritual experience of Marie Eugenie

During these years, migration was not a reality talked about in the Congregation. However, from the outset, one feels the call to serve the poor and to extend the Kingdom of Christ by going to faraway missions or by praying for missionaries. Marie Eugenie often insisted on the fact that the Sisters who do not go on mission can also participate, in their humble daily life, in this missionary momentum. We can mention some interesting aspects that could be the “basis” for the reflection on a commitment with migrants today.

- 1) Movement towards the “poor”, desire to serve the poor (1)
- 2) Movement towards faraway missions: call of the Kingdom (2)
- 3) From the very first years, the presence of students coming from other countries
- 4) Some “attitudes” or expressions of Marie Eugenie

Marie Eugenie herself went through the experience of being born “at the frontiers”, in Lorraine, on an adjacent land. Her family has its origins in several neighboring countries and she speaks several languages. This produces much openness in her which is manifested in concrete attitudes towards life. Among these we can point out the following:

- A “special” attention to vocations coming from elsewhere (30 % of entries from 1839 to 1864)

- The experience of administrative procedures to integrate Sisters from other countries

- The importance of languages, a medium of mutual understanding: Marie Eugenie learned several languages, including English and German. For her, language is a medium for understanding others (3). Among many examples is this advice to a Sister: “If it pleases you to talk to me about your conscience in your language, write me in a nice penmanship so that I may read it easily” (4).

- The benevolent appreciation of the difference linked to cultures: Marie Eugenie often starts from her own experience to talk about the delicacy and the benevolence we should have towards people of another nationality. Cultural differences are an opportunity for her to learn to love...She loves to see, beyond differences, what can unite hearts. This is what she said in a Chapter of 1886: “...there are no foreigners among us: all are daughters of the Congregation and are for us, Religious, our Sisters and our Mothers, before being British or Spanish.” (5)

5) The Holy Family, Saint Joseph and the Virgin Mary, models of the interior life in times of migration

Marie Eugenie often returns to what the Holy Family experienced in Bethlehem, welcomed in manger in a place of passage, and during their flight to Egypt. We could develop in this way the reflection on the spiritual life that it enhances. The figure of Joseph is a model of the interior life and of obedience in times of migration: “... obliged to flee to a country which was not his own, in the midst of a people who did not speak his language, in every place, he carried the spirit of the interior life.” (6) For Marie Eugenie, the interior life helps live in obedience in a totally unknown universe, where everything escapes our control (7) in value. The figure of Mary underscores the silent consent: she carries Jesus Christ within her in all circumstances, in moving about, on difficult journeys: “Mary carries Jesus during the Visitation. She crosses the mountains of Judea with a lot of difficulty because of her state, despite her youth, the dangers, the difficulties of travel at that time. Later she goes even further. She crosses

(1) Cf. Sr. Véronique Thiébaud, RA, article “Go to the peripheries – Set out with Marie Eugenie”

(2) Idem

(3) María Eugenia, Carta a la Madre Thérèse Emmanuel, Carta nº 303, 26 de septiembre de 1850

(4) Marie Eugenie, Letter, nº4444, October 30, 1848

(5) Marie Eugenie, Chapter of August 29, 1886

(6) Marie Eugenie, Chapter of March 2, 1879

(7) Marie Eugenie, Chapter, July 10, 1881



the desert (...) She suffered in the desert, but with Jesus she went anywhere." (8) In Jesus, Marie Eugenie sees docility, submission to human conditions, abandonment to the will of the Father. And with that, the importance of renunciation and of detachment. The patience and gentleness of Christ in difficulty are all the more admirable since He is of divine condition: "The trips were very difficult (...) But in these sufferings, what divine peace! How good it would be to have this always before our eyes! Through His patience, His gentleness, He inspired in His disciples all the perfect feelings, but with what difficulty!" (9)

## STAGE 2: 1898 – 1953 – YEARS MARKED BY CONFLICTS

Experience displacement and take care of the displaced

In the 1st part of the 20th century, because of the multiple conflicts (Latin America, Philippines and Japan, Europe, etc.) and also the moment of expulsions in France (beginning of the 20th century), the Sisters themselves became "migrants", moving from one country to another, from one city to another, to be more secure and safe. We have the basic documents to study their experience during those years. It would be very interesting to explore this topic further. In several places, they took care of the foreigners who were wounded especially the combatants. This was the case in Auteuil, in the Val or elsewhere...In 1919, there were also Sisters who went to the USA, Philadelphia, land of migrants...In 1938, in Argentina, a country marked also by migration in the 19th century.

At the beginning of the 1950s, after the great European conflicts, we developed what we would call "social works". That too could be a very interesting study. Many experiences could be delved into, for example, Rome-Quadraro for those displaced after the war of the 1950s, experiences of the return of the Sisters in the Philippines, etc.

## STAGE 3: 1953-1976 – GREAT MISSIONARY EXPANSION

Impact on the style of life, the way of defining our presence in the world

(8) Marie Eugenie, Chapter,  
March 14, 1875

(9) Marie Eugenie, Chapter,  
March 14, 1875

(10) Mother Marie Denyse,  
Letter to the Congregation,  
December 12, 1963

After 1953, came the great missionary expansion of the Congregation especially in Africa. Basic questions arise: "Is our life truly incarnated there where the Lord has sent us? Are we truly one among these children, white, black or yellow, rich or poor, of the area where we are missioned?" (10) Internationality is from now on experienced in communion with the people to whom we are sent. This proximity will transform the communities, change their habits and lifestyle, challenge their poverty. The "convent" is transformed into a home that welcomes the local population. It will influence the





way of understanding religious life. In the 1959 General Chapter, a chapter on the "missions" is integrated into the Constitutions. The 1965 General Chapter, marked by Vatican II, develops a reflection on the mission *Ad Gentes* of consecrated persons who should not be "strangers to people or become useless in the earthly city" (11). Small insertions arise in Europe, linked to "social works". Action and prayer join together in a movement of great communion. The 1970 General Chapter takes this movement up again and intensifies it. The small insertions are the occasion for a new mode of presence in the world.

#### STAGE 4: 1976 – 2000 – A GREAT MOVEMENT OF INCARNATION

Developments in society, new Incarnational experiences and displacement of the apostolic areas

In the 1976 General Chapter, we join this movement by linking it to an INCARNATION movement. The Sisters are immersed in the contemporary world: "The Assumption is in the world, she is in the Church. She experiences the shocks, the impacts. Our Communities, our Provinces are sounding boards where we more or less strongly experience the events, the interrogations, the crises of those around us (...) everywhere it is a movement of incarnation towards the poorest, a desire to approach people, to be simpler, more detached, more fraternal..." (12)

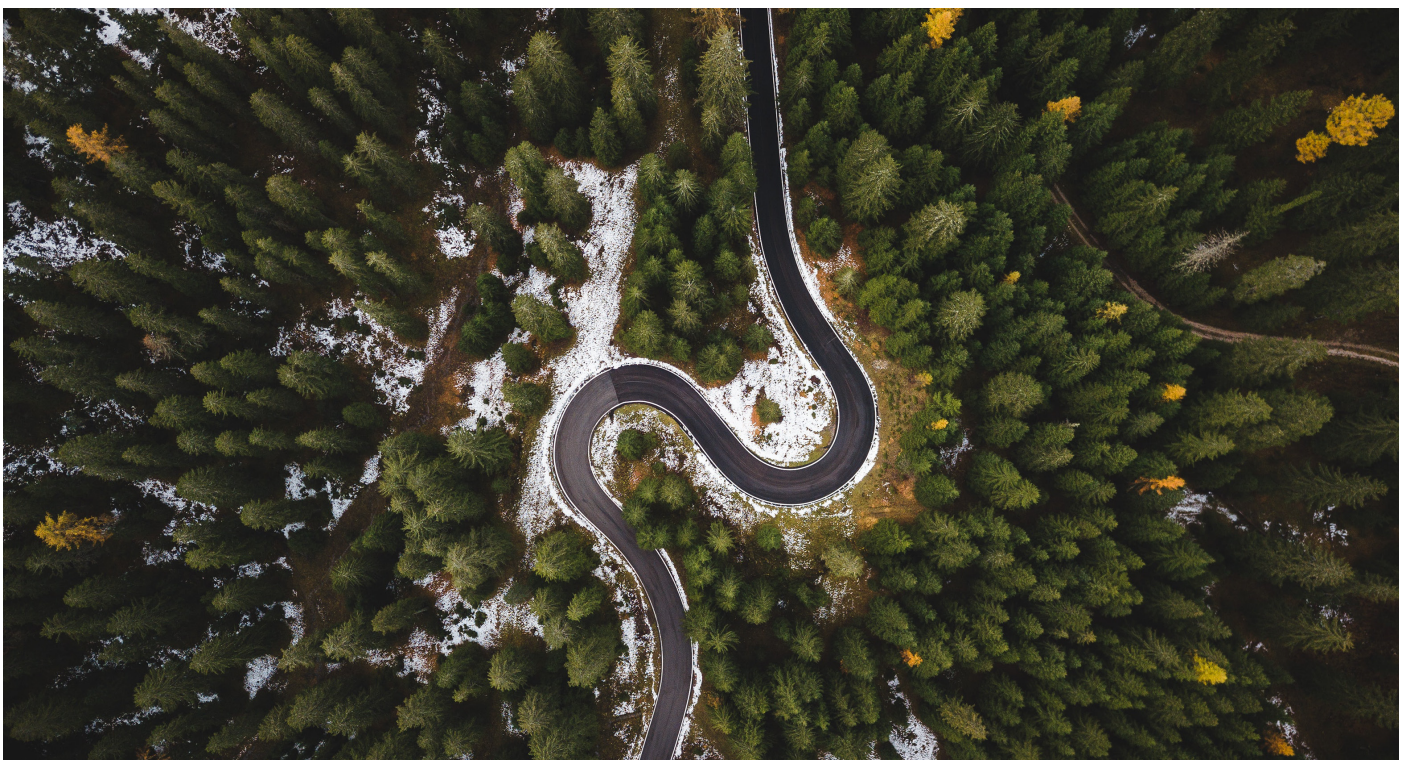
Among the new milieu affected is that of migrants, mentioned in many Provincial Reports in the 1976 Chapter: Belgium-Denmark, Argentina (a people defining itself as being marked by massive migration around the mid-19th century), France (new insertions in neighborhoods which bring migrants together), Ivory Coast... The most glaring report is undoubtedly that of England-Scotland: "In recent years a very large number of immigrants have entered England and we now have to live in a multiracial society. The immigrant population residing in London is said to be larger than that of Londoners themselves. The Church has recognized this situation and is working in her pastoral ministry to respond to the needs of these people (...) For the future... We are asking for smaller communities and an apostolic commitment to the poor and to immigrants (...) We are asking for establishments near immigrants. We are researching but find that we do not yet have the personnel for this kind of work." The mention of migrants does not appear in the final texts of the General Chapter, but the movement towards the poor, in a dynamic of Incarnation and transformation of society, is very clear there. The texts evoke the uprooting of populations." (13) In 1982, Mother Hélène-Marie's report mentions immigrants among the list of "poor" that the Congregation meets with. (14)

(11) cf. Text of the 1976 General Chapter

(12) Mother Helene Marie, Report to the 1976 General Chapter

(13) cf. Texts of the 1975 General Chapter

(14) Mother Helene Marie, Report to the 1982 General Chapter







(15) Cf. Sister Clare Teresa,  
Report to the 1994 General  
Chapter

(16) 2000 General Chapter,  
Message of the Delegates to  
the Congregation

From 1988 to 1994, is a time of refoundation with insistence on inculturation. The 1994 General Chapter is entitled: "Presence of the Assumption to God and to the Contemporary World". It is marked by the recent events in Rwanda which led the Rwandan Sisters to be sent to the different Provinces. Internationality and inculturation appear as two complementary notions which refer to the experience of Marie Eugénie herself: "We believe that by the merciful plan of God, all the riches of humanity and of the various cultures should be in the Church in its marvelous wholeness (...) we have understood that inculturation is the path of Incarnation, that the whole mystery of Christ is to be revealed through the quantity of cultures, each being unique." (15) The General Chapter wrote a document on the transformation of society and the poor. At the same time, the wars and conflicts that affected several Provinces like in Guatemala and El Salvador, have led several Sisters to support actions that accompany the victims: internally displaced persons, refugees...

## STAGE 5: 2000-2018

### GENERALISATION OF THE PHENOMENON OF MIGRATIONS

Development of the JPIC movement, later becoming JPICS

In 2000, the reflection on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation is very present. Two documents from the General Chapter bear witness to this: "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation", "Solidarity: Towards a Christian Practice of Globalization". The Chapter experiences a call to communion that the delegates share with the whole Congregation, evoking the uprooting of certain peoples: "Consecrated to God for the World: In this Jubilee Chapter, we have heard an urgent call to be converted so as to live COMMUNION. The contemplation of God at work in the world, unceasingly creating and recreating, engaged in the depth of history, touched by the struggles, the joys and the sufferings of His children, gives us the opportunity to enter the mystery of His compassion and His plan of universal salvation." And after having shared the experience of the Chapter: "All this has united us and made us taste the joy of communion in diversity." (16) (Message of the 2000 Chapter delegates to the Congregation) Communities like that of Chaparral in the US, among migrants coming from Latin America, are founded.

In the 2006 General Chapter, the reflection continues with a document on JPICS which specifies that in the coming years, we want to focus more on women, migrants and AIDS victims.

It is in 2012 that another turning point occurs because the reflection on ecology is link to that of migrations, which has spread across the planet. The introduction of the document ECOLOGY AND MIGRATION marks a passage: "Today ecology and





(17) Towards an Eco-Assumption, article of Amparo Marroquín

(18) Towards an Eco-Assumption, article of Diana Wauters

(19) General Chapter document 2018

migration impact every person and every place on our earth. As such, they are two of the most urgent issues that we have to face. We know now that the very survival of our planet is at risk if we remain indifferent to this critical situation. While migration is an age-old phenomenon, its global nature today gives it particular prominence. If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation." The orientations call for formation, awareness (critical eye and advocacy), action. Concrete actions are proposed to manifest "communion": celebration of Earth Day, Refugee Day, Creation Month and Migrants Day.

As a consequence "Towards an Eco-Assumption" is published wherein the topic on migration is taken up once more in two articles in line with the ecology: "Migration and Ecology. Looking at the complexities"(17) and "Ecology and Migration: the commitment of the Community of Chaparral"(18).

In 2015, the PGC (CGP) is struck by the question of migration, especially in Latin America where it is taking place, and in Europe. The Provincials share their experiences with the Congregation.

In 2018, the reality of migration is clearly present in Sr. Martine Tapsoba's report for the General Chapter: "Migration continues despite the many lives lost at sea (more than 900 from January to May 2018). Walls continue to rise, and migration laws are becoming more and more restrictive on all sides. At the same time, we note the efforts of so many people who monitor the Libyan coast to help migrants. (...)... at least 8 communities in 7 Provinces have the work with migrants among its apostolic projects." The Chapter document also takes up the theme: "As the documents of the 2012 General Chapter strongly express, migration and ecology remain priorities for our Congregation" ... "The displacement of peoples due to various causes – wars, poverty, environmental disasters – does not fail to affect us deeply. Aware that "initial causes of displacement are often replaced by other vulnerabilities such as security problems, threats, exploitation and conflict", we ask ourselves how to be more in solidarity with our brothers and sisters and experience with all a dialogue that is constructive." (19)

### **SISTER VÉRONIQUE THIÉBAUT**

Archivist of the Congregation,  
*Original French*



# echo from the archives

**“...Covid invited us to enlarge the walls of our Mother House.”**

In her Chapter of August 13, 1891, Marie Eugenie said: “It is always a great joy to be together during the holidays and it is the consolation that we feel at this moment when many Sisters who were working for God and fulfilling their mission far away have momentarily joined us. But this reunion must be more than a joy for us. Undoubtedly, joy is a good thing and God always gives it generously to all His creatures (...) Sisters, I would like this joy of coming together to be not only a joy for us, but also an opportunity to renew, to immerse ourselves once more. To immerse ourselves once more in what? Well, I believe that it must above all be in the Spirit of our Institute, in the Spirit of the Assumption.”

There were no sessions at Auteuil, no cries of joy when we saw each other, no laughter resonating in the corridors of the house ... but Covid invited us to enlarge the walls of our Mother House. Isaiah's voice rang out: “Enlarge the space of your tent, spread out your tent cloths unsparingly; lengthen your ropes, and make firm your pegs! “(Isaiah 54:2)

With everyone's creativity and hard work, a curtain of the tent was lifted, and we carried it further than our hearts had imagined. Thus, the Archives Team received a hundredfold of this joy of which Marie Eugenie speaks. In February, the “Aux Sources” days brought together several hundred people who came to “re-immers themselves” in the Spirit of the Assumption, who came to drink from the common source. Aside from the Sisters, lay people came to enrich the communion among us. This experience made us realize even more that the sources are valuable only if they are shared and that it is up to each one of us to propose this sharing, there where we are, with audacity and humility.

There have been no sessions at Auteuil... but how many meetings, thanks to our new companion - zoom..., with the teachers from Guayaquil (Ecuador), the teams from Antipolo, San Simon and Malibay (Philippines), the older Sisters of Europe, teachers from Vilnius (Lithuania), the group Assumption Together of Italy or all the schools in Spain “gathered” on March 10 for a “live” visit to Auteuil, as well as many others. Each time, we have been touched by the depth of the experiences, by the revealing effect of the sharing, by the thirst to meet together.



Storage of files

In March, the Mistresses of Formation joined the group. After the questionnaire sent widely to a group of 100 people, Sisters and lay people, we took several decisions in dialogue with Sr. Rekha and her Council. One of them was to journey, as an Archives Team, with the Mistresses of Initial Formation (aspirants, postulants and novices) in order to be formed together and to create tools that will allow us to deepen the sources and the history during these stages of formation. A first meeting took place which made it possible to formulate the themes on which it would be good to work on. We hope to achieve concrete results as soon as possible that we can share with you.

In addition to the regular meetings with the Archivists of each Province, the number of collaborators has also grown. After the zoom visits to the Congregation's web page, many volunteers (around thirty Sisters and lay friends) showed up to download texts, reread them and share them when more and more were put online. And even if this task still seems pharaonic, a small 'army of ants', our modern day "copyists", have replaced the monastic stylus with the computer and are giving of their time to help us. The group can still be expanded, especially with English speaking volunteers.

Under our tent open to all, the Archives of our Augustinian Sisters have also taken their place. The Archives of the rue des Plantes have become an annex of the General Archives and the discoveries made in Arras have enriched them. More than 1000 years of history are thus entrusted to us, with all the heritage of the development of hospital care given in France by the Congregation. We are only just beginning to explore this depth, but it is already nourishing us a lot.

Marie Eugenie was right in saying that when the walls of Auteuil are enlarged, whatever form it takes, a great joy of communion flows freely!

For any project or request: [archives@assumpta.org](mailto:archives@assumpta.org)

### SISTER VÉRONIQUE THIÉBAUT

Archivist of the Congregation,  
Original French

The 17th century bell (Archives of the Augustinian Sisters of Arras) was given to Sr. Rekha by the sisters of the community of Arras



An old document from the Arras archives



# finance

## 50 years of union with Assumption

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**“This is  
how the  
affection and  
admiration for  
Assumption  
and its work  
first started.”**

*Q. How did you get to know Assumption and how did your collaboration with it begin?*

R. I was working in the legal department of a bank, and I was selected to do an inventory of the heritage of the province of Spain. I think that the congregation wanted reassurance in carrying out work for which the new bursar had courageously recognized her own technical shortcomings. Collaborating with and hiring lay people to work for Assumption, especially in the schools, was already common, but not so much at the level of the Provincial Bursar's Office. I believe that, apart from the occasional support of the sisters' parents, it was the first time for a lay person to collaborate "side by side" with a Provincial Bursar. I was barely 20 years old and, for the older sisters, it must have been an exceptional event. I remember that one of the older sisters warned the bursar "... I don't know how it doesn't scare you to work with this man..."

Once the work was done, the bursar thought I could help her overcome her doubts and to do things differently, so she asked me to come once a week for a few hours. This is how the affection and admiration for Assumption and its work first started. It was wonderful for me to go every week and hear about the experiences of the sisters during the Second World War in the Philippines. It feels like it was only yesterday that Sister Inmaculada Altoraguirre was telling us about how she was no longer able to sign in front of anyone because, during the war, the Japanese made her sign a document under the threat of a bayonet! Well... we also worked, there was time for everything.

*Q. From part-time collaboration, you then went to full-time total integration. How did that work out?*

R. There was a series of events: the Provincial Bursar (Ana María Tolosa) was replaced by the sister who was helping her (Carmen Yrizar); the transition was very swift - too swift for Carmen. It also coincided with the fact that the General Council was visiting Spain. The Superior General was Clare Teresa and the General



Counsellor was Cristina Gonzalez. They both wanted to see me, and they came to my house for dinner. It was 1985 and I had four children. They suggested that I leave my employment at the Bank to work full-time for Assumption.

Evidently, the choice wasn't easy. It was a challenge and a great responsibility to technically lead a very ambitious project while seeking individual training, especially given that I was the one who had to train the others. On the other hand, I was seduced by the possibility to work for an institution with different objectives from the ones of businesses. They were not looking for material benefit. Their charisme reflected a quest for goodness, and I could constitute an additional element towards that achievement.

I didn't over think it, Assumption won me over.

*Q. And... the time came. From where did you have to start?*

R. We thought we had to start by gathering technically sound information. We had to become aware of the fact that, more often than not, the accounting information system would be very "home-grown". We therefore had to clean it up in order for the analysis to be valid. Let's remember that the information is produced at the community level, at the level of each project and at the level of the province.

We began by examining, one by one, all the balance sheets. This led us to analyse each element contained in them and to trace them. The work was colossal and it seemed to be endless.

I could not understand the work without understanding the institution, so I asked for all of Mother Marie Eugenie's publications and letters. Reading them helped me understand her purpose, mission, as well as the way in which the mission functions.

My own training enabled me to understand that I needed to become familiar with the legal framework of the action: the Rule of Life. We put a lot of effort into making sure that all of our actions were covered by the Rule, and we applied the full plan of authorizations and budgets at all levels.

When we had reliable balance sheets, we were able to establish with certainty the genuine economic situation of the province of Spain. It wasn't reassuring at all. The losses in the Works were such that they could jeopardize the survival of the province. We therefore began to work hard to balance the financial situation.

Through joint meetings with the bursars and the administrators of the Works, we were able to make them understand the importance of their action and obtained their commitment. We introduced management strategies and systems, such as budgetary accounting, zero-based budgets, and above all personal commitment and a sense of group belonging.

The deficit had had an impact on the conservation of the buildings, which did not receive the corresponding

preventive maintenance, and that required specific planning.

The next objective was to provide training in the field of economics and accounting. This was undertaken at all levels, starting with the administrators and Works Bursars and continuing with the Community Bursars. The sisters finished with a full training which was then transmitted to the communities, especially when budget preparations were under way, and that became a commitment to community life.

*Q. A lot of changes in a short period of time... how were they accepted at the different levels?*

R. It is true that all of this has constituted a minor revolution. Those who best accepted the changes were the communities. We cannot say that there was any resistance in the Works, but we did have to convince them that this was the best way to move forward. Even though today we can undoubtedly boast about the progress achieved, merit goes to the Provincial Council for the constant support and encouragement we were given.

*Q. I believe that your work has had an impact in other congregations and in educational institutions.*

R. Indeed, the whole technification process that we had undertaken became known, and we were asked to organise meetings so that we could all move forward together. We were asked to join certain work groups, to be part of the group teaching the Master's degree in educational centers .... In short, it was a very intense but rewarding time.

*Q. Were there any relationships with other provinces of the Assumption and with the General Headquarters?*

R. In addition to attending the annual meetings at the General Headquarters, teams, such as the International Finance Team, were formed. I had the honor of participating in several General Chapters and PPCs (Provincial Plenary Council), presenting different topics. A working group of several provinces - Central America, Mexico and Ecuador - spontaneously emerged. They mainly focused on the theme of economic accounting, which led us to meet in these provinces. I believe that the results were very fruitful.

All these meetings have enabled me to gain a more thorough understanding of the reality of Assumption, of its works and of the sisters who have, personally, brought me a great deal.

*Q. We have spoken of a long process of evolution with an important technical component, but always in relation to people; have there been any difficult moments of resistance or discouragement in the process?*

R. Denying the existence of tensions or disagreements would be out of touch with reality. But they were rare and always in a constructive spirit. I think that most of the time it was a matter of different "speeds", but when everyone agrees that what is important is



Assumption, everything else becomes secondary.

*Q. Over the years, I imagine there were all sorts of anecdotes and funny moments, do you remember any in particular?*

R. There were certainly some funny moments, mainly because it was a happy and jovial work environment. I particularly remember taking part in a training meeting for the Works Bursars, with about 30 people. In another group, some sisters were having a conversation and one of them pointed to our group and asked, "Who is that sister who is dressed as a lay person?"

And another one answered, "It's Carlos."

*Q. Finally, how would you summarise your experience?*

R. It is not easy to summarise more than 50 years into a few lines... yet, as I contradict myself, it is actually easy: a whole life.

I believe that this experience has been and remains, to this day, a sincere relationship between the two parties. I gave myself wholeheartedly to Assumption throughout all those years, and I felt reciprocity. I have grown as a person, and as a professional, and have had the opportunity to get to know Mother Marie Eugenie through the sisters and their writings. In addition - and this is very important - I felt the affection of the older sisters who accompanied me throughout these years. I do not want to mention any of them to avoid forgetting any. Those who have passed away know it from heaven, and those with whom I had a special bond and with whom we have the chance to see each other, we remember them every day. From a technical aspect, I would have liked to have developed the province more than I did, but that's okay. I'm sure others can do it as well and better.

My penultimate service is to facilitate the transition, to make sure everything runs smoothly, without hitches, and to continue to provide training upon request.

For the last service... I will always be ready.

**CARLOS ARENSE**

Provincial Economat Team

Province of Spain

*Original Spanish*



# news from the web

## *Giving-Out “onigiri” (rice balls) to the Homeless for over 30 years ...*

**S**r. Maria Corales, an 84 year old, catholic nun, who lives in Nishinari Osaka has been engaged in doing the “night patrol” for more than 30 years distributing “rice balls” and blankets to the homeless people on the street at night. Due to the serious spread of Corona virus, several volunteer groups suspended their activities. However, Sr. Maria continued her Tuesday and Thursday “patrol” as she says “I want to protect the life of others like everyone else without exception”.

At 9'O'clock in the evening of October 11th, a station wagon stops near the house of the Assumption Sisters in Nishinari where Sr. Maria's community lives.

The driver is Mr. Morishita (51), the manager of a Catholic Social Welfare Corporation called Gyokukoukai. Together they departed with Sr. Maria and his handmade “Onigiri”(rice balls).

The first place they went to was an Electric Town in Nihonbashi , South of Osaka City. Sr. Maria called out to a man who was lying down in front of the store with shutters down, wrapped in a sleeping bag up to his head, “Are you OK? Do you care for Onigiri?” Sr. Maria puts one wrapped Onigiri on his gently stretched palm. He responded with a thin voice, “Arigatou” (Thank you).

They went around the other areas such as the underpass of a highway and Tenouji Park. Then they arrived at Airin General Center (that is closed at present) in Kamagasaki, Nishinari. A pile of oversized garbage and unused items are there and yet many homeless people are sleeping there. Sr. Maria kneels beside each person and says “Have an Onigiri”. Many faces are familiar to her, having been doing this for many years. Some people approach and greet her as if they were waiting for her coming. This night Sr. Maria with other staff members distributed 69 “onigiri” (rice balls).

Many homeless people are elderly people who lost their jobs as day laborers, doing civil engineering work.

Sr. Maria came to Japan from Spain at the age of 22 as a missionary. She moved to Nishinari in 1989. “There are much less homeless people now,” she says. Two old men died one after the other lately in Kamagasaki. Sr. Maria stood at the place where they used to be and made the “sign of the cross”.

Mina Yoshimura a 20 year old college student of Kinki University started joining the “night patrol” six

months ago. She happened to know a homeless person near her home. One day she noticed him in trouble. The public bench he was using for a bed was removed. She had no words for him. “What can I do for him?.....” Wanting to do something, she started to volunteer in a support group for the needy as well as in the “night patrol”. “Now not only those living nearby but even distant places became closer to me.” she says.

Last April 25th the third “state of emergency” was declared in the Osaka Prefecture. Since then, in Kamagasaki, some groups stopped their “soup kitchen” which is the lifeline for the homeless people here. Yet Sr. Maria continues what she does wholeheartedly because she wants to “protect their lives”. “No lack of supplies of masks and blankets for the homeless,” she says.

Sr. Maria wants as many people as possible to know this; this is the place, environment in which homeless people are born and raised, they do not get enough education, and they are not able to get welfare support.... “It's not their fault that they live on the street. They have backgrounds and reasons for that. But one can always notice their presence and recognize their dignity. They are the voiceless in our midst.”

Written in Japanese and Published in the ASAHI MORNING PAPER 20th.May 2021 (Osaka City Version)

### **RIE KOWAKA**

Traducción: HNA CHRISTINA NAKAYAMA

Provincia Asia Pacífico

*Original Japanese*





# *Echo of the golden jubilee of the presence of the Religious of the Assumption in Benin*

Fifty years ago, the Religious of the Assumption arrived in Dahomey, now Benin. Because of the Corona virus pandemic, the celebration did not take place last year.

This year, our sisters wanted to mark the event because not giving thanks is a sign of ingratitude. Indeed, on Saturday 8 May 2021, the Good Shepherd parish in Abomey was crowded with people on the big days of the festival. The celebration of this golden jubilee of the presence of the Assumption was presided over by the local Ordinary, Monsignor Eugène Cyrille HOUNDEKON, surrounded by about twenty priests, including the parish priest, Abbé Philippe DEGUENON, and his vicar, Abbé Adolphe MAWUTON, in the presence of many of the faithful, including the Friends of Abomey and those who had come from Togo (Notsé and Sokodé) to live this time of thanksgiving in Assumption Together.

More than 50 years ago, through his pastoral care and concern, Bishop Lucien Agboka invited the Sisters of the Assumption to open a community in his diocese for the care of the sick, especially children. This foundation became effective on 16 May 1976 with the arrival of the first sisters. At the beginning of the Eucharistic celebration, the history of this arrival was sung by the choir in Fon, a local language. In his homily, the Bishop paid a vibrant tribute to the entire Congregation: "The time has come to express our gratitude to the Infinite Father in heaven... the

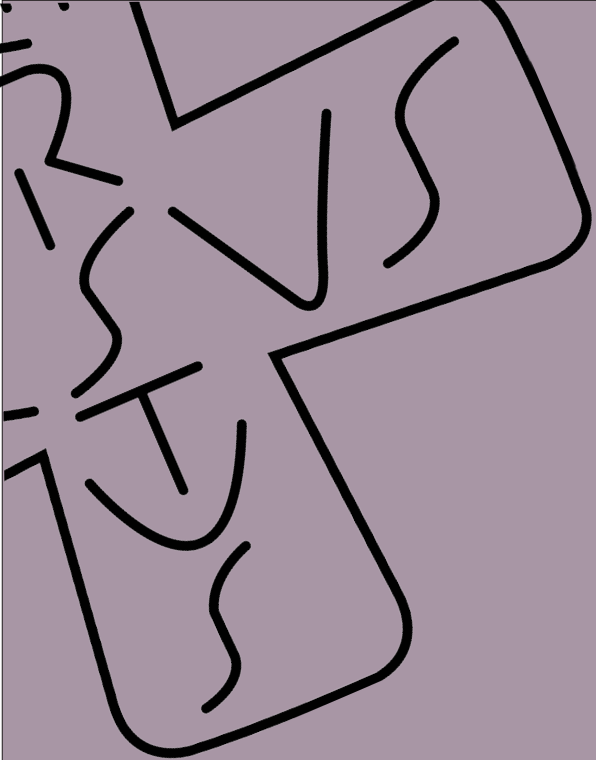
presence of the Religious of the Assumption has enriched our life of prayer and our awareness of a mission that must be carried on. We salute the immense work of the sisters; we encourage them to continue the mission of the Bible Camps so that the children get a taste for the Word of God..."

It was a joyful and peaceful celebration to the glory of God! After Mass, a fraternal meal brought us all together; the local Ordinary offered cake and champagne to the sisters and their friends. "It is God who leads all things, and never a more loving or wiser hand could lead our destinies." All best wishes for the future to our sisters in Abomey so that the Kingdom of Christ may come in us and around us!

**SISTER MARIE-MADELEINE AGONOU**  
Province West Africa  
Original French



*Joy of the sisters present*



*Direct their flight, but don't clip their wings*



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