

From July 27-31, 2015, thirty Assumptionist religious are meeting at the shrine of Lourdes here in Santiago and reflecting on the theme, "Consecrated Life and Assumptionist Life Today". These religious belong to the Andean Province which includes Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Ecuador. Within the group, many nationalities are represented (Argentinians, Chileans, Colombians, and Ecuadorians, to be sure, but also others from France and Mexico. There is also a large contingent from the Democratic Republic of the Congo involved both in pastoral work and theological studies.

Two assistants general traveled to Chile specifically to participate in this encounter, Fr. John Franck (American), who has particular responsibility for South America, and Marcel Marciel (Chilean), whose responsibilities include Madagascar and the Near Eastern Mission. Both reside in Rome.

In what does the reflection of this assembly consist? Observing, reflecting, and seeking out new or renewed ways to live the consecrated life in Latin America today. Then, there will be an opportunity to recommend detailed ways to adapt these reflections in the four countries of the province within the Assumptionist charism. The reflection will consist in judging what it is we wish to keep or initiate and what we do not. The Assumptionists of the Andean Province are responsible for many parishes, five schools, two Marian shrines, and two religious publications of a popular nature (“Auras de Lourdes” in Buenos Aires and “El Eco de Lourdes” in Chile).

The Assumptionists are involved in numerous missionary activities, some of which are clearly directed to those on the "margins" of society, as Pope Francis has recommended. The Assumptionists also feature a lay branch within a structure known as the Assumptionist Lay-Religious Alliance. Such lay Assumptionists work shoulder to shoulder with religious and follow, as lay-people, Assumptionist spirituality.

Fr. Juan Carlos Cisterna Bastías, provincial, pointed out, “This get-together is giving us an opportunity to live an intense moment of brotherhood. We are different, one from the other, but what unites us is a common call to build the Kingdom of the Lord here and now”. And he added, “We are responsible for accompanying many others; therefore, we have to lead an intense and solid community life that will feed us and strengthen us”.

As for Fr. Aldo Gajardo, director of the shrine of Lourdes in Santiago, “It gives us great joy to welcome our brothers from so many different countries and communities here at our house. The shrine of Lourdes is a spiritual lung for Chile and, with the presence of Assumptionists who have come from afar, it has become a spiritual lung for all of South America”. He further stated, “Everyone is welcome at this shrine of Lourdes; it is everyone's home. And this week it offers a sure welcome to Assumptionists who for more than a century have been transmitting the message of Lourdes and serving pilgrims of every social status. Security and peace can be found here at Lourdes”.

The assembly features intense moments of prayer, including lectio divina, and concludes every day with the celebration of the Eucharist.

Br. Ramon Gutierrez, A.A.




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MEMORIA


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