

The first Plenary General Council (PGC) since the 33rd general chapter of the Congregation held last May is taking place at this time in Rome. The major item on the agenda of this gathering is the implementation of the many decisions made at that chapter, a huge and complex undertaking. The composition of this PGC features a number of new faces: in addition to the two new assistant generals, Frs. Miguel Diaz Ayllon and Thierry Kambale Kahongya, there are two new provincials in attendance, Frs. Benoit Bigard (Europe) and Dennis Gallagher (North America), as well as a new general secretary, Fr. Michel Kubler.

In explaining the role of the PGC, Fr. General said in his opening remarks, “The PGC is intended to offer us the opportunity to exercise ***coresponsibility.*** The Congregation is a whole and each province contributes to the life of the entire body of the Assumption. We put into practice here what has become known as an ecclesiology of communion. Responsibility for

one's province should never make one forget
solidarity
with the entire body of the Assumption. We are learning to discern together, to make decisions together, and to work together. From now on, it is impossible to enclose oneself within the limits of his province alone, even if it is vast. We must think catholic, that is to say, « with the whole in mind » (« selon le tout »), in the words of the Dominican theologian, Yves Congar."

One of the very first discussions focused on the chapter's decision to appoint a new general secretary of formation. In recent years it has become clearer and clearer that the sheer number of young people in formation throughout the Congregations demands the special attention of full-time secretary. There are currently some 400 young people in formation on five continents; this number represents a little less than half the number of religious in the entire Congregation New realities, such as the growing number of international houses of formation and the superior general's responsibility to make the first apostolic assignment of all religious, as well as the implementation of additions or changes to the *Ratio institutionis* (formation program) will be some of the key priorities facing the new general secretary of formation.

The members of the PGC will also discuss matters ranging from changes in the organizational structure of the Congregation (the creation of new vicariates in Asia/Oceania and West Africa and the increased responsibilities given to the PGC), the determination and scheduling of Congregation-wide sessions (for masters of novices, the Lay Alliance, the missionary experience, etc.), an evaluation of a number of major apostolic priorities/'mobilizing works' (e.g. Bayard Press), and a presentation of new foundations.

An integral aspect of all gatherings of the PGC is the one-on-one meetings between provincials where they are able to discuss inter-provincial initiatives, especially the transfer of religious for reasons of study or apostolic ministry. As the Congregation grows, the demand to pool resources, in terms of personnel and finances, has become more pressing.

Please keep this important gathering in your Advent prayers.