

"Faithful to Emmanuel d'Alzon... for the coming of the Kingdom"

A WORD TO OUR ASSUMPTIONIST BROTHERS,
TO LAY ASSUMPTIONISTS,
AND TO SISTERS OF THE ASSUMPTION FAMILY

Dear friends, brothers and sisters,
The 32nd General Chapter of the Assumption began on May 3, 2011, in Rome, in the immense house of the Brothers of Christian Schools the day after the beatification of Pope John Paul II.

Our Assembly was composed of 43 brothers from around the world and of Pierre Tran Vanan Van Khuê, of the Saigon community and invited by Fr. General. In 2005, lay people participated for the first time in a General Chapter to share with us the charism of the Assumption. Since then, the Alliance has made great strides. Twelve lay people, chosen from each province of the Congregation, were invited by Fr. Richard Lamoureux to give a new impetus to the mission we share.

During the opening ceremony which took place in the chapel, each one in his own language answered "Present" when his name was called. Present to respond to the calls of the Spirit, to renew His mission in the Assumption and to remain "faithful to Emmanuel d'Alzon...for the coming of the Kingdom", the theme adopted by this Chapter.

"Three weeks, three themes" was the title of the Diary of the Chapter, edited by Fr. Michel Kubler. The first week, with our lay friends present, was dedicated to evaluating and looking ahead. We heard reports from the various provinces. This allowed us to become aware of the expectations of our world, the Church and our communities. We updated the three orientations given at the last Chapter: "Men of Faith, men of communion, in solidarity with the poor". They express what we sense as most important and they convey our charism, fruit of the Spirit that we reap for ourselves and for those who find these intuitions to be on target and wish to share them. They allowed us to determine the goal we want to reach in the next six years without giving in either to the atmosphere of pervasive gloom or to the fear that the world engenders. The Chapter reaffirms its trust in the future which God gives to the world, the Church, and the Assumption Family.

With our lay friends, we covered new territory by means of some lively discussions. We agreed on the definition of a Lay Assumptionist: "a man or woman who is committed to live his/her baptismal call and the mission that flows from it, in the Assumption, in the Church, and in society".

We expressed the hope that a "Way of Life" would be produced and we provided for the canonical erection of an "Association of the Faithful". In this work, we benefitted greatly from the work and experience of Sister Cristina Ocaña, R.A., who lives in Madrid. Henceforth, the Assumption is composed of men and women, religious and lay!

The second week was dedicated to Orientations. But before launching into the discussion, we took time for meditation. Fr. Sandro Laini, from the Florence community, with the energy and simplicity of one profoundly wise, invited us to made room for God in our life so that it would conform to what the Lord wants for our Family. We received his words as so many sparks to enlighten our lives.

We then began studying the fundamental orientations and discerning apostolic priorities. We took special interest in the dossier everyone was waiting for, the one on our new community organization. What we understand by this is the reconfiguration of the diverse geographic entities that form the Assumption throughout the world and the adaptation of our structures of governance in order to foster greater solidarity and collaboration. In this "logic of communion", we wanted to increase the powers accorded to the Superior General. We replaced the current General Curia with an Ordinary General Council. Along with the entire body of Major Superiors, they will form the Plenary General Council from now on. This new organ of collegial government will take into account the interests of the entire body of the Assumption we form, so that all may be united in the mission.

We moved in the direction of a territorial organization of a continental type. The Chapter voted for the creation of a Province of Europe, made of of the three current provinces of Northern Europe, Spain, and France. This decision will become effective by 2014, at the latest. The Chapter expressed its wish that the provinces of each continent where we are located expressly engage in a process of rapprochement: Africa and Madagascar, South America, North America. For Asia, marked by the rapid development of the Assumption, measures to provide common oversight of all the communities will put in place.

We divided the articulation on our fundamental orientations under convictions and means, each with three subheadings: personal, community and apostolic. Following our Founder, Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon, whose bicentenary of birth was celebrated in 2010, we came to see that we are disciples sharing a common faith, brothers eager for greater communion, apostles in solidarity with the poor. More than ever, we are convinced that we are called to bear witness in a spirit of communion and unity within the great Assumption Family, with our sisters and our lay friends.

The third week was one of decisions and a deeper understanding of the fields of our apostolic endeavors. Each province presented works that represent one aspect of our charism in keeping with the great causes of God and man, works that can “mobilize” the entire body of the Assumption. These works fall within the framework of the apostolic axes that we discerned in 2005: new foundations, the Mission in the Near East, vocation ministry.

The needs are tremendous. They are a good match for the ambition of the heirs of Fr. d'Alzon. Yet, at the same time, we realized that we no longer have the resources to undertake them all. Financial realities also colored our discussions. No one has a silver bullet, the miracle solution. We will need to use our imagination, accept to make changes in our life style and find new solutions of funding.

The Chapter elected Fr. Benoit Grière as Superior General. This was a moment of great emotion. Since 2005, he had been Superior of the Province of France. The Chapter decided to provide him with four assistants: Fr. Emmanuel Kahindo (Province of Africa), Vicar General, Brother Didier Remiot (Province of France), Treasurer General, Frs. John Franck (Province of North America) and Marcelo Marciel (Province of Chile-Argentina). Fr. Bernard Le Léannec (Province of France) was elected as Secretary General.

During the Mass for the installation of the new team in the General House, the new Superior General invited us to rediscover the joy of the Kingdom, “that comes to invade our hearts so that they may, in turn, overflow around us." "This joy,” he continued," makes us hear the music played for the feast given for the return of the prodigal son." We are confident and assured that together, brothers, sisters and lay friends, we will play the part that God confides to the Assumption a song that already fills her with joy.

Fr. Benoît Grière, a.a., Superior General
and the members of the 32nd General Chapter of the Assumption
Rome, May 23, 2011