

- **Could you tell us a little bit about your history with the Assumptionists?**

- I come from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) where I was born in December 1965 in the small village of Beni-Paida, in the province of North Kivu. My adventure with the Assumptionists began in 1984 when I met Fr. Christian Blanc, of happy memory, who was visiting the Orant Sisters of the Assumption in Beni. Six months later, I was already a postulant, and two years later, on September 16, 1986, a young Assumptionist.

Since then, I have come to know, to love, and to transmit to others my love for the Assumption, which has really become my new family.

I would say that four events have marked me during this time: my apostolic experience in Ivory Coast in 1989-1990 after completing philosophy, my studies in Biblical exegesis in Rome and Jerusalem between 1994-1998, my years as director of formation for the Province of Africa from 2002-2005, and, of course, since 2005, my work at the service of the congregation as assistant general, work which has brought me to discover the different faces of the same body we know as the Assumption. Each day that passes leads me to appreciate the Assumption in its internationality, which, even though it presents its challenges, constitutes, in my opinion, its strength today. I am happy that the General Chapter this past May recommended to the general government that it find the means to mark even mo0re clearly the formation of young Assumptionists with this international dimension. The winds of globalization have not left us untouched.

- **What are the major recommendations of the General Chapter affecting the general government?**

- Before speaking of recommendations, let me clarify something with regard to the expression “general government” in the light of the General Chapter. When speaking of “general government” in the past, one would have thought immediately of the Superior General’s ordinary council. Today, however, it seems to me, that when one uses the phrase “general government,” one must understand the superior general and his two councils, that is to say, the ordinary council (i.e. the general and his assistants) and the Plenary General Council (the ordinary council plus all of the major superiors, known as provincials). Even if, when all is said and done, it is the Superior General who makes a decision, the Plenary General Council from now on will be involved in implementing many recommendations from the General Chapter. This being said, without getting into too many details, here are the major recommendations which concern the general government:

+ With regard to our spirituality, the general government is called upon to lead religious and lay Assumptionists wherever they may be, wherever they may be involved, to live as men and women of faith and communion, in solidarity with the poor and the least among us.

+ Next, with regard to personnel, it has the responsibility to make the first apostolic appointment of those taking final vows, in order to foster greater unity and greater mobility of religious; it also bears responsibility for naming major formation personnel.

+ Finally, with regard to mission, it is responsible to oversee the process of restructuring provinces, to approve the opening and closing of communities, to be involved in new major apostolic initiatives, to support works considered “mobilizing”, and to strengthen the Lay-Religious Alliance.

+ All of this will require of each and every one of us a spirit of co-responsibility and fraternity. But have no fear: we left ample place for the principle of subsidiarity.

- **How has the General Curia be organized since the Chapter?**

- In speaking of the General Curia, I suppose you mean the ordinary general government and are using a term from a previous general chapter.

Of course, since none of us knew each other, there was a period to do so. We spent quite a bit of time introducing ourselves, sharing our story with one another and our deepest convictions about the Assumption. We also had to re-read the Chapter acts to understand clearly what responsibilities were being entrusted to us. Then there came the time to divide up our work. First there was a consideration of geographical territories. One principle which Fr. Benoit established from the beginning was that we would not, at least at first, have responsibility for the province of our origin. That would allow us to get to know the rest of the Assumption better; but it was also meant to show that at the Assumption we are all brothers of one family and no one is a stranger wherever he may be. So, the Superior General will be responsible for Africa and Asia; Didier for North America; John for South America; Marcelo for Madagascar and the "Mission d'Orient"; and I for the provinces of Europe which are on the way to becoming one province by 2014.

Afterward, we looked at specific topics that the Chapter asked the congregation to highlight. John will have the heavy responsibility for education, vocation ministry, and the volunteer network; Marcelo, the lay-religious alliance and helping John in vocation ministry; Didier, in addition to all the economic issues, will be responsible for the media; and I will have formation. Needless to say, these are not private preserves of one or another. Co-responsibility will be fundamental if we are to be effective. Right now we have to put all these decisions into practice, set up committees/commissions, and develop strategies.

- **Do you yourself have trips planned before February 2012?**

- Since I am responsible for Europe, I will be participating in the meetings of the joint committee preparing for the unified province of Europe and will also be attending the Council of the Province meetings in France scheduled for the beginning of January. A lot of this will depend on my ability to get the necessary visas!

- **What is the day-to-day life like in Rome?**

- As for any Assumptionist community, the day to day life depends on the apostolic duties entrusted to the members of the community and the rhythm established by the local chapter. Therefore, there is time set aside for personal work and group work (depending on each one's mission), time for personal and community prayer, time for common meals, time for a weekly community meeting, etc. Often, the members of the community take advantage of weekends to get to know Rome better, either by getting involved in a parish or by visiting the city.

- **Do you have any contacts with major figures in Rome?**

- Oh, yes, we do! We have already been invited over to the residence of French ambassador to the Holy See. We have welcomed at Due Pini the superior general of the Eudists, Fr. Jean Camus. Once a trimester all Africans who are members of their general council and live in Rome get together to talk about their work and what is happening in Africa. At the beginning of October, the Superior General and the Secretary General were received by the newly appointed cardinal Joao Braz de Aviv, prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life. We've also met Cardinal Peter Appiah Kodjo Turkson, president of the Pontifical Council on Peace and Justice. John participated in a conference on education organized by the Union of Major Superiors (USG). At the end of November, Fr. Benoit and I attended the plenary session of the USG. And the list could go on. All of these occasions broaden our horizons and enrich us. As we say in my language, "the bird that never goes beyond the top of the hill will never find out where the wheat is planted."

- **Do you have a final word?**

- I would address it to God. We are convinced that he was with us throughout the chapter, guiding us and inspiring us. May he make of us men and women of faith, of communion, in solidarity with the poor and the least among us, in this world that he so loves.