

For the first time in its history, APAC (the Asian pacific Augustinian Conference) has named a president who is not a member of the Order of St. Augustine. He is Fr. Bernard Holzer, an Assumptionist, who is currently the regional superior of the Philippines, the Superior General's delegate for the entire Asia mission. Fr. Bernard became the 14th president of the Conference at its 11th triennial convention held at the Villa Consuelo Retreat House, Novaliches, near Manila (the Philippines).

Here is the biographical note on Fr. Bernard which appeared in the latest APAC newsletter:

"The election of Fr. Bernard Holzer A.A. as incoming President of the Asia-Pacific Augustinian Conference is a groundbreaking event for the Conference. He becomes the first Assumptionist to lead the Conference and the first APAC leader beyond the Order of Saint Augustine or the Augustinian Sisters of La Consolacion. Fr Bernard brings a history of dynamic involvement in religious life to this position.

Bernard is a Frenchman born in Huningue in 1948. He joined the Assumptionists in1959 at their minor seminary in Alsace and completed his novitiate and made his first profession in 1957. Bernard was a religious as the full impact of the Second Vatican Council came into force in Europe. In line with the renewed emphasis on religious life Bernard and many of his fellow Assumptionists lived their religious commitments as brothers in their congregation. Bernard's interest lay in the area of social action and he worked for the French Bishop's Conference on projects often based in the Third World. Those projects covered action in many countries including Ethiopia and the Congo. Bernard was elected as an Assistant General for his congregation in 1993.

Towards the end of his first term his thoughts and the thoughts of the congregation moved him to seek diaconate in 1995 and he began his clerical ministry working in hospital chaplaincy particularly with those suffering from AIDS and cancer of the blood. Bernard was ordained to the priesthood in 1997 and was reelected as Assistant General. At the end of his second term Bernard's next assignment was to Manila to work with the Filipino brothers. Bernard is presently operating as the Delegate for the General for the Assumptionists throughout Asia.

His work takes him to many of the countries of Asia where the Assumptionists are growing and developing. Surely APAC can rejoice that we have a person of vision and action to lead us for the next three years. As so many of our congregations have missionary vision and purpose at this time it seems fitting that someone like Bernard should provide leadership for our organization which offers support to all who follow in the footsteps of Augustine in the great Asia-Pacific region."

Tony Banks O.S.A.