

A Life Lived in Community

As sons and disciples of Saint Augustine, the Assumptionists live their faith, prayer and apostolate in community. Is this ideal lived out every day? Not always. It is a daily choice, an act of faith, a road that cleaves to the Gospel. As brothers, we share everything that makes up the life of a family: everyday chores - grocery shopping, cooking, housework, money problems, news, worries, relaxation - and at the center, faith and hope in Jesus Christ. This way of life helps us to rediscover the demands of everyday fraternal evangelical life - truth in relationships, spontaneity, gracious listening, mutual acceptance and forgiveness. The source and summit of our life together is the Eucharist. "No one can experience the joy of this life unless he commits his whole person to it," says our Rule of Life. Emmanuel d'Alzon wrote to his religious, "We shall ask the Spirit of Love to unite us to God, to Jesus Christ, to our brothers."

The Great Causes of God and Man

The Assumptionist Community exists for the coming of the Kingdom. The spirit of the Founder impels us to make the great causes of God and of Man our very own, to go wherever God is threatened in Man and Man is threatened as the image of God. We must give proof of boldness, initiative and selflessness, in fidelity to the teaching and orientation of the Church (Rule of Life, n.4). In a world where we share the quest and efforts of the human family to become fully human, we recognize in Jesus Christ the perfect man, and we find in God the deepest motivation for our life and action. God wants to make all human beings his people, his friend, his sons and daughters. (Rule of Life, n. 23)

By being faithful to God in our choices, in our daily work, in our openness to others and our availability in times of need, our whole life, under the action of the Holy Spirit, becomes an encounter with God. (Rule of Life, n. 45)

The Spirit of the Assumptionist Family

"One mind and one heart intent upon God." (Rule of St Augustine) The great passion of the Assumptionist Family is the Kingdom of God. It is God's great plan for the entire human race, manifested in Jesus Christ and made present by His Church. As the Revealer, he makes perfectly clear what it is that dishonors God and Man, so as to bring remedy to it. A world glutted with riches but in which people are dying of hunger is simply unacceptable. The Reign of God is the Assumption Family's great passion. It opens up vast horizons, broad and distant vistas, carried out in great programs as well as humble accomplishments. But from the beginning to the end, it is the work of God.

That is why his messenger must be in deep harmony with the Kingdom he is proclaiming, after the example of Jesus, the supreme Apostle. To follow in his footsteps, to adopt his sentiments and ways of being and acting is imperative. Emmanuel d'Alzon repeats this constantly:

"Before working to make Jesus Christ reign over others, be sure he reigns over you." And again: "Let us pay little heed to our own concerns, as long as Jesus Christ

is proclaimed."

The Kingdom of God is the password for the Assumption Family, indelibly stamping its whole life. Study, prayer and action - these form the rhythm of our days, constituting for us three distinct yet mutually interrelated forms of the same passion for the Kingdom. In an apostolic community, mission and prayer continually interact. The mission of each member nourishes fraternal life, which in turn stimulates the mission. For apostolic activities must be concerted, shared and evaluated in a climate of fraternal candor and prayer. This faith-sharing is important in an apostolic community. It is thus that the community becomes "one mind and one heart intent on God." (Rule of St Augustine)

Three Hallmarks of Assumptionist Spirituality

The Assumptionist Spirit and our Augustinian heritage can be summed up in three words: Truth, Charity and Unity. The life and the work an Assumptionist does is marked by a strong doctrinal, social and ecumenical character. These three hallmarks are the signature of the Assumptionist Family. They have had a profound influence on its history and given birth to many of its works, from the most scholarly to the most unpretentious. Very often an Assumptionist's mission is to specialize in one of the three - as a teacher, scholar or university professor, preacher or journalist. Others, as men directly involved in social action, fight the ills of our society. Finally, some of us work through ecumenism for unity of all Christians. But each of us must bear the imprint of all these three aspects. For when truth is cut off from charity and unity, it degenerates into haughty self-sufficiency. Charity that does not take truth and justice into account does not deserve to be called charity. And unity without charity is short-lived. This is a lofty road, great and arduous, but it leads far and high.

Our Superior General, Fr. Claude Maréchal, wrote recently with regard to our ecumenical aspect, "The ecumenical spirit, which we want to be ours, rejects intolerance, narrowness of vision, sectarianism, prejudice and exclusivism. It seeks to understand before passing judgement. It is welcoming and open to dialogue. It listens more than it speaks. It has such reverence for God and truth that it can never consider its own experience as the norm for measuring everything." (Letter of the Superior General, 1990)

Teaching At All Levels

The Assumptionists have run and sponsored, for nearly a century, an extensive network of high schools, mostly in France but in other countries as well. The initial aim of this work was to provide poor youths from the countryside with an affordable education, while at the same time encouraging them to think about the possibility of a specific call to priesthood or brotherhood, whether it be with the Assumptionists or not. This approach has given the Church countless priests who have served in the Assumptionist Family as well as in many other congregations and dioceses. We have also founded high schools, mostly in cities, which aimed at giving a Christian education to the children of the elite of society, hoping in the process to increase the influence of Christian life on society when these children become adults and take their place in society.

Today, the Assumptionist Family worldwide is actively involved in education and we are running

a number of schools around the world. In our schools and colleges, Assumptionists and lay professors are invited to form a real teaching community inspired by the Gospel. They strive to build a Catholic educational institution which provides good teaching as well as a solid Christian formation for its students. Lay persons collaborate with the religious on the faculty, staff and administration of these schools and colleges. With trust and candor, the Congregation and the lay collaborators have, through serious discussion, worked out a plan of Christian education to be put into practice. This plan stresses the ideas precious to the Assumptionist Family: evangelical inspiration, collaboration, and the family spirit which has been ours from the first.

Assumptionist Apostolates

The Assumptionist Family has been multi-faceted since its beginnings. Our founder never limited us to one type of apostolic work. All our activities are at the service of the Kingdom of God, but they are broad in scope: from theological scholarship to foreign missions, with a real propensity for the Eastern Churches and the search for Christian unity; nurturing vocations for the service of the Church; the communication of the Christian message by the spoken and written word in education and the media; serving as parish priests, social workers, scientists, campus ministers... the list goes on...

The criteria for an Assumptionist? Aptitude and desire, but above all a passion to bring the message and wisdom of Jesus Christ to today's world. As Emmanuel d'Alzon wrote: Our Lord said: "I have come to set a fire." Whoever wants to join in the work of Jesus Christ must be ablaze with an immense love. That is the Apostle's cry: "The love of Christ impels us."