

The book of Exodus describes how God cried over the suffering of his people in Egypt. To address those needs, He called Moses to lead the Israelites to freedom. Great men and women continued to teach and lead the Hebrew people throughout their history and especially at times of great need.

At yet another time of crisis, in France after the Revolution, the Church was in need of great leaders. It was in response to that need that the Assumptionist community was born: first, through a woman, Marie-Eugenie Milleret, who founded (in 1839) the Religious Sisters of the Assumption, then through her friend and advisor, Father Emmanuel d'Alzon, who gathered a group of laymen and priests together into an organization for the restoration of Catholic secondary and higher education in France. Eventually (in 1845), Fr. d'Alzon founded a religious community, the Augustinians of the Assumption, to collaborate with this new organization in the renewal of the Church and French society and to refound Augustinian religious life in France. Later, the family grew with the founding of the Oblate Sisters of the Assumption, the Little Sisters of the Assumption, and the Orantes of the Assumption (a contemplative branch).

The Assumption came into being at a time of crisis; some have observed that it is well-equipped for such times. Today, in the Church and in America, we too are living in decisive times.

Since the 1970s, in response to the urging of the Second Vatican Council, the Assumptionists have been engaged in reform efforts in order to address more effectively today's core challenges. A major step along the way was the publication in 1983 of a revised "Rule of Life," a small book that includes all the rules needed for an organization spread over twenty-seven different countries. More importantly, the Rule casts the vision and sketches the mission for a religious family that wants to address the pressing needs of the day, faithfully following in the footsteps of the Lord who called them into existence and who continues to accompany them along their way.

Loving the Church as he did, but finding her in serious "disrepair" after the Revolution, Fr. d'Alzon wanted his disciples to be Catholic, simply and fully. Not to set themselves apart in the Church, not to claim special privileges, but to focus in an intelligent way on root problems and to work selflessly and with daring in the service of God's people. He wanted them to be docile to the direction set by the Holy Father, passionate about the cause of Church unity, and tireless in their service of the poor and in efforts to reconcile class struggles and bring some stability to a fractured society set adrift without principle or reason or the light of conscience. The guiding vision was the

establishment of God's Kingdom; the personal consequence was the daily effort to be faithful in prayer and in the pursuit of holiness. This vision led the founder and then his brothers and lay friends in the Assumption to engage in educational and scholarly works, in ecumenical projects, in social service, in publishing ventures and journalism, and in pilgrimages and other pastoral ministries.

In the Rule of Life you will find expressions of this same vision in a newer language.

- "The Assumptionist seeks to be a man of faith and a man of his time." (3)
- "The Assumptionist community exists for the coming of the Kingdom." (4)
- "The spirit of the founder impels us to embrace the great causes of God and of man, to go wherever God is threatened in man and man threatened as image of God." (4)
- "Our communities are at the service of truth, of unity, and of charity." (5)
- "In a divided world, (our common life) bears witness that Christ is alive among us and uniting us for the proclamation of the Gospel." (12)
- "Jesus Christ has encountered us personally so as to fulfill in us and through us his plan of being present to men and in communion with them." (23)
- "By our vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, which witness to our faith in Jesus Christ, we propose to remind people of the ultimate meaning of human realities and to become servants of the Kingdom." (25)
- "Prayer engages us in a struggle in order that our experience of God permanently cast its light on our vision of the world." (51)
- "Contemplation and action are united for us in one and the same goal: to serve the extension of the Reign of Jesus Christ." (54)

While this post-Vatican II rewriting of the Assumptionist Rule of Life was intended for brothers living in community, it has become a "rule of life" for many lay people as well, young and old. While it includes only a limited number of prescriptions for living the consecrated life in community (a fact that has made it more "useful" for our lay friends), it is nonetheless demanding in many concrete ways in terms of one's daily life and one's action on behalf of others.

This Rule of Life urges us to focus on what is central, to nourish ourselves on the Scriptures and the rich spiritual tradition of St. Augustine, to be attentive to today's world, and to speak "a language that people will understand" (as Fr. d'Alzon put it when he was just twenty years old). The Assumption is a gift to the Church, for all times, especially in times of great need. May we return unceasingly to this source, to this Rule, for deeper life, to hasten the coming of God's Reign.

Fr. Richard E. Lamoureux, A.A., Superior General  
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The chapters of the Rule of Life published below provide a good understanding of the way in which Assumptionists in the early 21st century are seeking to live in the spirit of the Gospel, of Saint Augustine, and of their founder, Emmanuel d'Alzon.

[Chapter 1 - Assumption](#)

[Chapter 2 - Our Common Life](#)

[Chapter 3 - Our Life of Apostolic Service](#)

[Chapter 4 - Our Religious Profession](#)

[Chapter 5 - Our Prayer Life](#)