



PROMINENT ASSUMPTIONIST Fr. Wilfrid Dufault was the fifth superior general of the Assumptionists and the first non-Frenchman. He was born in Spencer, Massachusetts, son of Etienne and Alma Dufault, and educated in local schools before transferring to Assumption Preparatory School and Assumption College. He entered the Assumptionists in 1929, pronounced his perpetual vows in 1933, and was ordained a priest in 1934. After receiving a licentiate in theology from the Pontifical Institute "Angelicum" in Rome, Fr. Dufault began teaching philosophy at Assumption College. Upon completion of further studies at Laval University, he returned to the College to teach for another seven years before being named the first Provincial Superior of the North American Province of the Assumptionists.

Fr. Dufault was the recipient of honorary doctorate degrees from Rivier College, Anna Maria College as well as from Assumption College. He was also recognized with the French Legion d'Honneur, Officier and Commandeur of the French Ordre National du Mérite, the Lafayette Award from Worcester's Harmony Club, the Assumption Prep School Alumni Hall of Fame Award, the President's Medal from Assumption College and the Outstanding Achievement Award from Assumption College. He was also inducted into Ordre de la Fidélité Française and the Knights of the Holy Sepulcher. During his long association with Assumption College, he served as president, acting president, chancellor, member of the Board of Trustees, and co-founder of the College's French Institute.

As the fifth superior general, Fr. Wilfrid oversaw the development of the congregation during the years of ferment leading up to the Second Vatican Council, a time of turmoil and of expectation. In his homily at Fr. Wilfrid's funeral, Fr. Richard Lamoureux, the second American to serve as superior general, had this to say about Fr. Wilfrid's years in this position: "They were challenging and remarkable years. As Superior General, Fr. Wilfrid was an indefatigable traveler. That would not be such a great feat in 2004, but in 1952, when it took almost twenty hours to fly cross the Atlantic, you can appreciate the depth of Wilfrid's desire to know his religious family intimately. During his tenure, the Congregation reached its largest size, almost

2000 religious at the time of the Second Vatican Council. It was a time of expansion, but also a time of suffering, when the Congregation's mission in Eastern Europe was openly persecuted and three of our brothers were killed by the Communists in 1952. Incidentally, though happy that Pope John Paul II decided to beatify these three Bulgarian martyrs, Fr. Wilfrid expressed some mild disappointment: 'Father d'Alzon should have been beatified before!' It is clear that the founder, Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon, was his principal source of inspiration. Shortly after his election, Fr. Wilfrid commissioned the publication of what has become the Assumptionist "bible", the collected Spiritual Writings of the founder, a book that since its publication has served to form countless Assumptionists in the spirit of d'Alzon. Toward the end of his time in Rome, Wilfrid was appointed a member of the Ecumenical Council, Vatican II, that met from 1962 until its close in 1965. This was a time of major change for the Church, but also for Fr. Wilfrid, who understood that to preach the Gospel effectively in today's world, the Church and his religious congregation would need to undergo important change."



In referring to the first reading at this funeral Mass which related Moses's experience at the burning bush, Fr. Richard continued, "Moses was the man he was because of a powerful encounter with the Lord. His experience of God at the burning bush gave him what might even be called a philosophical insight into the nature of God: "I am who am", the one who is from all time and is the source of all things. Wilfrid's experience of God had its philosophical side. I've never heard anyone speak with more conviction and passion about the importance of seeking the truth and shaping one's life in harmony with it. But the burning bush experience also revealed a God attentive to the suffering of His people. This kind of God inspired Moses, and I think Wilfrid, with a passionate love for God's people. So, at the heart of it all, was a knowledge of God that inspired a life of dedication and service."

