

Team of lay people, engaged in the Assumption, invited to the General Chapter

By Pat Haggerty

I love the poems of E.E. Cummings. One of his poems begins: "I thank you God for most this amazing day." If Cummings wouldn't mind, I would change the line to: "these most amazing days." That is in reference to my participation for a week as a lay delegate to the 33rd General Chapter of the Assumptionists.

They were most certainly very amazing days! I am still in awe of everything I experienced from the protocol to the conviviality of my brothers in Assumption. I am mentally storing information, reflecting and praying over all that I absorbed during my time at Valpré (where the Chapter was held). It's as if I need to de-brief like someone having gone on a military mission.

I was on a mission, of sorts. Along with my fellow Alliance member from Québec, we were representing the Alliance members of the North American Province of the Assumptionists. We both learned a great deal as we worked, prayed and shared with other Alliance members from around the globe. The Assumptionists are known as an international community and this permeates the ranks of the Alliance as well. I had no trouble with the French, but the Spanish did prove to be a challenge! I caught words here and there, but gestures and signing seemed to be the best form of communication with my colleagues from Brazil, Columbia, Chile, Spain and Argentina.

What did I learn from the Chapter? Too much to write in one sitting! At dinner one day, one of the Fathers remarked: "You will have enough to write about for a year!" I don't know about that, but I will have enough for several submissions.

One thing that was reaffirmed for me during the Chapter is that the Assumptionists are a community of joy. Evidence of this was everywhere---in the daily prayer and singing, in the light-hearted conversations at meals, in the spirit of friendship during a birthday celebration. Father General even called upon us to have a day of "smiling" and to pass our smiles along throughout the day.

Where does this joy come from? It comes from their love of the Lord. In the words of Emmanuel d'Alzon: "We will find our joy by counting on God alone." (From *Prayers of Emmanuel d'Alzon,*
Rome, 2011)