



February 4-7, 2011

### ***Day One: Our Founders***

At Due Pini, the General House of the Assumptionists in Rome, a workshop just ended, which brought together the five Congregations of the Assumption Family (with four representatives from each Congregation). It is the second gathering of this kind, dedicated to deepening reflection on the charism of our religious family. This year, the theme was the love of the Church.

On Friday, February 4<sup>th</sup>, the first day of the meeting, we heard presentations on the topic of how our founders lived and understood their own love of the Church. This made it possible to perceive the many attitudes common to them all, but also the particular kind of relationship each one had with the Church. Then, Gianni La Bella, professor of history at the University of Bologna and a member of the Sant'Egidio community spoke. In a forty-five minute presentation, he provided a remarkable picture of society and the Church, especially in France, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and showed how our founders, in particular Emmanuel d'Alzon, responded to the challenges of their day.

At the beginning of the afternoon, the participants made their way to Saint Peter, where, in the spirit of pilgrims, they visited the excavations beneath the Basilica where there was found in the 1950s the burial place of the apostle Peter. Back at Due Pini, the group reflected together on what they had learned during the day.

**Day Two: Our personal experience**



After reflection and conversation regarding the founders' experience of the Church, the participants at the "Charism Workshop" spent their second day, Saturday, February 5<sup>th</sup>, thinking about the experience that each one has had of the Church. But the day began with another, very moving pilgrimage: in the catacombs of Saint Priscilla. More than 40,000 Christians were buried in this place, where striking frescoes of the 2<sup>nd</sup>

and 3<sup>rd</sup>

centuries are beautifully preserved. In an underground chapel in the catacombs, the group celebrated the Eucharist.

Back at work, the participants gathered in groups by Congregation to talk about the way in which our experience today might (or might not) be in consonance with what existed at the beginning of our religious family. The results of these conversations were then communicated in a plenary assembly.

As was the case earlier, an "observer" made the effort to reflect in a synthetic way what had emerged from these conversations. A few of the major themes: an understanding and experience of the Church as communion; the very pronounced role of the family in the discovery and love of the Church; the experience of a Church which, at times, is a cause of suffering as a result of attitudes that are far from the Gospel, of negative experiences, of scandals..., but also the overcoming of this suffering in faith and in love; a call not to imitate Peter ("I do not know this man."), not to turn our eyes away from this Church wounded by sin, etc. And then, an awareness of the universality and unity of the Church; the important place of the poor in the

Church, etc. In short, very rich reflections, “food for thought” for tomorrow.



### **Day Three: What's Common/What's Different**

After two very rich days, even if it is not always easy to discern the line of thought that can gather all together, the participants in the “Charism Workshop” pinned a few things down. After the Sunday Eucharist, celebrated on this 6<sup>th</sup> day of February, each participant took the time to do some personal thinking with the help of a few questions prepared by the Steering Committee. Then together the participants shared their thoughts before making their way to Saint Peter’s Square, where the Pope would lead pilgrims gathered there in the midday Angelus prayer and reflection.

In the afternoon, work in small inter-Assumption groups tried to begin synthesizing the results of all our reflections to date. Participants were invited to respond to the following question: “In all that I’ve heard, in all that I’ve been thinking and praying about, and in the input provided by the “observer”, what are the common points and what are the differences that exist in our Congregations regarding our love for the Church?”

But before then, the brothers and sisters at the workshop with some members of the local community will gather together for a relaxing moment in a pizzeria in Rome’s Trastevere neighborhood.

