



DIARY OF THE CHAPTER

32nd General Chapter of the Augustinians of the Assumption
Rome, May 2 to 23, 2011

Towards a new organization of the Congregation

A logic of communion

It is one of the dossiers « awaited » at this 32nd General Chapter – with the election of a new General Council on which its profile will depend: that is, the “new community organization” of the Congregation. This expression designated an entire redefinition of various geographical units that make up Assumption worldwide, in new Provinces or other types of units. But it’s not simply a territorial regrouping!

As we saw in the discussion if this first day of week two of the Chapter, it’s also a question of adapting our governmental structures, not only to the demographic developments, but to a better coordination of the various realities throughout the world, in view of greater solidarity and collaboration. It’s what the Chapter has called “a logic of communion”! Concretely, what can be said? It will still be necessary to wait for the discussions to specify the contours of their restructuring. For the moment, it is based on a “memorandum of understanding” which was articulated by an extraordinary meeting of the Council of the Congregation this past February. This schema, which the Chapter will be considering from now on, recommends a proposal for new provinces – to be discussed later – but especially a redefinition of the Government of the Congregation.

In this proposal, the current General Curia in Rome would be replaced by a “Restricted General Council”, under the leadership of a Superior General with additional powers. This Restricted General Council and the group of the major superiors would make up the Plenary General Council, which would be a veritable organ of collegial government – as opposed to the current Council of Congregation. Objective: to take into account the interests of the entire Assumptionist body, so that one and all may be better at the service of the mission! ■



Fr. Alessandro Laini

Editorial

Lord, why am I here?

Fr. Alessandro Laini*

Given the enormous difficulties that society and the Church are facing, I think it is good for us to ask ourselves what the Lord is expecting of us during this General Chapter whose importance we cannot imagine. Asking ourselves what God wants from us even as we face our current difficulties - without minimizing or exaggerating them - means making room for God in our life, as it is, so that it can conform more and more what the Lord wants.

Faced with the current weakness of the faith producing wide spread confusion and absence of solid references, we need to make a qualitative leap. A leap into “the holiness of ordinary life”. With our Founder, I would call this “Catholic” holiness, open to all people, in the spirit of Therese of Lisieux.

As Assumptionists, religious and lay, we have everything we need: the Bible to meditate, pray and share; the Eucharist, to celebrate and adore; the rosary, or at least the devotion to the Virgin Mary; the witness of brothers and sisters who have gone before us, especially Augustine and Fr. d’Alzon; the Rule of Life; our local community and others .

I believe that we have no reason to envy others. We can begin the journey into this second decade of the third millennium - with the economic challenges that it presents - without irrational fears or stupid pipe dreams, but with this holy realism that was characteristic of the spirit of Emmanuel d’Alzon.

**Extract of the recollection preached to the members of the General Chapter on Sunday. (For the complete text, please visit www.assumptio.org)*

My Voice at the Chapter



I am pleased with the unfolding of the Chapter but also with the work completed during this first week. The discussions were valuable and reflected the family spirit which characterizes our Congregation.

The climate was fraternal. In a general way, we achieved the objectives which had been set for this week. The evaluation of the life of the Congregation was sincere and truthful. This now allows us to begin reflecting on ways to deepen those objectives but also to determine the new calls and challenges to respond to during the next six years.

These calls and challenges are numerous. We will not be able to respond to all of them. We will thus need to make choices. It is my wish that the Chapter will select clear orientations, especially concerning: our prayer life, as an oasis for our dialogue with Jesus Christ, whose waters quench the thirst of many men and women; the life of the vows, prophetic and contesting; our love of the Church, at a time when it experiences rough seas; continuing education, by insisting on St. Augustine and Fr. d'Alzon; our structures of animation; an interprovincial solidarity which promotes adult responses and self-sufficiency; vocations ministry, especially in the provinces tempted by "birth control" because they lack resources; the question of languages.

The work yard is vast and can frighten, given our modest means. But let us not fear! Christ is there and accompanies us!

Fr. Emmanuel Kahindo (Rome - Africa)

After one week of work, we are gradually coming to an appreciation of the state of our "small family": its strengths and vitality, its concerns and its limitations in contexts that are very different from each other. We understand a little better the challenges to be confronted as "men of communion and men of faith, in solidarity with the poor", doing so more and more in collaboration with lay people whom we recognize as true members of our family.



Now, we are entering into another phase of our work. We need to find the ways to renew at its source our passion for Jesus Christ, for the Church, for humankind, in a word for the Kingdom. And we want to do be able to help one another live as disciples of Jesus. In a suffering world, overwhelmed at times by a confusion of ideologies, we want to be signs of hope by putting ourselves even more at the side of those who want to build a world that is more just and fraternal.

Will we be able to define a common vision among our priorities and choices (including financial choices)? We will be able to go beyond our own individual interests and see the needs of the "entire body"? Will we have the daring necessary to welcome new brothers and be sufficiently willing to leave our familiar horizons, if necessary, to build the body of Christ beyond our frontiers, even as far as to the Great Wall of China?

It's a question now of being attentive to the Spirit, to discern the path, perhaps unexpected, that the Spirit is tracing for our family and for each one of us. Please, pray to the Spirit with us.

Fr. Bernard Holzer (Philippines, North American Province)



The first week of this General Chapter could be summarized as a time for becoming aware of both the wealth of our spiritual heritage and our real situation in the different continents, and especially of our evolution at the level of the Congregation.

A review of our fundamental orientations as men and women of faith, communion and in solidarity with the poor, has allowed us to cast a look at our real state in all truth, that is, taking into account

our strengths and our weaknesses, without underestimating our errors, in an atmosphere of dialogue and exchange of views and experiences, in the presence of the lay people.

Nevertheless, as we contemplate the new landscape that appears before us, it is important not to lose sight of the distance already covered and the animation of these past years towards becoming men of communion.

Now our concern could focus on how the new decisions, the new government structures and territorial units that we are considering in this General Chapter can guarantee greater closeness, more attention, better accompaniment and cooperation in solidarity at all levels between the different instances of the Congregation.

As it has been said in our meetings, we are rich of the heritage received from Saint Augustine and Fr. d'Alzon; we are living out the great project of passing over, with great fidelity, boldness and openness, all the content of that heritage, expressed in creative works rather than just words.

The invitation now being extended to us is to take a new step towards the logic of communion that pursues the wellbeing of the whole body, beyond our personal interests.

Fr. Daniel García R. (Colombia)

Finals Words to Lay Participants

At the end of our first week of Chapter... At the end of our first week together, lay members and religious... some final thoughts about the Alliance

Christian life and a fortiori Assumptionist life is a pilgrimage, « un chemin de vie, un chemin de sainteté ». In 2005, we were witnesses to the joyful birth and « baptism » of the Alliance. This Chapter is allowing us to continue on our journey; the week has been an opportunity for reflection and for deepening our fraternity.

Our goal has been to continue looking for ways to draw more closely together. Our desire has been to find ways together to accompany lay people as they respond to their call to follow the Lord as part of the Assumption and to help all religious enter into a process inspired already by Vatican II and then the Synod on the Laity, and ratified by the Congregation at its last General Chapter.

In just a few days, we have succeeded in defining more precisely the contours of a “Chemin de Vie” (or Rule of Life) that will help all lay people drawn to the Assumption to deepen their knowledge of our charism and mission and enable them to continue on their own journey of discovery and involvement. It will also assist those lay people who desire to be more formally incorporated into our Assumption



family. And defining more precisely the ways in which the lay and religious members of the family can join together at all levels of our Assumptionist life: prayer, fraternal life, mission and also animation and governance.

I thank our lay brothers and sisters for their energetic and inspired contribution to this 32nd General Chapter, and more personally I thank them for the testimony of their faith and their love for the Assumption which have taught me more than I can say.

May the Spirit continue to accompany us on the path that he has set before us.

**Richard E. Lamoureux, a.a.,
Superior General**

(for the complete text, please visit www.assumptio.org)

How I have lived this General Chapter

The Holy Spirit has created in us the desire to form a family of lay and religious Assumptionists pursuing the same goal: the Advent of God's reign. The incorporation of lay people into the family of the Assumption is a result of rediscovery of the authenticity of our Congregation. The chapter has unfolded the mind of the founder Emmanuel d'Alzon regarding the place and the role of lay people in the family of the Assumption and the adaptation of this role in our context. The ideas of the General Chapter (2005) have become a reality and not just a dream.

What about the enrichment of the

charism of the Assumption family? I am graciously proud and joyously convicted to say that lay Assumptionists have made a covenant, not only with the Congregation, but also with God. We, the lays, have adopted the charism of the Congregation and thus have committed ourselves to be defenders of the rights of God and of the human person. The chapter has taught me that the call to be a lay Assumptionist is a vocation from God and should be taken seriously.

The retreat reflections animated by Fr. Alessandro Laini leads me to the conviction that, just as the Father sent the Son, the Son sends lay

Assumptionists with the promise of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Good News through our being, our words and our actions. Assumptionists are really men of faith, communion and solidarity, as witnessed by this Chapter.

This chapter is really a pilgrimage leading to way of holiness as I witness with joy the enthusiasm, fraternity, diversity and internationality being expressed by the capitular members. What can I say! God bless the Assumption Family.

**Jane Mputhia
LA Africa Province**

Letters from our readers

I especially appreciated Fr. Richard's quite remarkable opening remarks. May they offer precious suggestions for your deliberations.

I believe, with many others in the Congregation and indeed throughout the Church, in the unique importance of the Lay- Religious Alliance. There are many ways of speaking about this Alliance. One way one is to see it simply as an insistence on more cooperation between people in the Church, Rather than running on parallel lines that never meet, and sometimes are opposed to one other, we are being invited by the Spirit to share gifts and Charisms for the good of Church, World and Kingdom.

Again, many thanks for keeping us so well informed, and may the Holy Spirit guide and inspire your every decision.

Fr. Oliver Blanchette, a.a. (Worcester – North America)

Greetings from Mexico. We rejoice with you for the work you are carrying out in the General Chapter, and feel united to you through prayer.

Thank you for your efforts in the service of our religious and lay family; we ask Our Lord Jesus Christ to send his Holy Spirit so that, under his guidance, you will make present to the world the will of the Father, and that together we may continue to work at expanding his Kingdom. May we, prompted by the spirit of our founder, Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon, find the path our family is expected to follow in the coming years.

God bless you, and let Him be close to you during these three weeks.

Thank you again for keeping us informed through this Journal of the Chapter.

*Fr. Oswaldo García Sánchez,
(Casa Manuel, México)*

Every day I come to absorb the Journal of the Chapter, to my great contentment. There I can see the capacity for work you are displaying, and the fruit it bears.

My sincere thanks for your effort and dedication and,



above all, for being attentive to the Spirit who, as it clearly appears, is enlightening you. Both this community and our parish community pray each day that the Lord will remain close to you.

I see that today you are going to work on the Alliance. I agree with Sister Cristina that, together, lay and religious, we are doing a lot of good for the Church in its mission of proclaiming the Kingdom of God and making it present to the world. I would love that, as a result of the Chapter, some new steps may be taken in this Alliance and, most of all, that a Way of Life and some kind of structure be given to this process.

May the Lord bless you all as well as the whole Congregation, which, though small, has a great future ahead of her, as Jean François Petit says.

P. Julián Lucas a.a. (Leganés – Spain)

I wish to thank God for this General Chapter. I am very sad for not being able to attend myself and then share the experience with everyone.

I am in full agreement with Sr. Cristina Ocaña's opinion concerning the lay people.

I pray that this Chapter find the best possible way to spread the Word with the Assumptionist spirit, and that the Alliance between the religious and the lay people be strengthened.

Carlos Jiménez Colorado, lay Assumptionist (Leganés – Spain)

Today's Program

The General Government

Morning

Plenary Session :

- Community Organization: presentation «General government», and ramifications for our statutes.
- Presentation Provinces of Northern Europe and Spain

Afternoon

Plenary Session:

- Fr. General replies to questions
- Steps for the elections.

The word of the day

**«The kitchen will not become the chapel
or the parlor the bathroom»**

Fr. Claude Maréchal,
speaking of the new community organization
(« The changes will be real but not so radical »)