



DIARY OF THE CHAPTER

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

Father Benoît Grière new Superior General

Editorial

Prima verba

Fr. Benoît Grière
(Moments after his election)

“I accept my election.

Last Saturday when we chose a biblical model as a symbol of the Superior General, I chose St. Paul: an Apostle, a man of conviction and enthusiasm... but I am not Saint Paul. I am more like Moses with an iron will but aware of his limitations.

I have had some health problems these last months. I am aware of these limitations which are not only physical but also human and spiritual as well. The Lord sometimes lets us travel difficult roads but he always guides us toward the Promised Land: For us in the Assumption, the Promised Land is called the Kingdom. Disciples of Emmanuel d'Alzon, this is the road we must take. We do so with this sentence from St. Augustine in mind: “It is better to have a lame person on the road than a runner in the ditch.” I have also fallen. But brothers helped me to get up.

Today, our Congregation is made up of all these brothers: sometimes falling but still limping along. I accept to continue on this road toward the Kingdom. With you!

Let us give thanks for all those who accept to take on responsibilities because they help us to be faithful to the Gospel.” ■



Benoît Grière was born on May 22, 1985, in Chauny (France).

After completing his secondary education in Epernay (Marne), he studied medicine at Reims (1976-85) and, simultaneously, began his studies in Philosophy in preparation for the priesthood (1981-87).

He pursued his theological studies at the Seminary of Reims (1987-89) and then at the Catholic Institute of Paris (1989-93). He holds a Masters Degree in Theology.

He did his military service in Dakar (Senegal), as research assistant at the Orstom Institute, nutrition section (1985-86).

He entered the Congregation of the Augustinians of the Assumption (Assumptionists) in 1991 having completed his Novitiate in Sceaux (Hauts-de-Seine) and he was ordained a priest in 1995 in Epernay.

In 1995, he was named to Madagascar as coordinator of health services in

the diocese of Toliara and, in 1999, became professor of Theology in the Seminary of Fianarantsoa. He also served as pastor, prison physician and director for the Center for Nutritional Rehabilitation. In 1998, he was named to the ethics committee for the Catholic Church in Madagascar.

He returned to France in 1999 as First Assistant to the Provincial of France, with specific responsibility for Bayard Press (2002-2005).

Since 2005, he has been the Superior of the Province of France for the Augustinians of the Assumption, a Province which today comprises 252 members, in 41 communities, in France as well in Eastern Europe, Italy (Florence), the Near East, Africa (Togo) and Asia (Korea, Vietnam). Fr. Benoît Grière is a Knight of the National Order of Merit (France). His favorite hobby is reading mystery novels.

My Voice at the Chapter



I'm aware that I do not have everything I need to do all the work that is expected of us. Nevertheless, this Chapter is becoming for me like a Kairos, a manifestation of God's grace through the fraternal relations that

unite us. The texts we are working on are very important. They will guide the whole Congregation for the next six years. But so that they can really be useful they need to correspond to the realities of our communities and to our persons. We need to be fed from this invisible but real body that is the Assumption where each of our names is important and where we find the Lord in the very midst of our human relations. From the beginning of the Chapter article 3 of the Rule of St. Augustine has echoed in me: "First of all, since you have come together in community, live in a household of perfect unity, having but one mind and one heart intent on God." For this to become a reality, we have to face two great challenges. One, adapt our structures to the new situations while maintaining a sense of belonging to the same family and allowing a better distribution of our strengths. Second, reinvent solidarity among our communities through a better distribution of our human and financial resources. Yes, we are faced with great challenges but we know that hundreds of people, lay and religious, are praying for us. This week we will elect the new team that will guide us on this challenging road. I ask the Lord, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, to help us to elect those brothers in whom He has placed his trust. I pray that they will be able to leave aside their human interests to look solely to God and to what He expects today from the sons of Fr. d'Alzon.

Fr. Juan Antonio Sanchez (Spain)

There are some events that I can't get used to. One of them is meeting those Assumptionist brothers who are involved in the apostolate from around the world. There are more than 30 here. This doesn't happen often but they affect me deeply especially if I already know some of them. They are getting to be more and more numerous. What warm cordiality! It overcomes the language barriers that always exist a little. Praying together in different languages produces an exceptional feeling of unity, even if one needs to twist his tongue around some words.



We are gathered here to take some important decisions. In a democratic way. This causes some complications because the system is far from perfect. But there is none better. We will make it. These decisions are coming in the weeks ahead. Until now we have been focused on the foundational themes of our spirituality (Men of faith proposing the faith; Men of Communion in solidarity with the poor) and the Lay-Religious Alliance. This is done first of all in "workshops", a fruitful method. We hear some impressive experiences of human need that inspire us and strengthen our desire to devote ourselves to the service of others. Then comes sharing in full assembly. We take orientations and the concrete means to compose Chapter documents that will inspire our brothers around the world.

But I think that it is the way the Chapter members will be changed that will influence the brothers at home because all this preliminary work is like a common and profound meditation.

Fr. Jan Zuiker (Holland - North Europe)



Taking part in a General Chapter for the first time is a grace. The General Chapter makes me experience what the Rule of Life means: "The one who unites us is stronger than what divides us". We establish links of fraternity across the barriers of language, of color of the skin, of differences in culture. The question I always have is: 'How to take into account the whole body, when I take the floor and speak?'

I am aware that the event in which I am taking part is of the utmost importance. We are invited to face up to challenges: evangelizing our societies, our pastoral approach to young people, proposing relationships of communion with our Christian brothers from other confessions.

The General Chapter will give us some tools for the coming six years or, as the preacher of our retreat put it, a compass that will point to our main pastoral and apostolic orientations so we can better implement our commitment as a Church following on the steps of Jesus Christ. The love of Christ will be our only strength, with which to overcome the "crises" of all sorts that we will have to face in our several missions. The love of Christ prompts us to love the Church, sinner but pardoned, who give birth to us in the love of the Father.

In spite of all the doubts I felt when I was chosen for coming to this Chapter, now I am grateful; and to finish I borrow the words of the Psalmist "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord" (Psalm 116, 12).

Fr. Lucian Dîncă (Bucharest - France)