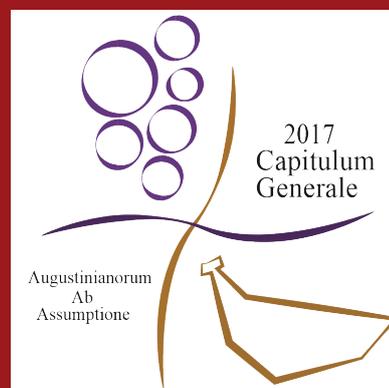


THE NUMBER OF THE DAY

52 Communities at the birth of the Province of Europe on April 29, 2014, with 341 Religious, 52 communities in 18 countries and on 4 continents. In 2016, the Province has a total of 137 brothers in formation.

THE DOCUMENT OF THE DAY

How to transmit the charism ? An analysis by Fr. Richard Lamoureux (Province of North America/Philippines), former Superior General.



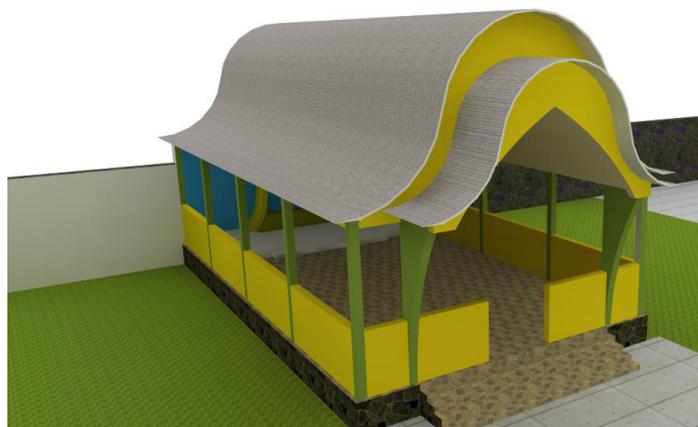
Info

33rd General Chapter of the Assumptionists

April 28 - May 17, 2017

Day 5 | May 2, 2017

THE LAY-RELIGIOUS ALLIANCE IS HERE TO STAY



Future grotto for the Emmanuel d'Alzon Center in Goma (Democratic Republic of Congo) which mobilizes a great number of lay persons

It is worth noting that it was a result of the call of the lay people and the Oblate Sisters that the Religious of the Province of Africa established a community in Goma in 2012. Today, some 400 lay people come to the Emmanuel Parish regularly. They have many projects such as the plans for a grotto seen above. This is what the members of the Chapter discovered as they viewed a 30 minute film featuring the leaders of the group

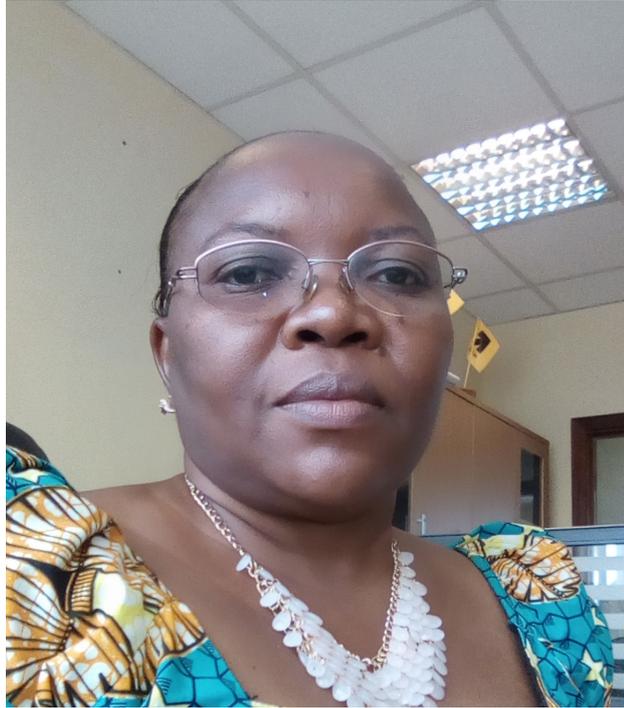
along with their Pastor, Fr Roger. They shared their every day experience and the dream for an Assumptionist fraternity. The lay Assumptionists have recently celebrated their 25th Anniversary. This morning was dedicated to a review of the Provinces beginning with the Province of Europe in no less than four continents and a return to the Lay-Religious Alliance (see below). Fr General repeated that the Alliance is here to stay. Representatives from the International Commission which is composed of two Religious and three lay members, showed how their mandate requires that they continue their work. The Chapter will return to this topic.

Two other items are to be noted on this rainy day. First of all, the presentation of projections for the demographic future of the Congregation as established by the general team. From 2004 to 2014, the Congregation had an average of 42 Novices each year. The exercise reveals that in 2025 the number of religious should be in steady growth and the age pyramid should return to a

normal curve. About 498 religious should be in initial formation as opposed to 317 in 2014. Much work ahead for the Formators. The only concern: the current weakness of the intermediary ages where we usually find the superiors, the formators and directors of works. "But we are a body and we need to discover the lessons of history including the lost dynamism of those countries that held the record for missionaries (France in 1900, the Netherlands in 1950)," said Fr. General. He is pleading for a constructive realism, in favor of a more perfect corporate awareness which requires mutual recognition of persons and resources. Let us share everything in common, according the Rule of St Augustine.!

Hence the second concrete aspect of our conversation concerning the community organization of the Assumption to accompany a rapid development of the Congregation and its mission. The time has come for more adequate structures capable of responding to the needs of the mission. Some initial proposals, especially the establishment of Vicariates, will be studied during the Chapter. This means the establishment of territories under the jurisdiction of a Provincial with some delegated responsibilities to free the Provincial from some of his duties. This will be the charge of one of the capitular commissions that were established this same day. Nine of them have begun their work: statutes (established beforehand), finances, community organization, youth and vocations, charism, personal requests, priority missions, education, formation. On Wednesday we turn to another obligatory aspect of the Chapter: the mobilizing works.

Br. Robert Migliorini



Stella Kahambu Vumilia, member of the leadership committee for the Lay Assumptionists in Kinshasa.

The Assumptionists of the Alliance

**Chantal from Québec, Stella from the Congo,
The lay Assumptionists participate fully in the Chapter**

13 lay people representing the six Provinces were invited to participate in this first week of the General Chapter.

For us lay members, this week has been a real chance to see, understand and put words and images on what happens beyond the Provinces where we are attached.

The group of lay people is composed of 13 members : 10 women and 3 men, ranging in age from 44, the youngest, to 69, the eldest.

Their professional activities, either current or in the past, vary from health care (mid-wife, psychologist) to education (teaching,

administration) as well as journalism, commerce. Our journey and our encounter with the Assumption are diverse. The Alliance is lived in a variety of ways. For those outside the Province of Europe, it is often connected with parishes staffed by Assumptionists and slowly the Assumption charism found its way into the lives of these lay persons.

What is the General Chapter ? For many it is something to discover. For two of them it is almost routine. Paco, representing the international commission, and Jef, very much involved in the Belgian schools, have three General Chapters to their credit. Jef notes that if the presence of lay people has become normal for the brothers, there has been quite an evolution over the last 12 years.

During the period of introductions, Mary from Kenya and Stella from the Congo, both in France for the first time, gave moving testimonies of the Alliance in the Province of Africa. The lay people have their own ministry to the sick or people in trouble. They do not hesitate to organize activities of a spiritual or social nature to live the family spirit.

Luciola shared the experience of the Alliance in Brazil. They meet monthly under the guidance of Fr. Marcos. Solidarity and affirmation of the members is shown with regular gatherings at the homes of one or other so that no fees are needed for persons coming from other regions. Chantal from Quebec and Patricia from the USA helped us discover the diverse forms the Alliance takes in the Province of North America which includes Mexico and the Philippines where there exists great economic and political disparity . The Canadians and Americans are mostly retired people but are active in the animation of the Shrines. The USA group sponsors two young students in the Philippines.



Chantal Rouette, Lay Assumptionist from Quebec.

Sylvia from Argentina, Nancy from Chile and Victoria from Colombia showed us the projects of the Alliance in the Andean Province such as the Mi Hogar Association which offers street people or the very poor a place to spend the day and have a shower and a good meal.

Karem, Marie-Claire, Jef, Paco and Jean-Nicolas of the Province of Europe, followed with the various projects of this extended Province.

These presentations were not given without a certain degree of apprehension. We are all sensitive to the hospitality, openness and the diversity that is allowed in this chapter. The attentive ear of the brothers, the informal exchanges that show how much the experiences of the Alliance are needed even when they cannot be copied because of the different economic realities.

The international commission is progressing slowly with the publication of the “Way of Life”, approved in 2014 by the Plenary General Council and the “Protocol of Formation” approved in 2015. But work still remains to prepare a common text for those who wish to make promises and to respond to requests from brothers of other Provinces.

Marie-Claire ROUQUET

How to transmit the charism today

First a warning: any charism (and specifically a religious charism) worth its salt resists easy transmission. It's not just a few ideas or a set of activities, but a way of life: a way of thinking, of feeling, of acting, and even of speaking. It's a complex of things, brought together often unexpectedly as a result of one person's experience. It's something very personal to the founder, but what's unusual about the charism of a religious community is that it's one person's experience in which others discover a deep (perhaps the deepest) dimension of who they are themselves. Specifically, as Assumptionists we share in the vocation and spiritual experience of our founder. We identify with him and his particular way of living and proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ.

If all of that is true, then to grow in the charism and to be able to transmit it, we would do well to know Emmanuel d'Alzon and to love him. We need to know how he experienced God's call and how he thought best to respond to it. I've found it important to know about the challenges and even the sufferings (doubts, questions, failures, opposition and persecution) that Fr. d'Alzon confronted in responding to God's guidance and in overcoming the road-blocks set in his way. Knowing of those challenges made it easier for me to identify with Fr. d'Alzon and grow in love for him.

One of the best ways I've found to do this is to read his extant letters, many of which have been translated into different languages. They are personal communications of thoughts and

feelings and experiences that can only be inferred when we read his more formal, public, prepared writings. The letters give flesh to the more theoretical or spiritual texts, and they're written in a less formal, simpler language. They make reference to all of his projects and their development over the years, but as he reveals himself to his good friends, like Luglien d'Esgrigny and Sister Marie-Eugénie, we get a rich sense of his vocation and of his humanity.

This needs to be supplemented, however, by reading some of Fr. d'Alzon's more systematic writings. Of course, I have some favorites. They strike me as concise expressions of what the charism of the Assumption is. The best of all is a talk that Fr. d'Alzon gave to his brothers who asked him the question: what exactly does it mean to be an Assumptionist? The founder knew that these men were the future leaders of the Assumption family, and he needed to give them some good guidance. In 1868 the closing address he gave to the men gathered in Nîmes for a major event, a General Chapter, is the best expression I know of the Assumption charism. It's worth reading and rereading, and it is sure to awaken in the reader a good amount of enthusiasm. Later, he provided the person entrusted with forming the future generation of Assumptionists, the Master of Novices, some good advice on how to "make" a good Assumptionist. Read especially the first and second letters. Then, Fr. d'Alzon tried to summarize some of his spiritual teaching in a text he called the Directory. The book is meant to be a practical manual for becoming



Opening celebration, Valpre, Friday, April 28 with three Superiors General, present and past.

an Assumptionist (like the Exercises of St. Ignatius) and includes some useful reflections on various aspects of the charism.

So... some reading and thinking will be useful and necessary if you want to know and then transmit the charism. But this is far from adequate. We also need to let ourselves be transformed by the spirit of Fr. d'Alzon, which he tried to communicate in what he wrote. In other words, we have to become living witnesses of that spirit. People will come to know the charism and be attracted to it when they see how it can transform a person's life... my life, your life. After all, people are more touched by witnesses than by words. We can't hope to be good "transmitters" unless we become good witnesses. How often have I heard it said about the Assumptionists: "I don't know how to define it, but there's something special and different about them." That something special and different is the charism.

Transmitting to others this life, that we call a charism, will make it possible for it to continue to enrich the lives of others. And it too, in turn, will be enriched by the character and grace of each person who calls himself a disciple of Fr. d'Alzon. That might surprise us, but perhaps it's the same phenomenon that Jesus was referring to when he told his disciples that they would complete the work he had begun.

Maybe you expected a simple answer to the question of how to transmit the charism. If the transmission were easy, the charism would not be as rich as what we've received from our venerable founder.

Fr. Richard E. Lamoureux, a.a.

1 May 2017