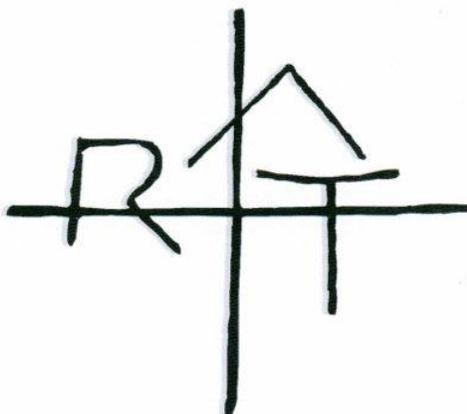


*«Faithful to Emmanuel d'Alzon...
for the coming of the Kingdom»*



Acts of the General Chapter of the Augustinians of the Assumption
Rome, May 2-23, 2011

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Preface

Our religious family closed out the celebration of the bicentennial of Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon's birth in the context of the 32nd General Chapter. The coincidence of these two events reminds us that we are called to be at one and the same time heirs and founders, "Faithful to Emmanuel d'Alzon for the coming for the Kingdom". For we are, hand in hand, heirs of a rich apostolic past and founders called to respond to the challenges of new times. *The old things have passed away; behold, new things have come* (II Co 5:17). We can give thanks that the Chapter took place in a climate of peace and openness to the Spirit and we can say that it allowed us to move forward in renewing our missionary dynamism.

Six years ago, at the previous chapter, it was asked that we not multiply texts, but that we encourage action. The 2011 Chapter wished to keep the essential of what had been edited before and to focus our attention on taking a step forward in fostering a new commitment to apostolic zeal. The look itself of the Acts is tangibly different than that of preceding chapters. There is quite clearly an important place given to the messages, but especially to an important text entitled, "Fundamental Orientations," which insists on our triple vocation as men of faith, of communion, and men in solidarity with the poorest. For the last six years we have really deepened this Assumptionist trilogy. It has become familiar to us and we have tried to put it into practice day after day. Our lay friends, who have been taken up with our trilogy, challenged us and requested that we go further in the definition of each of these orientations. I think we have made significant progress.

The Assumptionists do not want to succumb to the sense of hopelessness which has invaded society and Church alike. We tried to be attentive to the signs of the time, but we wanted to interpret them in the

light of the Gospel, that is to say, a light that is characterized by faith, hope, and charity. We do not want to despair of the world and we know that, in spite of the crisis of our age, our Lord remains present; he does not abandon us. I invite you to read these texts and find in them the traces of the God of Jesus Christ and the presence of the Spirit.

We wanted to give thanks to God for everything that he gives us and for everything that he desires to accomplish through us. It would be arrogant of us, and inappropriate, to say that we had a “theological” chapter, but it would not be misguided to say that our reflection was deeply rooted in the spiritual life. The Assumption wants to be marked by a Christocentric and Trinitarian tradition. It is because we are chosen by God that we are his sons and that we are sent by him to bear witness in the Spirit of his love.

The Chapter took up the delicate question of community reorganization and geographical divisions. We didn't want to make this the focus of our discussions realizing, and rightly so, that this issue was one that dealt more with means and that what was paramount for us was a discussion of our mission. But we quickly came to a consensus on this matter, a sign, if there need be one, that the Spirit was working in our hearts. There is nothing revolutionary about the way the Assumption is to be organized; rather is it a question of an evolution which will allow our religious family to be more prepared to respond to the challenges of the mission today. The decision to give certain authority to the *Plenary General Council* was taken so that there could be greater co-responsibility among provinces. The principle of subsidiarity remains at the heart of our organization, and the local community is the stage, par excellence, where we show how we belong to the Assumption. But we wanted to take into account a more effective internationality and a desire to be ready for mission. The ‘continentalization’ of the Assumption will take place gradually. It will respect the rhythm proper for each province.

The Chapter strongly insisted on the quality of our religious life and the meaning of our consecration. We reaffirmed, with strong conviction, that we desire to follow Christ chaste, poor, and obedient. Religious life is not a yoke that bridles our freedom, but provides us with so many opportunities to live in profound harmony with the will of the Father and this so that we can hasten the coming of the Kingdom in us and around us. Community life, then, stands as the privileged place for our vocation. A place of truth, a place of progress. An Assumptionist is one who lives in apostolic community. He must time and again return to the depth of his commitment. The key word of the 32nd General Chapter was that of communion: communion with God, communion in the Church, communion of mankind, communion with the cosmos.

I nourish a special wish, that the reading of the Acts of the Chapter may foster in each and every one of us a firm desire to put them into practice. If we are able to do so, we will be more faithful to the Gospel and thus more inclined to pursue the work of Emmanuel d'Alzon. In this way we will work more effectively for communion and reconciliation. And the holiness of our Founder will be more clearly manifest.

Fr. Benoît Grière a.a.
Superior general

Promulgated, Monday, May 23, 2011

Faithful to Emmanuel d'Alzon

Our Fundamental Orientations

Hope at a time of crisis

*"I must love this world.
I must evangelize it."
(E. d'Alzon)*

- 1.** We are undergoing a serious economic and financial crisis. It demonstrates the degree to which globalization has led us to be interdependent and aggravates to an even greater extent the inequalities that exist among countries. It causes great anxiety regarding the future, especially among the poor. It encourages a lack of trust in the financial system, in international regulatory organizations and in politics in general. In response, new forms of solidarity have been launched, and others are coming into being.
- 2.** Terrorist threats and armed conflicts persist and give rise to misunderstandings among peoples. They heighten the tensions among different religious confessions. At the same time, faced with the pressure of immigration from the South, the West is tempted to draw back within its borders. At a time when foreigners are perceived as a threat, Christians are organizing themselves so as to defend the most fundamental rights of those who are seeking to live a better life.
- 3.** Meanwhile, ecological imbalances reveal the limitations of a development model based solely on material growth with little concern for the proper use of energy resources. This obliges us to rethink at some depth our way of living and of consuming, even in our communities, which have not escaped the influence of consumerism.

4. A crisis of confidence also affects the Church at a time when it is confronting growing secularism. Ecumenical dialogue seems to be at a stand-still. Catholicism itself is dealing with tensions that threaten its communion. Sexual abuse and the manner in which the pedophilia crisis has been handled have discredited the Church and its leaders, generating at times a climate of discouragement and a feeling of abandonment among lay people and in religious communities.¹

5. In this context of crisis which has an impact on the way we think and live, on our resources, and even on our hope, the general chapter reaffirms its trust in the future that God offers to the world, to the Church, to religious life, and to the Assumption Family. It is to this future that our religious life seeks to give witness, particularly among younger people who are searching for meaning in their lives. For this reason, the three themes from the chapter of 2005, “men of communion, announcing the faith, in solidarity with the poor,” still seem relevant for today and able to provide guidelines for our personal life and for our communities, as well as for our mission.

¹ See Benedict XVI's *Letter to the Catholics of Ireland* (March 20, 2010).

Men of Faith

For one's personal life

Convictions

6.
 - Faith is a gift from God.
 - It comes into being and matures through listening to His Word. It calls for a free response and entails a personal decision. It takes flesh in the life of those who put it into practice, in particular among those who place themselves at the service of the poor.
 - In a world seeking its bearings, religious life rooted in faith in Christ is a source of encouragement and challenges conventional ways.
 - Faith enlightens our life and makes of us disciples of Jesus Christ and witnesses of the Gospel.

Means

7. Personal prayer, *lectio divina*, care given to liturgical prayer and the presentation of the faith in all its forms, time given to personal retreats and the regular practice of the sacraments are ways of strengthening our faith. They require a certain discipline (*Rule of Life*, #51).
8. We urge superiors, at the provincial and general levels, to see to it that religious take advantage of spiritual direction in order to reflect in the light of faith on their experience in community and in the apostolate.

9. Furthermore, superiors should encourage religious, in the context of their continuing formation, to take study seriously so as to strengthen their faith and their apostolic vocation.

For the fraternal life

Convictions

10. - Community life is the natural setting that helps us to grow in the faith. It provides brothers with an opportunity to encourage each other in their spiritual journey and in their apostolic service. Faith blossoms in this mystery of communion in which we participate with those lay people who share the charism of our religious family: together we are more attentive to the promptings of the Spirit.
 - Fraternal life in community is a unique way of witnessing to the faith. It helps to open us to the signs of the times and to challenge the tendency toward individualism.
 - In the sharing of bread, of God's Word, of prayer and of daily life, our fraternal communion and our common mission are signs of the Kingdom.

Means

11. To nourish this fraternity in faith, fidelity to the community's liturgical prayer, frequent reflection together on the Gospel, and the regular celebration of the Eucharist by religious in community are indispensable. In each of our houses, an oratory should be foreseen.
12. We ask that our celebrations be open to the laity. Likewise, the community dimension of our parishes can be a concrete expression of the faith to which we want to witness.

For the mission

Convictions

- 13.** Proclaiming the faith, a challenge for the believer and for the world, for the Church and for society, requires that we be men who are convinced of our faith.

- 14.**
 - If we want to speak about the risen Lord we need to be attentive to the different expectations that we encounter on the various continents where we are located, each of which presents its own particular traits.
 - In Latin America, the encounter with those who have distanced themselves from the Church and with those who suffer the effects of violence leads us to transform the traditional ministry of our parishes.
 - In Africa, ethnic conflicts and the suffering caused by war and corruption lead us to promote a ministry of reconciliation and truth by developing the ideals of justice, of peace, of unity, and of the defense of the inalienable rights of the human person.
 - In Asia, where Christians are in the minority, faith calls us to live in dialogue with different cultures and religions and to be attentive to the poor.
 - In our mission in Eastern Europe, difficult ecumenical relations with the Orthodox make us pursue the work of dialogue and of prayer in truth.
 - In Western Europe and in North America, secularization and religious indifference invite us to enter into that new arena of dialogue that Benedict XVI has called the “Courtyard of the Gentiles”, a place of dialogue “with those for whom religion is something foreign, for whom God is unknown, and who nonetheless do not want to stay simply without God, but approach Him at least as the ‘Unknown’.”

- The growing presence of Islam requires of us a response that has a religious, social and service dimension. A serious effort in terms of Islamic studies is also required.

15. These different expectations should be of concern to all Assumptionists. In responding to them, we will learn to appreciate the true value of our own culture and to listen to what the Holy Spirit says in speaking through the voice of another culture.

Means

16. In order to evangelize we insist especially on education (schools, universities, centers for theological formation), communication (publications, journalism, radio), the digital world (Internet, new social networks), parishes, pilgrimages, hospitality centers, and Assumptionist volunteer groups. These require us to be attentive to world events, thus enriching the social dimension of our faith.
17. But these means have not prevented some Christians, in society, in the heart of the Church and even in our own midst, from being at the source of scandals such as corruption, discrimination, social injustice and sexual abuse. We are saddened and outraged by such injustice. As members of a Church that puts its faith in Jesus Christ, we cannot remain silent. Our desire is to awaken renewed hope.
18. To do this, we ask that we make an effort to renew our work of evangelization both in its content and in its language in order to denounce firmly and with courage all compromise and injustice. In this way, we will bear powerful witness to a faith in Jesus Christ that is free, even to the point of risking our very lives.

- 19.** It is in this faith as disciples that we discover the most fundamental sign of our religious identity.

Men of Communion

20. As Assumptionists we are attentive to the world around us. For us, to be men of communion means fostering greater respect for and understanding of the cultures where we are called to announce the Good News of Jesus Christ.

21. Our fraternal communion draws its energy from the communion to be found in the Trinity, as well as finding its source and model there. God's plan for the world is to form one single people. The motto, *Adveniat Regnum Tuum*, given to our religious family by Father Emmanuel d'Alzon, prompts us to work, in the Church, according to the spirit of Saint Augustine, for the coming of the Kingdom of Christ, a Kingdom of unity and of peace (*Rule of Life*, #13).

For our personal life

Convictions

22. In a world marked by different kinds of conflict, by difficulties in communication and by forces that disperse rather than draw together, religious life authentically lived can be a source of personal integration. This is achieved by serious interior work, as much at the human as at the spiritual level, by giving a central place in particular to the Eucharist, source of all true communion.

23. By a greater openness of spirit and of heart, unity becomes possible. It requires, of each religious, a daily conversion and an active participation in the life of his community. Communion achieved in this way thus becomes a sign of the Kingdom for all.

Means

24. Communion is the result of an ever greater effort of attentiveness to daily life and to the sharing and regular review of the apostolate.
25. If we desire to grow in our awareness of belonging to one single body in the Congregation, our communion will oblige us to welcome brothers with great respect for their place of origin and to take an interest in the realities being lived in different Assumptionist communities throughout the world. The Chapter recommends:
 26. at the level of the provinces:
 - involvement, during the years of initial formation, in a pastoral program with people of other cultures and religions, with immigrants and refugees;
 - the organization of meetings for all religious, at regular intervals, on topics such as the integration of the interior life, conflict management, and intercultural relations;
 27. at the level of the Congregation:
 - the organization of a workshop that would enable the participants, after five years of apostolic work, to rediscover and embrace anew the basics of religious life.

For the fraternal life

Convictions

28. Community is where we as religious can live communion. In a world often deeply divided but also longing for unity, our common life, at once international and intercultural, “bears

witness that Christ is alive among us and unites us for the proclamation of the Gospel" (*Rule of Life*, #12).

29. Fraternal life is a gift received from God, but it is also a task to be accomplished. Our efforts to build an authentic fraternal life are an expression of our desire for deeper communion, in particular with the Assumption laity. This kind of fraternal life witnesses to Gospel principles. It is sustained by personal and community prayer.

Means

30. To take the fraternal life seriously requires of each religious an ever more intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

31. The Chapter recommends :
- that our communities become open to all, especially the Assumption laity. With them we are called to be men of communion;
 - that our brothers living in areas of conflict become agents of unity and of peace;
 - that the Plenary General Council study the eventual founding of an international community in a geographic area marked by deep tension. Such a foundation would be a prophetic sign that reconciliation is always possible.

For the mission

Convictions

32. Assumptionist religious life is by its nature prophetic. It announces and anticipates the celestial banquet (Mt 22:1-13). It prefigures the communion to which all are called by God.

33. Like our founder, we want to work for the unity of the Church. We reaffirm our desire for communion wherever tensions exist.
34. Firmly committed to ecumenism, we want to work for the growth of our mission in Eastern Europe.
35. We want to express our communion with the entire universe by contributing to the well-being and integrity of creation, which “awaits with an ardent longing the revelation of the sons of God” (Rm 8:19).

Means

The Chapter makes the following recommendations:

36. at the level of the provinces:
 - to foster personal convictions and community initiatives that are respectful of the environment;
 - to help our parishes, our educational institutions, and our media be more effective in their service of communion in all of its forms;
 - to establish cultural and interreligious centers in order to facilitate conversation and encounters of different kinds;
 - to promote collaboration, especially with the laity of the Alliance, at the service of the mission within the Assumption Family.
37. at the level of the Congregation:
 - to make of our *Center of Saint Peter/Saint Andrew* in Bucharest a tool at the service of the entire Congregation so as to raise the awareness of our members to ecumenism and to Patristic and Byzantine studies;
 - to promote, as a sign of the unity of the Congregation and through the work of the Plenary General Council, a greater

mobility of religious, particularly at the time of their first apostolic assignment.

In Solidarity with the Poor & the Least in our Midst

Propter amorem Domini nostri Iesu Christi

38. Only the love of Jesus Christ, who became poor and the servant of all, makes it possible for us to give our lives for others. *Propter amorem...* Our love for Him urges us to imitate Him and live like Him in solidarity with the least among us.
39. Prayer, which draws us ever closer to him, leads us to be attentive to others, especially with the simple and humble. It enables us to be in solidarity with those who suffer and struggle for justice and peace. Prayer unifies our life. It gives coherence to our words and our deeds. It enables us to get involved and to become signs of hope, despite the difficulties of the work.

A crisis: for us, a sign of the times

40. The financial crisis that is shaking our world, with both human and social consequences, is for us a sign of the times. It affects every country, reveals the fragility of our economic system, and accentuates inequalities among people and among nations. It is creating new forms of poverty and reveals the seeds of avarice present in all of us.
41. However, this crisis has also awakened new forms of resistance as well as new ways of sharing, by giving rise to new networks of solidarity and of social alternatives. New movements have arisen that invite us to live more simply, to fight against waste, to protect the environment. These initiatives should encourage our communities to embrace these attitudes and take part in those

associations or non-governmental organizations that work along these lines. The involvement of our lay brothers and sisters, especially Assumption laity, encourage us in this direction.

A call to new choices

42. This crisis leads us to rethink our choices. It leads us to rediscover the meaning and the practice of the common good and to work against a climate simply of competition and profit.
43. The Chapter calls us to rediscover the often-forgotten prophetic character of our religious commitment, rooted in gratuity and sharing, respect and attentiveness to others, compassion and careful listening. Poverty is not simply material.
44. The Chapter calls us to convert those attitudes which focus more on giving than receiving and to learn how to welcome everything that the poor can reveal to us about the Gospel.

In keeping with our tradition

45. The General Chapter invites us to rediscover the living sources of our Augustinian and Assumptionist social tradition: the overall project of social transformation envisioned by Emmanuel d'Alzon, Etienne Pernet's passion for families, the humble work of Victorin Galabert and Henri Halluin, the fervor of the alumniates, our struggle for the rights of God and the poor through journalism and popular pilgrimages, and finally education as a path of liberation.
46. Along these lines:
 - does not the Church invite us to struggle vigorously against the root causes of injustice and to take special care of those who are excluded from economic growth?

- is not the special love of the poor a constitutive element of religious life?
- has not a more demanding poverty marked the great moments of renewal in religious life throughout history?
- do we not have in Saint Augustine and in Father Emmanuel d'Alzon wonderful models?

- 47.** The bare essentials were enough for Augustine. He is unbending on the question of putting all things in common: it is the very condition for "one soul and one heart always turned toward God". Also, do not the rich and the poor both need to work equally hard to change their customary behavior to conform to the Gospel? Augustine was in contact with the poor every day of his life. This learned scholar spent hours instructing, listening to and assisting the poor. Like many other Fathers of the Church he denounced the insolent luxury of the wealthy, a real insult to those in misery. He who does not love God will not know how to love the poor.
- 48.** For Emmanuel d'Alzon, to neglect the good of man is the consequence of having rejected God. God is the bulwark of human dignity. This son of a very wealthy family chose to live a modest life. Throughout his entire life, the poor always had a privileged place. When he worked to form an elite, it was always in order to regenerate society through them, to break down barriers. He was scandalized by the exploitation of workers and the dire misery into which they were plunged. In this spirit, he supported Fr. Pernet's initiatives, and at the end of his life the evangelization of the poor was one of his great preoccupations.

For our personal life

- 49.** The Chapter asks each religious to consider the following points with his community:

50. to promote personal poverty by a “simple and modest life”, it would be important...
- to open one’s eyes to the broader world;
 - to reflect on one’s needs and resources in the context of the needs and resources of the people in one’s surroundings and to know the real value of consumer goods;
 - to evaluate each year the goods one has accumulated and if necessary to redistribute them within the community or to others.
51. to cultivate a love of work, one of the ways in which we live the vow of poverty, it would be important...
- to talk about one’s use of time, in community, in order to evaluate the wisdom of our choices in terms of their impact on our work, our apostolic activity and our study;
 - to question oneself on one’s concrete participation in the common good of the community and to learn to assume certain tasks in view of diminishing expenses.
52. to put all goods fully in common, it would be important...
- to exercise regular accountability for one’s finances, in particular for all income, for all gifts received, gifts offered, and salaries, and even to talk in community about one’s relationships.
53. The Chapter asks that student brothers do all they can, if possible, to find work during school holidays as a way of contributing to the cost of their education. They should do this in consultation with their Superiors (see *Ratio Institutionis*, #107).
54. The Chapter asks each religious to consider the following questions:
- What are my needs?

- What time do I give to the poor in order to grow in compassion and be better aware of the way they live? Do I take part in any charitable organizations?
- What place do the marginalized and the victims of injustice and of war have in my prayer? If they have no place there, do they have a place in my life?
- How much time do I dedicate to my education, whatever my age, on social and economic issues?

For the fraternal life

At the level of the community

- 55.** In order to grow as a community in the practice of the vow of poverty, the Chapter recommends that communities:
- meet on a regular basis to analyze their revenues and expenses and to check on their fidelity to the budget approved at the beginning of the year (*Capitular Rules #210 and #219*);
 - learn to fight against waste, to economize even in simple ways, to draw even from what is necessary to give to others, and finally to make efforts at self-financing;
 - find concrete ways to assist the needy, not only with financial aid. They should also seek to assist the families of those religious suffering from temporary financial difficulties.
 - talk about the Congregation's projects with their friends and benefactors and enlist their financial support;
 - harmonize poverty on the one hand, with beauty, cleanliness and order on the other, for poverty is not misery.
- 56.** The Chapter asks each community to address the following questions:
- Does our way of life make clear that we share all things in common?

- Do we invite to our communities from time to time people who are working at the service of the poor?
- Are we aware of initiatives in favor of the poor in other communities of our province and in other provinces?

At the provincial and general levels

- 57.** The Chapter asks the Council of the each province to see to it:
- that each young person in formation have an experience of the world of work if he has not already done so and that he reflect on this experience with a formator;
 - that each young person be formed, at every stage of his formation, in economic and social questions; that he accompany those in need; and, in the case of some, that they be encouraged to acquire an appropriate formation (in social work, in economics, in law, in psychology);
 - that it prepare treasurers and fund-raisers and follow up on their training and the execution of their duties;
 - that it assure that our educational institutions, parishes and media outlets promote integral human development.
- 58.** The Chapter asks the Plenary General Council to see to it:
- that the sharing of our resources is done in a spirit of communion and of solidarity among provinces;
 - that the Congregation be involved in the International Justice & Peace Commission of the Assumption Family and report on the activities of the Commission;
 - that the effectiveness of the International Office of Development and Solidarity be strengthened, by the involvement of competent lay persons and preferably volunteers.

Returning to Christ

59. A world of greed and wide-spread injustice requires of us a more radical following of Christ. The poor in goods and in spirit have a special place in the Kingdom of God.
60. To witness to this, one needs to be attentive to the Beatitudes and to the Holy Spirit.
61. We are to learn to give from what is necessary and to give our life even to the point of the cross, like the poor widow of the Temple “who gave everything, everything she had to live” (Luke 21:4).

Conclusion

- 62.** “Men of faith and of communion, men in solidarity with the poor” — this “trilogy” sums up the way in which we want to follow Christ in living out our religious consecration, in the spirit of Saint Augustine and following the insights of Father d’Alzon, as witnesses to the hope for which the world longs.
- 63.** To be men of faith means freely welcoming the gift of God and experiencing that encounter with Christ without which our life collapses in ruins, for only in him do we find salvation.
- 64.** To be men of communion means fighting against the spirit of “the One who divides” and working for the coming of a kingdom of justice and peace, within us and around us. It means working for the unity of Christians and for dialogue among peoples of different religions.
- 65.** To be in solidarity with the poor means making it clear that those who are poor in goods and in spirit have a special place in the Kingdom of heaven, the land of the Beatitudes. It means imitating Christ by making oneself a servant, with a special love for the poor.
- 66.** This trilogy invites each one of us to grow as a disciple of Christ, as a brother living in community, and as an apostle at the service of the Kingdom. It is a call addressed to every member of the body that we constitute, to live a religious life that is more authentic, more radical.

For the Coming of the Kingdom

Community Organization

Government

Listing of motives

67. An awareness of the changes that have occurred in the Congregation over the past twenty years, as well as in our social and cultural environment, presses us to rethink our community organization, in such a way as to take into account both our strengths and our weaknesses.
68. Much progress has already been made in the area of interprovincial collaboration and solidarity, and we speak more and more of the Assumption in terms of a “body”. We have come a long way especially in the area of economic solidarity, of common apostolic projects for two or three provinces, and of foundations which were possible only because of interprovincial collaboration, etc.
69. We now need to take a further step, permitting us to strengthen a logic of communion and interdependence. A logic which encourages generosity and solidarity, but according to criteria upon which we decide together and not simply according to those criteria which each province decides by itself.
70. Concretely, it is now a matter of moving towards the creation of a governing structure - a Plenary General Council which would have the possibility of taking decisions from a global perspective and from a plan for the whole of the Congregation with a view to the common good. Reflecting a logic of communion, this structure would have as its first preoccupation the health of the entire

body, without neglecting the individual health of each of its parts and the necessary subsidiarity.

71. That is why the fundamental perspective of the Plenary General Council is that of a collegial organ which must allow dialogue, communion and decision making. Its members must seek to go beyond an attitude of defending their “own” interests in order to pursue those of the entire body.

Modifications to the *Rule of Life*

72.

Actual Text	Modified Text
	57 bis: Inspired by the charism and spirit of Fr. d’Alzon, lay Assumptionists commit themselves by alliance with religious for the coming of the Kingdom. They may form an association of lay Assumptionists within each province, with the authorization of the Superior General. They live in conformity to a rule proper to them, approved by the authorities of each province in which such a request is made.
91. The Assistants make up the Ordinary Council of the Provincial.	91. The Assistants form the Ordinary Council of the provincial. The provincial treasurer has the full rights of an Assistant.
104. The General Chapter exercises extraordinary authority over the Institute. Ordinary authority is exercised by the Superior General with the help of the General Council and the Council of the Congregation.	104. The General Chapter exercises extraordinary authority over the Institute. Ordinary authority is exercised by the Superior General with the help of the Ordinary General Council and of the Plenary General Council.

<p>120. The General Curia is composed of the Superior General, the Assistants and the General Officers. They are chosen from among the perpetually professed religious for a six year term.</p> <p>The work load of the General Officers may be taken up by the Assistants or accumulated by the Officers themselves.</p>	<p>120. The Ordinary General Council is composed of the Superior General and the Assistant generals. They are chosen from among the perpetually professed religious for a six year term.</p> <p>The work load of the General Officers may be taken up by the Assistants or accumulated by the Officers themselves.</p>
<p>123. ...matters ..to be decided by the Superior General with the consent of his ordinary Council</p>	<p>123. ...matters to be decided by the Superior General with the consent of the Ordinary General Council</p>
<p>124. Once a year, the Major Superiors and the General Curia come together as the Council of the Congregation.</p> <p>This Council studies the problems of adaptation of the congregation to the changing situation in the world and in the Church.</p> <p>It prepares, at the appropriate time, for the General Chapter. It decides about matters reserved to its competence by the Constitutions or proposed by the Superior General.</p>	<p>124. The Ordinary General Council and all the major superiors compose the Plenary General Council. The latter has as mission to assure the good of the whole body of the Congregation. It meets at least twice per year. It studies the problems of adaptation of the Congregation to the changing situation in the world and in the Church.</p> <p>Consequently, it studies the needs of the Congregation in terms of adequate formation, of specializations in theology and in other disciplines, and it imagines or confirms innovative foundations.</p> <p>It prepares, at the appropriate time, for the General Chapter. It decides about matters reserved to its competence by the Constitutions or proposed by the Superior General.</p>
<p>125. A Major Superior who is unable to attend the Council of the Congregation is replaced by his First Assistant..</p>	<p>125. A Major Superior who is unable to attend the Plenary General Council is replaced by his First Assistant.</p>
<p>126. It is the responsibility of the Superior General, with the consent of the Council of the Congregation, to:</p>	<p>126. It is the responsibility of the Superior General, with the consent of the Plenary General Council to:</p>

	those responsible for important houses of formation. They also determine the end of a mandate for these formators. c) the approval of formation programs according to the <i>Ratio Institutionis</i> .
	128. The Superior General, with the consent of his Plenary General Council, is entrusted with the first apostolic appointment of religious, in close collaboration with the competent major superior. With the latter, he will establish, in a written document, the terms and the duration of this appointment.
127. <i>becomes</i>	129.
128. <i>becomes</i>	130.
129. <i>becomes</i>	131.
130. <i>becomes</i>	132.
131. The General Treasurer attends the meetings of the General Council. If he is not an Assistant, he votes only on matters which have economic implications. On a regular basis, he reports on his management to this Council and submits to its approval the account books along with supporting documents if need be.	133. The General Treasurer has the full rights of an Assistant General. On a regular basis, he reports on his management to the Ordinary General Council and submits to its approval the account books along with supporting documents if need be.

Powers delegated to the Superior General for the final redaction of General Chapter texts and their interpretation

- 73.** The texts adopted by the General Chapter take effect once they are promulgated by the Superior General (*Rule of Life*, #117).

74. This General Chapter delegates to the Superior General, with the consent of his Ordinary General Council, the following powers:
- a. In case of doubt or discussion regarding the meaning or implementation of texts adopted by the General Chapter, the power to interpret them.
 - b. The power to touch up the texts both in form and expression, while respecting the thinking and ideas, in order to improve the presentation to communities and for their publication.
 - c. Taking care of putting all the articles of the *Rule of Life* in conformity with the modifications adopted by the Chapter.
 - d. Taking care to have all of the modifications made to the *Rule of Life* approved by the Holy See and integrating into the *Rule* whatever adjustments the Holy See may request.

Territorial Organization

Convictions

75. Working toward the territorial organization of the Congregation in a continental type model and working deliberately and without delay to attain it in these coming years is a common conviction.
76. This decision falls within the dynamic of communion strongly emphasized by the Chapter. It will require us to draw closer to one another, to discover at greater depth other ways of looking at things, other cultures and other languages. It will also mean emphasizing our solidarity beyond borders and developing our missionary spirit.
77. Although governing structures may only be slightly lightened, such a model does require, nevertheless, putting certain intermediary structures in place in view of a community organization that is more local (regions, delegations, etc.).
78. Given their history and setting, provinces in different continents feel more or less prepared for this gradual process. It will therefore be necessary to respect the means and the rhythm of the unification process.
79. On some continents, the Assumption already has a long history which can give rise to misunderstandings, even long-lasting wounds. But it has also given rise to rapprochement, collaborative efforts and accomplishments in common. This is true for all continents. Furthermore, the unknown always causes fear even as it calls us to adopt new attitudes as well.

- 80.** Therefore, everywhere, what is necessary is a labor of mutually getting to know one another, of discovering on-site realities, of dialogue, and of establishing a climate of trust. In other terms, a true conversion.
- 81.** Moreover, for each continent, a particular vigilance on the part of the Superior General and his Councils is indispensable both to encourage this dynamic and bring it successfully to term.

Recommendations

- 82.** The General Chapter asks the Superior General, in his Plenary General Council, to implement the following recommendations:

For Africa and Madagascar

- 83.** That the provincials of the two provinces concerned establish strategies and steps to favor continental organization underlining existing forms of collaboration: new foundations, formation in different places, common sessions and exchange of retreat directors.
- 84.** Economic and financial aspects as well as cultural and linguistic disparities within the provinces involved will need to be addressed especially by those in charge, by erecting, as need arises, new vice-provinces and regions.
- 85.** In concert with the Province of France, they will take care to integrate West Africa in this process.

For North America

- 86.** That the provincial and the regional superiors of the province elaborate a new plan for the statutes of the province and the three regions that make up the province in view of assuring greater unity in the province. That they help the mission of the Philippines be involved in the process of unification of Asia.

For South America

- 87.** In order to begin the process of organization in South America, it is necessary to evaluate the common accomplishments of these last years and identify the obstacles encountered.
- 88.** The provincials and the regional superiors involved will organize gatherings and exchanges of young religious, elaborate a common policy for formation, education and parish ministry, encourage learning the two languages of South America, and will regularly discuss economic resources and difficulties.

For Asia

- 89.** In order to follow closely the recent and rapid development of the Assumption in an Asia with such diverse cultures, that a special Delegate of the Superior General be appointed and charged, in consultation with the provincials of the two provinces involved, with establishing common oversight of all the communities in Asia. This oversight will help our communities both to take root and to foster coordination and cooperation among them in view of common projects.
- 90.** An awareness of belonging to a same Asian Assumption is the necessary foundation for the constitution of a continental unity in Asia.

Decree and recommendations for Europe

- 91.** The Chapter decrees the creation of the Province of Europe, composed of the three actual provinces of North Europe, Spain and France in their totality, that is, of persons, communities and properties.
- 92.** This decree will take effect, at the latest, by September 30, 2014. By this date, the Province will need to have the institutions and powers foreseen in our Constitutions in place.
- 93.** The Chapter requests, therefore, that the successive steps of the process be determined so as to meet this deadline. Until then, the government of the former provinces will be assured as before by the provincial and his councils.
- 94.** A council of six persons, made up of the three provincials of Europe and one religious designated by each of them, is particularly responsible for the progress of this project. Under the direction of a chairman chosen by the three provincials, this group will meet at least four times a year to study the measures for putting this new province into place, to elaborate common orientations, and to prepare for a constitutive provincial chapter. The provincials concerned will bring these matters back to their respective councils where they will discuss matters of common interest relative to persons, structures, and properties.
- 95.** Without delay, a Commission will be formed to elaborate the statutes of the new province. These statutes will be submitted to the approval of the first provincial chapter.
- 96.** During this entire period, special attention will be given to:
 - the particular physionomy of the former provinces,

- the great diversity of countries and works united in this new organization,
- economic and financial integration by stages,
- the involvement of the foundations of Korea and Vietnam in the process of unification of Asia.

Follow up and information

- 97.** The Plenary General Council will closely and actively follow this process, will check up on its progress in each continent every year, and will take care to inform the entire Congregation of it.

Our apostolic choices

Mobilizing Works

Criteria for the Choice of Mobilizing Works for the Entire Congregation

98. The General Chapter was informed of works with a mobilizing character within each province.² They all embody a particular aspect of our charism by sharing in the great causes of God and of man. Some are traditional (especially in the fields of education and the media); others are innovative and may inspire other provinces.
99. Among these works, some have already been recognized as having a mobilizing character for the entire body (*Bayard* and *Assumption College*). Others may be recognized as mobilizing for the entire congregation. However, the need for Assumptionist personnel for their operation and ongoing development is not a sufficient criterion to be so recognized. They must meet other criteria, among which the following:
- conformity to our fundamental orientations: in the service of faith, communion, and solidarity with the poor;
 - a significant presence of religious within the work itself;
 - collaboration (existing or possible) with members of the Assumption Family;
 - a capacity and a desire to receive, temporarily, religious from other provinces;
 - a capacity and a desire to receive volunteers;

² ISEAB / Institut Supérieur Emmanuel d'Alzon de Butembo (Africa), *Adveniat youth hostel* (France), the agency known as *Accompagner* (Northern Europe), *St Peter - St Andrew Center* of Bucharest (France), *Assumption College Worcester* (North America), school network Tulear (Madagascar), *Bayard* (France).

- lay-religious collaboration, especially in the framework of the Alliance;
- an international dimension;
- the capacity to promote vocations;
- the existence of partnerships with other similar initiatives (networking);
- a precise identification of financial needs and a partial capacity for self-financing.

100. In acknowledging the mobilizing character of a work, the Congregation commits itself to promoting its dynamism so as to assure its continuation.

Recommendation

101. The General Chapter requests that the Ordinary General Council produce a brochure presenting such mobilizing works to our communities and to individuals who might be interested in dedicating several months of their lives to them.

Ordinance

102. The General Chapter delegates the Plenary General Council to determine and to rank order, for the next six years, mobilizing works for the entire Congregation from among those presented by the various provinces. In order to foster an *esprit de corps* and to stir up missionary spirit, the General Chapter requests that the Plenary General Council closely follow these mobilizing works by: requiring a regular evaluation of their continued relevance, checking on their ongoing development, evaluating financial and personnel needs, especially in terms of Assumptionist religious, and foreseeing the possibility of involving volunteers.

Youth and Vocations

- 103.** The Chapter retains the convictions and calls to conversion found in numbers 25–28 and 80–94 of the Acts of the General Chapter of 2005. They remain valid and completely relevant.
- 104.** *Vocation ministry is needed in the Assumption to respond to a crisis situation which is weakening our Congregation. On the one hand, Western countries - and soon Latin America - suffer from a lack of religious and priestly vocations. On the other hand, the Province of Africa and the Vice-Province of Madagascar have difficulties with discerning and accompanying vocations.*
- 105.** *We want to face this challenge lucidly and serenely, confident in the love of the Father for “our small Congregation”. It is not the time for words. We must respond concretely to this difficulty, despite the discouragement and the apathy that could affect us.*
- 106.** *We believe and we have also seen that God continues to attract young men to the Assumption. The ideal suggested by our Rule of Life responds, in large measure, to who young people of today are and what they are seeking. The real challenge that is proposed to us, in the North as in the South, is to find a new apostolic energy that is imaginative and daring, capable of calling young people to follow Christ in religious and priestly life. The example of Fr. Emmanuel d’Alzon invites us to work with passion and disinterestedness at fostering vocations for the service of the Church.*
- 107.** *If we wish to accept the challenge and respond to this call, it is imperative that each religious and each community accept a certain form of conversion. Young people need to be able to*

discover how we live and to make it their own. It is not a matter of distorting our religious life. It is rather a matter of living it more faithfully than we do now by assuring that our communities are open and welcoming, that they favor an encounter with Christ by a simple way of life, by concern for fraternal dialogue, by beautiful liturgy... It is also important that we be truly present where young people are to be found, witnessing to a real commitment to the poorest among us and to a fraternal and joyful community life.

- 108.** *To attract young people, we must love them and live our religious life in a simple and fulfilled manner. That necessarily implies a path of conversion.*
- 109.** *The rarity of religious vocations and the problems we have in accompanying them constitutes a challenge to which we must respond urgently, not with good intentions but with deeds. We want to hear it as a call to conversion, to greater fidelity to the charism we have received.*
- 110.** *In fact, young people challenge our convictions and unsettle our way of life. Conversion invites us to take three paths:*

At the level of the community:

- 111.** *The community will be more committed to vocation ministry and will actively encourage the welcoming of young people by offering them an opportunity to discover the demands of religious life. This will require a climate of confidence and a spirit of openness. It implies the observance of a rhythm of life that will allow brothers to spend time with young people.*
- 112.** *Proposing something new means that we must live simply and soberly in our houses and in our way of living (entertainment and*

clothing), resisting the society of consumerism and bearing witness in this way to the One who gathers us together.

- 113.** *The beauty of the liturgy allows us to lead guests to a deeper experience of prayer. It initiates and deepens their experience of the encounter with Christ, especially in the Eucharist, heart of the community.*

- 114.** *The community shall actively encourage community sharing and dialogue, in an atmosphere of respect and honesty, focusing on such central themes as the commitment to follow Christ, the experience of God, living the vows, human relations, apostolic projects, moments of joy and suffering. The community shall foster respect and trust so that brothers will not be afraid to be vulnerable to one another. With a daily and weekly program that foresees times for fraternal dialogue, the community will lead its members toward a greater communion that deepens the desire to be together.*

At the level of the Mission :

- 115.** *We try to be truly present to the world of the young. We will put in place a vocation ministry by using to better advantage our works in the fields of education and social communication.*

- 116.** *Our mission will make it clear that we are trying to live the Gospel in a radical way. It will respond to a need arising from the great causes of man and the commitment to the poorest of the poor.*

- 117.** *It will have more of a community dimension than an individual one.*

- 118.** *Collaboration with the Sisters of the Assumption family and with lay people is an important criterion.*

At the level of one's faith :

119. *It is a matter of living the faith in a way that is contagious and speaks to young people. Faith is a gift from God, which must be asked for in prayer.*
120. *We are called to bear witness to our faith in joy, confidence and freedom while remaining attentive to the signs of the time.*
121. Each community and each province should be imbued once again with these convictions and calls to conversion and take the next step to implement them.
122. The progress made by the Lay-Religious Alliance these last six years convinces us that lay people can and must assume an important role in awakening vocations and in youth ministry. This is not yet the case in all provinces.
123. Lay people are invited to support us in awakening vocations. The Assumption is thankful for families who place Christ at the heart of their life and do not hesitate to encourage and nourish vocational discernment.

Recommendations

The Chapter requests that:

124. Each Assumptionist parish take the means to make youth ministry one of its priorities.
125. Each Assumptionist educational institution located in an affluent setting enter into a twinning relationship with an Assumptionist educational institution located in a disadvantaged setting.

- 126.** Each province establish a formal plan for youth and vocation ministry that is unified and coherent at the level of the Province. This plan should describe
- the works, proposals and programs related to the world of youth;
 - the human and financial resources to support it;
 - how the province responds to vocational requests coming from countries where the Assumption is not present;
 - how the new means of social communication are utilized to serve youth ministry and vocation ministry.
- This plan must also assure continuity in the implementation of this ministry.
- The Plenary General Council is invited to study these plans in order to encourage each member of the body of the Assumption to give pride of place to this ministry.
- 127.** Each province define, or update, at least one position that could be offered to a young volunteer. This offer should include:
- the detailed description of the work entrusted to the volunteer;
 - the community that will receive the volunteer;
 - the human and spiritual support which would be of benefit to the volunteer.

Formation

Initial Formation

Observations:

- 128.** It seems that the integration of the *Ratio Institutionis* is a given.
- 129.** However, in the last six years, new questions have arisen with reference to initial formation. This is due in large part to the international and intercultural character of our communities and of the Congregation as a whole.
- 130.** If, on the one hand, it is desirable to stress the international character of an Assumptionist formation, this should take place especially during the period of philosophical and theological studies. On the other hand, for initial periods of formation (postulancy and novitiate, in particular), it is preferable that candidates remain in their own cultural setting. However, the lack of competent and experienced formators does not always allow this to happen.

Recommendations

- 131.** The General Chapter requests the formation of an international formation commission under the responsibility of the Superior General and his Councils. This commission will have as its special mission to adapt formation to the international and intercultural dimension.
- 132.** It will be particularly attentive to:

- organize a session for Masters of Novices in order to evaluate their experiences, to discover what it is that young people are experiencing today in an intercultural setting and the challenges that flow from this, and to propose ways of responding;
- set up programs that, in fact, prepare formators to take this cultural diversity into account;
- study the specific ways to form non-priest religious and diocesan priests who enter the Congregation.

133. It will study, in view of submitting proposals to the Plenary General Council:

- measures to promote the exchange of students from different provinces and cultures, especially for apostolic field work, in those communities that are up to welcoming them and dealing with cultural and linguistic diversity;
- ways that would allow candidates, postulants and novices to receive their formation in a language they master well;
- a plan allowing each Assumptionist to master two international languages besides his mother tongue, so as to favor studies and apostolic work in a variety of linguistic venues;
- the creation, in existing locations or new ones, of international formation centers” (also known as “international formation communities” or “international theologates”) and the creation of international teams of formators to supervise these sites.

Continuing Formation

134. Given the urgency of this question, the General Chapter asks the Superior General, in his Plenary Council, to establish, in each province or continent, a continuing formation committee in view of elaborating a plan for formation consonant with numbers 171-182 of the *Ratio Institutionis*.

- 135.** It would likewise be advisable to organize an international session for continuing formation, either at the level of the entire congregation or by continent.

Formation of the laity

- 136.** The Chapter asks the International Lay-Religious Commission to establish the major elements of a formation plan for laity from which each province could elaborate its own.
- 137.** Whenever possible, we will try to organize the formation of religious and laity together, with a view to mutual support, all the while respecting the specific vocation of each person.
- 138.** The participation of lay people in formation programs as formators is also to be encouraged

Formation of leaders

- 139.** The Chapter asks the Superior General, in his Councils, to foster a new style of formation for superiors, focused on spiritual formation and integrating techniques of leadership, accompaniment, conflict management, and awareness of the consequences of internationality.

International gatherings of young Assumptionists

- 140.** The Chapter hopes that serious thought will be given to the possibilities of international conferences of young religious which are not too burdensome. It encourages each province, each community and each young religious to find, together, initiatives for contributing in whole or in part to their financing.

RIAD

- 141.** The Chapter requests that, in the organization of the sessions of the RIAD (Rencontre Internationale de l'Assomption pour le Dialogue/International Assumption Session for Dialogue), collaboration with the other Congregations of the Assumption Family be pursued.

Lay-Religious Alliance

Convictions

142. Since 2005, the Lay-Religious Alliance has made significant progress. There are different ways of living this alliance: conviviality, prayer, service, and mission. The charism of the Congregation and its fundamental orientations are becoming ever more part and parcel of the life of lay people. It is a source of life for our communities and a mutual enrichment for all. This General Chapter may be the occasion to make a further step forward.

Proposals

143. In this Chapter, we define a Lay Assumptionist as one who commits himself/herself to living his/her baptismal vocation, and the mission that flows from it, within the Assumption, within the Church and within society.

144. The General Chapter requests that a “Way of Life” be established by the Lay-Religious International Commission for Lay Assumptionists. This Way of Life, inspired by the spirit of the Assumption, should invite people to take into account the following fundamental elements:

- fraternal community life: in the family, the work place, between lay-people and with religious;
- apostolic life: in certain arenas of particular importance such as youth ministry, vocation ministry, solidarity with the poor, promotion of peace and justice, evangelization, the family, parishes, education, and the mass media;

- living in the spirit of the evangelical counsels and the Beatitudes;
- prayer life: fed daily, personal, in family and shared within one's group and a religious community.

Structure

- 145.** Organization is necessary for a more effective Lay-Religious Communion.

The General Chapter requests:

- 146.** That Lay-Religious tandems be formed and strengthened at the level of each local group, as well as at national and provincial levels; that lay people, as far as it is possible, be attached to a community and be accompanied.
- 147.** That an international commission be established to elaborate and implement the Way of Life, as well as to articulate a formation program and a program for communication, to find ways appropriate to each local situation to fund the implementation of the Alliance, and to assist in the determination of shared missions.
- 148.** That the Assumption recognize the existence of the Lay Assumption in the Congregation as members of our Family.
- 149.** That an official juridical and canonical structure be recognized to permit Lay Assumptionists who request it to constitute an association of the faithful within each Province with the Superior General's permission.

150. That the Congregation commit itself to recognize the Lay Assumptionists and to support them in the different duties/missions with which they may be entrusted.

Postulation

Conviction

- 151.** In the wake of the celebration of the bicentennial of the birth of Venerable Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon, the General Chapter reaffirms with the entire Congregation its conviction that our founder is truly a saint and expresses its firm wish to see the Church officially recognize his holiness soon.

Recommendations

The General Chapter asks:

- 152.** religious, communities and Assumptionist laity to become better acquainted with the person of Fr. d'Alzon as a model of holiness and to make his holiness better known; to be intent on imitating his Christian and apostolic virtues so as to live our vocation and our mission; and to promote prayer to obtain graces by his intercession.
- 153.** the Superior General and his Councils to confirm the Postulator General for the cause of Fr. d'Alzon, assisted by a Vice-Postulator, an Oblate of the Assumption, by an expanded Secretariat and by a network of international collaborators responsible not only for promoting the cause of Fr. d'Alzon but also those of Frs. Pernet and Picard and the canonization of our Bulgarian martyrs.
- 154.** that we promote the dissemination of publications and translations so as to make Fr. d'Alzon and the spirituality of the Assumption known and that an audio guide be prepared for visiting Alzonian sites (Nîmes, Paris, Rome).

Our possessions – Our resources – Their management

Observations

155. Since the Chapter of 2005 the world has changed and the financial crisis of 2008 has affected nations and peoples without sparing the Congregation (General Government, Provinces, communities and works, in the North as well as South).

Decreasing revenues

156. The yield on our investments has decreased. Our revenues no longer suffice to cover requests, as they once did.

157. In the North, the number of salaried religious has decreased and fund-raising offices have seen the number of benefactors, having grown older and touched by the crisis themselves, disappear little by little.

158. For the most part, provinces which had properties that could be sold to assure solidarity have already sold them.

159. The efforts of provinces to enhance and assure their self-financing have not sufficed and, in several situations, including the General Government, it was necessary to sell off capital assets in order to pay bills.

Increasing expenses

160. Expenses built into the work of the General Government have had to be restricted. But what impact has this had on such work?
161. The number of young men in formation is increasing, especially in the developing provinces and regions of the world (Africa, Asia, Latin America) and consequently the requests for help are increasing.
162. To welcome new arrivals, we need to build on, or build from scratch, residences for postulants, novices and scholastics ...
163. In the older provinces, we need to support the increasing needs of maintaining and caring for older religious or the sick.
164. Just about everywhere, the decrease, or the disappearance, of religious forces us to hire lay help which, in turn, considerably boosts total salaries for the service of the Congregation.
165. These phenomena, experienced for a long time, have been aggravated by the economic crisis. They affect certain Assumptionist regions more painfully than others. For certain religious, the difficulty which better endowed provinces now have in responding to the calls of others can seem like a lack of solidarity.

Convictions

166. The *Rule of Life* expresses well the convictions which should guide us in matters of poverty and solidarity (RL # 26–32). It clearly reminds us of our duties of solidarity and of co-responsibility (RL #59). Religious are invited to re-read, to meditate, and to live from them. The current crisis obliges us to renew our choice of a “sober” life which would be a credible indication that Christ is truly our only treasure.

167. The vow of poverty and good management are inseparable and require rigor and transparency in the preparation of budgets and in the supervision of accounts. They are the first step in the collective practice of poverty.
168. Putting all our goods in common, that is to say, revenues (salaries, gifts, stipends, pensions, etc..) is not optional. It also includes “the putting in common of our talents” and of our work (RL # 28).
169. The same holds true for local communities, characterized “in solidarity and co-responsibility” (RL #59). They must share their surplus to address the needs of their province or of the Congregation.
170. Calling upon the competence of lay persons in the management of our resources has proven to be useful and even necessary in certain cases.
171. There is no silver bullet, no miracle solution, to remedy the scarcity of our means. We are obliged to explore all avenues: to optimize existing resources; decrease expenses; seek new sources of revenue. The Plenary General Council will have to help to prioritize needs better and will be able to facilitate a more efficient exercise of solidarity.

Recommendations

The Chapter recommends:

172. *To the General Treasurer:*
 - an active search for new sources of financing: the increase of existing funds; the creation of a second fund (made up of real

estate or other assets) to support the Congregation; the creation of self-financing operations, etc...

- an evaluation of the existing self-financing operations in view of optimizing their yield;
- a complete inventory of the investments and of the real estate of the entire Congregation and of fund-raising operations, in order to avoid the non-utilization or the sub-utilization of potential resources and thus optimize our resources for solidarity;
- the intensification of activities of the Office of Development and Solidarity, which implies the active and continuous participation at the local level.

173. *To Treasurers at all levels:*

- the creation or the development of a network of benefactors in each province, region or country;
- a dynamic search for concrete ways of self-financing;
- working in close collaboration with their respective councils.

174. The Chapter reiterates a recommendation adopted in 2005 (#145):

It recommends that each province:

- prepare one or more religious to assume the function of treasurer by having them acquire a competence in management and accounting;
- be concerned with financial training at the local level. The preparation of budgets and the examination of accounts constitute excellent pedagogical tools;
- give to its provincial treasurer the possibility (that is the time necessary) to develop his knowledge of accounting and of management;
- ask the «outgoing» treasurer to take the time to initiate his successor and to guide him in the dossiers of the province for a few weeks or months, depending on the needs;

- apply to treasurers the norm which imposes a limit to the renewal of mandates, in reference to our *Rule of Life* (#62) concerning superiors.

175. Lastly, the Chapter reminds both religious and communities of their duty to pray for our benefactors.

Ordinances

Councils of the General Treasurer

176. The Chapter decrees the creation of the Economic Council of the Congregation, composed of the general treasurer and of the (vice) provincial treasurers. It meets at least once every two years.

177. The mission of this Council is:

- to inform the Plenary General Council of the economic and financial aspects of projects;
- to implement the economic decisions taken by the Plenary General Council;
- to participate, with the general treasurer, in the formation of financial administrators (of works and communities) at the provincial and local levels;
- to strengthen solidarity among Assumptionists by working at developing new resources and by mutual information.

178. The Chapter asks the Ordinary General Council to provide a Council of Consulters to the general treasurer. It will be composed of religious and of competent lay persons, at least for questions relating to investments.

179. This Council:

- studies the requests for interprovincial solidarity;

- advises the general treasurer on the management of portfolios and all other financial resources.

Assessments

- 180.** Beginning in 2013, provincial assessments for the General Fund are fixed at \$500 US (category 1) and at \$150 US (category 2). It will be left to the Plenary General Council to adjust this figure as needed in subsequent years.
- 181.** Falling into category 2 : the temporary professed of the entire Congregation and the perpetually professed of Africa, Madagascar, Chile-Argentina, Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador, Philippines and Vietnam.

Ceiling amount

- 182.** For all financial transactions, concerning personal property or real estate, sale or loans, the provincial superior should seek the permission of the Superior General when the sum is equal or superior to three quarters of the ceiling amount set by the Episcopal Conference of the country.

Travel costs

- 183.** At the meeting of the Plenary General Council, the Councils of the general treasurer, and sessions organized by the General Government and the General Chapter, the religious convoked contribute to a parity fund for their travel costs up to four hundred and fifty dollars (\$450 US) per person.

Languages of the Congregation

- 184.** Today, the learning and practice of international languages is indispensable for a richer and more varied communication among people. The use of English, practiced extensively throughout the world, has become unavoidable.
- 185.** For our Congregation, the Chapter decided in favor of the habitual use of three international languages: English, French and Spanish. This decision will be implemented as follows for meetings and publications.
- 186.** Meetings (translation)

	ENGLISH	ESPAÑOL	FRANÇAIS	NEDERLANDS	OTHERS
General Chapters	indispensable	indispensable	indispensable		
Councils of the Congregation	according to circumstances	indispensable	indispensable		
International sessions <i>(organized by the General Council)</i>	indispensable	indispensable	indispensable		
Other					

187. Publications (written translation)

	ENGLISH	ESPANOL	FRANÇAIS	NEDER- LANDS	OTHERS
Letters of the Superior General to the entire Congregation	indispensable	indispensable	indispensable	indispensable	
Other official documents (e.g. Documents Assomption)	In the language of reception and then in the language of composition				
Communication from the General Government	according to circumstances	according to circumstances	according to circumstances		
A A Info	indispensable	indispensable	indispensable	indispensable	advisable
Congregation's website	indispensable	indispensable	indispensable		
Animation Documents of the General Government	indispensable	indispensable	indispensable		
Books published by the General Government	according to circumstances	according to circumstances	according to circumstances	according to circumstances	according to circumstances

The Messages of the General Chapter

Message to our Assumptionist brothers, to Lay Assumptionists, and to sisters of the Assumption Family

Dear friends, brothers and sisters,

The 32nd General Chapter of the Assumption began on May 2, 2011, in Rome, in the house of the Brothers of Christian Schools the day after the beatification of Pope John Paul II.

Our Assembly was composed of 43 brothers from around the world and of Fr. Pierre Tran Van Tran Khuê, of the Saigon community and invited by Fr. General. In 2005, lay people participated for the first time in a General Chapter to share with us the charism of the Assumption. Since then, the Alliance has made great strides. Twelve lay people, chosen from each province of the Congregation, were invited to this Chapter by Fr. Richard Lamoureux to give a new impetus to the mission we share.

During the opening ceremony which took place in the chapel, each one in his own language answered “Present” when his name was called. Present to respond to the calls of the Spirit, to renew His mission in the Assumption and to remain “faithful to Emmanuel d’Alzon...for the coming of the Kingdom”, the theme adopted by this Chapter.

“Three weeks, three themes” was the title of *the Diary of the Chapter*, edited by Fr. Michel Kubler. The first week, with our lay friends present, was dedicated to evaluating and looking ahead. We heard reports from the various provinces. This allowed us to become aware of the expectations of our world, the Church and our communities. We updated the three orientations given at the last Chapter: “Men of Faith, men of communion, in solidarity with the poor”. They express what we sense as most important and they convey our charism, fruit of the Spirit that we

reap for ourselves and for those who find these intuitions to be on target and wish to share them. They allowed us to determine the goal we want to reach in the next six years without giving in either to the atmosphere of pervasive gloom or to the fear that the world engenders. The Chapter reaffirms its trust in the future which God gives to the world, the Church, and the Assumption Family.

With our lay friends, we covered new territory by means of some lively discussions. We agreed on the definition of a Lay Assumptionist: “a man or woman who is committed to live his/her baptismal call and the mission that flows from it, in the Assumption, in the Church, and in society”.

We expressed the hope that a “Way of Life” would be produced and we provided for the canonical erection of an “Association of the Faithful”. In this work, we benefitted greatly from the work and experience of Sister Cristina Ocana, R.A., who lives in Madrid. Henceforth, the Assumption is composed of men and women, religious and lay!

The second week was dedicated to Orientations. But before launching into the discussion, we took time for meditation. Fr. Alessandro Laini, from the Florence community, with the energy and simplicity of one profoundly wise, invited us to make room for God in our life so that it would conform to what the Lord wants for our Family. We received his words as so many sparks to enlighten our lives.

We then began studying the fundamental orientations and discerning apostolic priorities. We took special interest in the dossier everyone was waiting for, the one on our new community organization. What we understand by this is the reconfiguration of the diverse geographic entities that form the Assumption throughout the world and the adaptation of our structures of governance in order to foster greater solidarity and collaboration. In this “logic of communion”, we wanted to increase the powers accorded to the Superior General. We replaced the current General Curia with an Ordinary General Council. Along with

the entire body of Major Superiors, they will form the Plenary General Council from now on. This new organ of collegial government will take into account the interests of the entire body of the Assumption we form, so that all may be united in the mission.

We moved in the direction of a territorial organization of a continental type. The Chapter voted for the creation of a Province of Europe, made of the three current provinces of Northern Europe, Spain, and France. This decision will become effective by 2014, at the latest. The Chapter expressed its wish that the provinces of each continent where we are located expressly engage in a process of rapprochement: Africa and Madagascar, South America, North America. For Asia, marked by the rapid development of the Assumption, measures to provide common oversight of all the communities will put in place.

We divided the articulation on our fundamental orientations under convictions and means, each with three subheadings: personal, community and apostolic. Following our Founder, Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon, whose bicentenary of birth was celebrated in 2010, we came to see that we are disciples sharing a common faith, brothers eager for greater communion, apostles in solidarity with the poor. More than ever, we are convinced that we are called to bear witness in a spirit of communion and unity within the great Assumption Family, with our sisters and our lay friends.

The third week was one of decisions and a deeper understanding of the fields of our apostolic endeavors. Each province presented works that represent one aspect of our charism in keeping with the great causes of God and man, works that can "mobilize" the entire body of the Assumption. These works fall within the framework of the apostolic axes that we discerned in 2005: new foundations, the Mission in the Near East, vocation ministry.

The needs are tremendous. They are a good match for the ambition of the heirs of Fr. d'Alzon. Yet, at the same time, we realized that we no

longer have the resources to undertake them all. Financial realities also colored our discussions. No one has a silver bullet, the miracle solution. We will need to use our imagination, accept to make changes in our life style, and find new ways of funding.

The Chapter elected Fr. Benoît Grière as Superior General. This was a moment of great emotion. Since 2005, he had been Provincial Superior of the Province of France. The Chapter decided to provide him with four assistants: Fr. Emmanuel Kahindo (Province of Africa), Vicar General, Brother Didier Remiot (Province of France), General Treasurer, Frs. John Franck (Province of North America) and Marcelo Marciel (Province of Chile-Argentina). Fr. Bernard Le Léannec (Province of France) was elected as Secretary General.

During the Mass for the installation of the new team in the General House, the new Superior General invited us to rediscover the joy of the Kingdom, "that comes to invade our hearts so that they may, in turn, overflow around us." "This joy," he continued, "makes us hear the music played for the feast given for the return of the prodigal son." We are confident and assured that together, brothers, sisters and lay friends, we will play the part that God confides to the Assumption, a song that already fills her with joy.

Fr. Benoît Grière, a.a., Superior General
and the members of the 32nd General Chapter
of the Augustinians of the Assumption
Rome, May 22, 2011

Message to our senior brothers

Dear Brothers,

The 32nd General Chapter is drawing to a close and we now want to address a special word to you.

Faithful to Emmanuel d'Alzon, whose bicentennial of birth we just celebrated, we rediscovered how much we are heirs of his message of faith, communion, and of solidarity with the poor.

You already know our Assumption Family well! For many years, you have seen it grow in the face of the events of the world and the Church, seen it respond to the calls of the Spirit, and seen it bear witness in season and out of season that the Kingdom might come.

Faithful to your religious commitment, you turn toward the future, as brothers and apostles living in religious community to the end.

Without fear we pursue the path that you set for us. The decisions we have taken fall within the framework of the dynamism of your fidelity. Your example has inspired us, directed us, pushed us to move forward. Your deep love of Christ and your passion for others have guided us.

We appreciate your continued apostolic efforts and the many expressions of your collaboration. We wish to express to you our respect and our gratitude.

We know that we can count on your prayers, your counsel, your friendship, and the edifying example you give of helping one another. You can count on our affection and support, especially you, brothers, who are experiencing failing health and diminished strength. We know

how difficult it is to experience this loss of autonomy. By going through this period of life serenely, you become signs of hope for the world.

There is a youth of spirit that remains over time: day after day you have shared it with us as brothers marked by the presence of God.

May the Lord be blessed and may he accompany you always.

Fr. Benoît Grière, a.a., Superior General
and the members of the 32nd General Chapter
of the Augustinians of the Assumption
Rome, May 22, 2011

Message to our brothers and sisters in the Near Eastern Mission

Dear Brothers and sisters,

Meeting in Rome, May 3-23, 2011, for the 32nd General Chapter of the Augustinians of the Assumption, the Chapter members, representing all the dimensions of our apostolic foundations throughout the world, wanted to address this fraternal message to you. We want to encourage you and to say that the entire Congregation supports you in the mission that has been entrusted to you in the Church.

Fr. d'Alzon loved the Near East and encouraged his first disciples to develop the Near Eastern Mission, in order to work actively for the cause of ecumenism. When Fr. Galabert went to Constantinople in December 1862 - we shall celebrate the 150th anniversary next year - he really didn't know what he should undertake or where he should settle. He was without means and without men. Fr. d'Alzon traveled there in 1863 in order to get a sense for himself of the complexity of the situation. However, very quickly, thanks to the founding of the Oblate Sisters, which was directly linked to the Near Eastern Mission, the apostolic diversification of the Assumption in the Near East became evident. The pioneers of the Near Eastern Mission undertook a vast range of apostolic activities: teaching, alumniates for the different rites, orphanages, parishes in the Latin, Slavonic, and Greek rites, formation houses and houses of study for young religious, the intellectual apostolate with the birth of the Institute of Byzantine Studies and its review *Échos d'Orient*, large-scale pilgrimages, and the popular religious press. Even to this day, in the majority of our foundations in the Christian Near East, the Oblates offer a close and invaluable-collaboration in our apostolic endeavors.

At the General Chapter of 2005, the Near Eastern Mission, Asia, and youth and vocation ministry were retained as apostolic priorities for the entire Congregation. During this Chapter we wanted to move ahead. First of all, the reform of our community organization should allow us to reinforce our sense of an “*esprit de corps*” throughout our religious Family and also reinforce our missionary dynamism. Subsequently, the Chapter reiterated the desire to go further in the major orientations that characterize us: men of communion, proposing the faith, and in solidarity with the poor. Likewise, the Chapter consecrated a lot of time to discuss a list of mobilizing works which each province was invited to present.

The *Saint Peter-Saint Andrew Center* of Bucharest was the object of a presentation and the new Plenary General Council will have the mandate to support it. Besides, the Center of Bucharest was retained as a tool at the service of communion for all of Assumption so as to sensitize our brothers to ecumenism, and to patristic and Byzantine studies. The Chapter also expressed its desire to reinvigorate all our foundations in the Christian Near East, especially those that are most fragile. Thus, the Chapter intends to encourage Assumption’s particular vocation in the Near Eastern Church to serve as bridges where divisions exist and as intermediaries where walls and barriers have been erected. Having been invited to the Chapter, Prof. Gianni La Bella, a member of the Sant’Egidio community, referring to the inter-religious meeting of Assisi, pointed out to us that he saw the unifying role of the Catholic Church in ecumenical and inter-religious dialogues.

The new General Team, with Father Benoît Grière at its head, whose attachment to the Near Eastern Mission you are well aware of, will do everything so that our presence at the service of the communion and *in fidelity to Emmanuel d’Alzon ...for the coming of the Kingdom*, remains a strong and dynamic promise. In the face of the challenge of ecumenism and interreligious encounter, we wish to encourage dialogue and mutual respect Placing our trust in God and conscious of the frailties of our

communities in the Christian Near East, we wish to form an Assumption rooted in faith and at the service of communion in these countries where our charism always needs to be renewed and adapted to new realities. On the eve of the 150th anniversary of the Near Eastern Mission we need to understand that we will not be able to raze the walls of division without leading a simple and fraternal life. In this way our mission will truly be an appeal to communion, at the service of this double cause: *that of God and that of man*. More than a course to keep, a heritage to prize, we want to continue *to see far and wide*, like Fr. d'Alzon, Fr. Galabert and so many others who have preceded you on the *road of the Apostles*. On Sunday, May 22, the members of the Chapter, surrounded by many invited guests, celebrated the closing of the bicentennial of the birth of the Venerable Fr. d'Alzon in the basilica of San Bartolomeo on the Isle of Tiberina where the relics of the three Blessed Assumptionist Bulgarian martyrs were placed among those of numerous other martyrs of the 20th and 21st centuries. The Chapter encourages us to continue praying for their canonization. Christ is stronger than anything that divides us. Strengthened by this conviction we wish to keep on toiling at the service of the Church in the Near East as workers for unity *so that the world may believe*.

Fr. Benoît GRIÈRE , a.a., Superior General
and the members of the 32nd General Chapter
of the Augustinians of the Assumption
Rome, May 22, 2011

Message to the religious and communities of Asia

Dear Brothers,

With both confidence and conviction the General Chapter of 2005 focused the attention of the Congregation on Asia by supporting the first foundations in the Philippines and in Vietnam and by strengthening our community in Korea. The Chapter committed the resources of the entire Congregation by making our foundations in Asia one of its three apostolic priorities thereby renewing our historical links with this continent.

Six years later, the members of the 32nd General Chapter thank the Lord for the seven communities that have been founded in Asia and for the vocations that He is giving to us from well beyond the frontiers of the three Asian countries where the Assumption is now established. The Chapter members give thanks for the missionary zeal of our pioneers in Asia, the perseverance of the formators, the fervor and enthusiasm of our young religious, the generosity of so many benefactors, and the precious help of the sisters of the Assumption Family.

They encourage you in your efforts to become more and more “men of faith, of communion, in solidarity with the poor and the least,” in the Assumption tradition, by cultivating what your Bishops call “the threefold dialogue”: with your cultures, with the religions of the area and with the poor. It is still the case, within your very rich continent, that the majority of the poor remain marginalized and the freedom of the Church is severely limited.

Your brothers the world over urge you to form a strong Asiatic Assumption, deeply rooted in your very diverse countries, but also open to the whole of the continent and its challenges. They invite you to

coordinate your efforts and to cooperate even more in view of common projects with the goal of deepening communion among you and fostering within you an ever greater openness to the mission beyond your borders. Our Superior General and his Councils will help you. In this way, you will be able to share your gifts with the whole “body” of the Assumption.

May God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless you and accompany you always in the joys and trials of every foundation.

Fr. Benoît Grière, a.a., Superior General
and the members of the 32nd General Chapter
of the Augustinians of the Assumption
Rome, May 22, 2011

Message to the Parishes

At the conclusion of this 32nd General Chapter, we turn to you, religious and lay people, seeking to give an Assumptionist character to the work you do in parishes and in other places of worship. We want to share with you the spirit that has presided over our meetings.

For three weeks, we have formed one body, made up of very different members, from all four continents, with everyone playing an essential role. We were like a parish, each one making his own contribution (as president, as liturgist, as secretary, as moderator, as translator) in order to carry out one common task.

The effort to listen to each other has been of the greatest importance during our weeks together. In parishes, you make the same effort. It is as religious living the fraternal life that you bear witness to the presence of God among the members of your parish community. It is important that they see you as brothers in community.

In another domain, we also want to thank you for the important service you render by accompanying our younger brothers in formation, especially during their diaconate program.

Our discussions and what we have been able to experience together during these days have helped us to become aware of the mission that Father d'Alzon entrusted to us: to be men of faith who live in communion and in solidarity with the poor. You are already living this threefold mission in your parishes, and we give thanks to God for that.

We want to encourage you to open even wider the doors of your parish communities to those who have been estranged from the community and to reach out to them where they are. It is through you that they will

be able to meet Jesus Christ and enter into the great family of the children of God.

In recent years, a serious effort has been made to understand and to articulate what it means to be an Assumptionist in parish ministry. This led to the publication of a letter from the Superior General (#11, "A Prophetic Power") and a booklet entitled "*Assumptionists in Parish.*" Both documents remind us that the parish remains an important place to live the faith and evangelize the society of our day. It is important to the Church that we continue to make the effort to embody in the parish our special character as religious, heirs of Father d'Alzon. We can live our charism fully as Assumptionists working in parishes.

This Chapter has officially recognized that lay people and religious together constitute a single Assumptionist family. As in every family, there are differences of mentality, of culture, of commitment, but it is no less true that "he who unites us is greater than that which divides us" (*Rule of Life*, #8). It is in the Eucharist that we find the strength we need to live as one in the way that the Lord asks of us. The Eucharist reminds us that we need one another in our journey to the Kingdom of God.

It is this same liturgy that enables us to celebrate the love that God has for us and that forms us into a parish community, as members of the Assumption and members of the Church. Father d'Alzon often reminds us of the need to care for the quality of our Eucharistic celebrations. During the Chapter, we saw how rich the liturgy can be when it is well prepared and everyone participates. This makes us appreciate how important it is to involve everyone in parish celebrations and activities.

In these times of economic, political and spiritual crisis, the Assumption counts on you and the Christian families around you to spread the Gospel far and wide. This requires us to make an ever greater effort to form people well and guided by God's Word to discern with them the signs of the times.

May the Lord bless your efforts to animate your parish communities and especially those committed in a particular way to the vulnerable, young people and children, whom you help to discover their vocation and their place in the Church and in the world.

Fr. Benoît Grière, a.a., Superior General
and the members of the 32nd General Chapter
of the Augustinians of the Assumption
Rome, May 22, 2011

Message to our Sisters in the Assumption Family

In one way or another, every topic we discussed during this 32nd General Chapter has developed one central theme, namely, that of communion. We have no doubt been influenced by the world in which we live, a world that is marked by division, but also one in which people are drawn ever more closely together by technological advances, new social networks, and easier long-distance travel, as well as by political and economic factors that have become inseparable and interdependent. But it is not simply these factors that led us to focus on communion. Our faith in Jesus Christ, who prayed that we be one as he is one with his Father, had communion as his mission: communion with his Father, communion with his sisters and brothers in the world, communion with all of creation.

It's in this broader context that we are happy to reaffirm our conviction of how important it is for the entire Assumption Family to pursue its efforts to draw ever more closely together. A common intuition is at the origin of our religious congregations. We are indebted to Saint Marie-Eugénie and Emmanuel d'Alzon for their faith and friendship and for their founding charism. We are indebted likewise to our other founders, Marie Correnson, Etienne Pernet, Antoinette Fage, Isabelle de Clermont-Tonnerre, and François Picard, who in the footsteps of these two figures developed the Assumption charism and helped us to discover yet other facets of this gift from God.

We Assumptionists want to promote communion in our own Assumption Family, with the laity as well as with the sisters. We do not deny that Father d'Alzon gave a particular character to his Congregation, but we believe that we can best appreciate this distinctiveness by

drawing closer to our sisters in the Assumption and learning from the particular gift that God has given to each of our Congregations.

With them we want to continue looking for ways to foster ever deeper communion. Regular annual meetings of the Superiors General, biannual meetings of the General Councils, common projects such as the RIAD, occasional workshops, and the Charism session are some of the means we want to encourage. Other initiatives have been taken at the Provincial and local levels and should be continued and expanded: meetings of Provincials in the same area, shared vocation ministry and formation activities, moments for celebration and gratuitous encounter, and, on the local level, collaborative mission projects (e.g. in our schools, at Bayard, in parish, ecumenical and social settings, etc.). It goes without saying that it is most important to continue fostering warm relations and even friendships among the members of our Congregations.

At this time, as members of the Chapter, we want to recommit ourselves to drawing ever closer to our sisters in the Family. We are grateful for their prayers during this Chapter and confident that the Spirit will help us to continue growing in fraternal respect and love, all for the sake of the coming of the Kingdom.

Fr. Benoît Grière, a.a., Superior General
and the members of the 32nd General Chapter
of the Augustinians of the Assumption
Rome, May 22, 2011

Message to all Educators in Assumptionist institutions

We, Assumptionists gathered in Rome, are happy to address this message to all of you who work side by side with us as teachers or educators.

In a troubled world which is seeking its bearings, we have reaffirmed our trust in the future which God gives the world, the Church, religious life, and the Assumption Family. This 32nd General Chapter has allowed us to deepen our desire to be “men of faith, men of communion, in solidarity with the poor and the least among us”, particularly in our educational responsibilities.

In fact, the Assumption was born in a college in Nîmes, southern France, in 1845. Our founder, Fr. d’Alzon, always attached a great deal of importance to education in all forms, but, in the first place, to teaching. He knew how to surround himself with competent lay collaborators like Eugene Germer-Durand and with religious like Victorin Galabert, the founder of our Eastern European Mission, in order to enhance this important aspect of the Assumptionist charism. He opened his horizons to the working-class world by founding alumniates (high school seminaries for those of few means) and by welcoming the orphanage of Fr. Halluin, known as the “Blessed Vincent de Paul” of Arras.

Fr. d’Alzon sought to offer a “new moral and social education” capable of transforming and revivifying teaching in France. He wanted a quality education, requiring of teachers and students alike character formation. The object of education was the mind as well as the heart.³ He took part

³ Cf *To Teach and to Educate according to the Assumptionist Spirit*, General House of the Assumptionists, 2008, p. 5

in all the debates relative to institutional teaching of his time, especially in launching the *Revue de l'enseignement chrétien (Review of Christian Education)*. His nomination in 1850 to the Higher Council of Public Education in France is but one indication of the recognition he received as a result of his public involvement. To the very end, he demonstrated deep passion for education to the point of making plans for a Catholic university. It was in his college that he died in 1880.

Today, we are aware of the force which our educational network represents. Our General Chapter has recognized the mobilizing character of *Assumption College* (U.S.A.) for the whole of the congregation. Other educational establishments, already supported by Assumptionist provinces, like the *Emmanuel d'Alzon Institute of Higher Studies of Butembo* (Democratic Republic of the Congo) or the network of schools of Tulear (Madagascar), could become such for the entire congregation in the upcoming six years.

Our 17 Assumptionist educational institutions, scattered across 5 continents, can be an effective instrument at the service of communion in all its forms. That is why the General Chapter has asked that they, as well as our parishes and media outlets, summon all their strength in this regard. Education and youth ministry will remain a priority for many years to come. In fact, although education is a fundamental human right, it has not been adequately realized in many places, as a result of insufficient means. In other countries, the education provided neglects an integral human formation, one open to spiritual questions. We cannot remain indifferent in the face of these situations in societies where it is necessary to better reconcile faith and reason and to promote the possibility of an encounter with Christ.

To all of you, educators, teachers, administrators, staff, and volunteers working within our Assumptionist educational establishments, we want to repeat the great trust we have in you. Our educational institutions should be places “where one discovers the joy of seeking

the truth, of discovering it and of communicating it” (John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution on universities, *Ex corde ecclesiae*, August 15 1990). This presupposes, wherever possible, deepening the charism associated with our founder. It means developing a quality education by putting in place strategic plans, mission statements, and governing teams sensitive to our charism.

During the course of this Chapter, we have understood more clearly how important it is for us to be better organized at an international level. Also, from now on, it is incumbent upon us to reflect more effectively together on different modes of partnership or twinning between our educational establishments. We have human and spiritual riches to share. A new effort should be undertaken to increase the quality of our training, for our teachers and our students alike. We need to foresee, much more broadly, selective types of collaboration (student scholarships, student and professor exchanges, sending of volunteers, etc.) and more developed programs (educational and financial partnerships, twinning of institutions, etc.). The General Chapter has thus asked that each Assumptionist educational institution located in a socially affluent setting twin with another one located in a disadvantaged setting.

Developing a real Assumptionist educational strategy at the international level is to be true to the original Assumptionist charism. Reflection on education within our Congregation deserves to be pursued and expanded. We count on your support in meeting these challenges together and we wish to thank you once again for your many countless hours of willing service and generosity.

Fr. Benoît Grière, a.a., Superior General
and the members of the 32nd General Chapter
of the Augustinians of the Assumption
Rome, May 22, 2011

Message to Bayard and Media Sponsored by the Assumptionists

At the conclusion of the 32nd General Chapter, we, the forty-three participants from North and South America, from Africa, from Asia and from Europe, are eager to send this message to you who are working at Bayard in France and abroad. In session from the 2nd to the 23rd of May 2011, we have set for ourselves the goals that we will work at during the next six years. We have given in neither to the gloom or the fears that are widespread in the world today; we want instead to live concretely from our faith in Jesus Christ, a faith that we share in communities that are at the service of those in need.

From the time of our founders, the Assumption has worked for the transformation of society according to the ideal of the Gospel. Accordingly, wherever Assumption Congregations are located, we have established schools, institutions of higher education, research institutes (Byzantine Studies, Augustinian Studies) and media centers.

Society today is marked by a great deal of mobility: immigration, cultural exchange, and the globalization of social networks intensified by a digital revolution that is radically transforming the world of communications. In this rapidly changing context, the challenge for us in the Assumption is to contribute to the creation of a dynamic and stable place that can accompany our contemporaries in their search for meaning.

In the Western world, secularization and religious indifference invite us to enter into that space for dialogue that Pope Benedict XVI has called the "Courtyard of the Gentiles." This open space is not limited to things religious. It is rather a place for dialogue among those who are eager to discover the meaning of their existence. The mission of the Assumption in the areas of education and communication is part of this movement in

its desire to reach out to everyone. Through an ongoing exchange of information and knowledge, educational initiatives and editorial endeavors provide the stepping back needed for discovering why we exist and how we should respond to our desires, to what moves us in the deepest recesses of our being.

To educate and to communicate in the Assumption means promoting creativity, personal expression, and a discourse that is constructive. It means taking into account the different dimensions of the human person and giving each one the time needed for integrating the knowledge that is acquired. It is a way of humbly encouraging desire rather than trying simply to dominate it, a way of encouraging a manner of acting that takes others into consideration.

To educate and to communicate in the Assumption means taking into account what is deepest in a person's heart, giving each person the possibility of expressing himself and eventually committing himself to action. By the questions that are asked and the convictions that are communicated, education and the media help people shape their destiny, a destiny that through this process can open up to the transcendent.

In this way, with all those who share these objectives, we can continue making it possible to ask questions regarding what is most important, even questions about God, and for the deepest desire of humankind to find expression in words. In so doing, we provide our contemporaries with a way to serve the common good.

Fr. Benoît Grière, a.a., Superior General
and the members of the 32nd General Chapter
of the Augustinians of the Assumption
Rome, May 22, 2011

Appendix

Appendix 1:

Letter of Fr. General to His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI

1 April 2011

His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI
Vatican City

Holy Father,

On 2 May 2011, close to fifty Assumptionists (Augustinians of the Assumption) will gather here in Rome from around the world for the 32nd General Chapter in our history. They will be accompanied in the first week of the Chapter by twelve lay people close to our communities. I write to ask for your blessing on the occasion of this important event in the life of our religious family.

We are celebrating this Chapter in the light of the 200th anniversary of the birth of our founder, the Venerable Emmanuel d'Alzon (1810-1880). We want to be inspired and enlightened by his example of holiness as we address the challenges, which you know so well, that confront men and women religious in their life and in their mission in our day. Fr. d'Alzon's words in 1835 remain so challenging for us today:

A mesure que j'étudie la religion, je découvre, dans les profondeurs du dogme catholique, tant de richesses, une saveur si forte, une vie si puissante que, d'une part je ne puis concevoir comment le prêtre qui veut renouveler la société peut chercher d'autres secours que ceux qu'il trouve dans la vérité même, et, de l'autre, il me semble que le meilleur, l'unique moyen de rendre aux intelligences les forces qu'elles ont perdues, de

reparer cet epuisement moral dont on se plaint de tout cote, est de faire briller devant elles cette lumiere qui eclaire tout homme venant en ce monde, de les rechauffer aux rayons du Verbe eternel (Letter to Alphonse de Vigniamont, 18 March 1835)

Through our work and prayer together during the Chapter, we want to address this “epuisement moral” of which Fr. d’Alzon writes, particularly its impact on our life as religious and as brothers in community. We will seek to identify and strengthen those apostolic works that are particularly important in today’s world: ecumenism (especially our longstanding commitment to working among the Orthodox), media and journalism, education and research, service to the poor, the accompaniment of youth... With our lay friends, we will reflect on the best ways to form and accompany those lay people who draw life from the Assumption charism and want to share in the community’s mission. Finally but no less important will be a discernment in view of electing a new General government and a reflection on the changes needed in government and community organization in view of fostering a greater sense of unity and collaboration in the Congregation world-wide.

The challenges are many. For this reason, we ask that you accompany us in your prayer. We know it will be a powerful source of strength and enlightenment for us during the weeks we spend together in Chapter.

Please be assured of our prayers for you and your ministry to the Church. You can count on our filial support and obedience.

In the Lord Jesus,

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

The Holy Father's reply to the Superior General's letter

Secretariat of State
First Section - General Affairs
No. 194.305

From the Vatican, 2 May 2011

Dear Father Lamoureux,

The Holy Father was pleased to be informed of the 32nd General Chapter of the Augustinians of the Assumption and he sends cordial greetings to all those taking part.

As you recall the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of the Venerable Emmanuel d'Alzon, His Holiness encourages you to draw fresh inspiration from your founder's vision, so timely in our day, of the great importance for evangelization of social communications, education and ecumenism. In a world hungry for the word of life, the work of your Congregation in spreading that word and helping people to explore its depths makes a vital contribution to the growth of God's Kingdom. So too, your founder's perception of the moral exhaustion characteristic of nineteenth century Europe has striking parallels in the modern world. The Holy Father invites you to proclaim afresh, by word and example, this wise teaching of Blessed John Paul II: 'Christian morality consists, in the simplicity of the Gospel, in following Jesus Christ, in abandoning oneself to him, in letting oneself be transformed by his grace and renewed by his mercy, gifts which come to us in the living communion of his Church' (*Veritatis Splendor*, 119).

Commending all of you to the maternal protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, gloriously assumed into heaven, and to the intercession of your patron Saint Augustine, His Holiness gladly imparts his Apostolic Blessing to you and all the members of the Assumptionist family.

Yours sincerely in Christ,
Signed
Archbishop Fernando Filoni
Substitute

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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 AS JOURNEY

Christian life and *a fortiori* Assumptionist life is a pilgrimage, «un chemin de vie, un chemin de saintete».

- In 2005, we were witnesses to the joyful birth and « baptism » of the Alliance.
- Since then, there has been a good deal of enthusiastic reflection together, of collaboration, of shared prayer, and of planning.
- And already we have seen on the part of some lay members of the Alliance an even more formal and public commitment.

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. We have wanted 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.

GENERAL CHAPTER 2011

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.
- 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.

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

As might be expected, the journey on which we have embarked together will be an adventure, with surprises, disappointments, challenges, failures, and accomplishments.

- As I look back over these six years, the hard work, but also the joys and accomplishments are most evident, and that is to be expected. It is often the case with beginnings.
- But the beginning phase is drawing to a close. As I look ahead, I foresee that the hard work of these beginnings will continue, but we will probably also begin to experience what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called the “cost of discipleship”, the cost experienced by every Christian and in particular by those of us who have chosen to follow Christ in the spirit of Saint Augustine and Emmanuel d’Alzon.
- Assumptionists, lay or religious, are called to discipleship. The more we are aware of that call and the more we give our assent to God’s invitation, the more we begin to understand the demands that this call entails and the more we begin to grow from the grace God is giving.
- Consequently, an important emphasis during the next phase in the development of the Alliance should be on deepening and

inferiority, on growing in knowledge and appreciation of the Assumption, and on strengthening our commitment to this particular path of holiness and service. That is a more difficult part of the journey, but it is nonetheless very important.

SOME ADVICE

As we embark on this difficult but decisive next phase, **I** would want to repeat how important it will be

- To intensify our efforts at **working together** in the mission, at all levels: in the elaboration of apostolic projects, in work “in the field”, and in the shared leadership of these projects.
- To continue **supporting each other** in our efforts to be faithful to our vocation, by mutual encouragement, by ongoing conversation, by persevering prayer as frequently as possible together. The more we see each other as brothers and sisters, the more we will talk with each other and work with each other with confidence and daring.
- To continue **reflecting together** on our spiritual heritage, on our mission, on the Church and the world in which we are called to live out our vocation.
- To continue **deciding together** in areas we consider that to be important. It is for that reason that we will need to continue thinking about the organization of the Alliance and the involvement of lay people at various levels of government.

Just as there are very different levels of involvement and commitment on the part of lay people close to the Assumption, there are also different levels of understanding and commitment on the part of Assumptionist religious to the Alliance. That hardly surprises me. I am convinced that with the Alliance we have embarked on a journey that Emmanuel d’Alzon would fully embrace, and I am entirely confident that this will be the conviction of my successor and his collaborators. I take the opportunity of these words, to thank the lay participants at this Chapter

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

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