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DIARY OF THE CHAPTER

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

General mobilization

Among the documents presently before the members of the chapter, those on formation and "mobilizing works" capture their attention.

Editorial

Mobilize to last
Michel Kubler

Contrary to popular opinion, a General Chapter does not spend most of its time making decisions. Rather, the time is spent selecting orientations for the Congregation. Sometimes, the Chapter is satisfied with working on a submitted text and returning it to its author for further elucidation.. That is what happened these days with the document on "Mobilizing Works". This is a new expression at the Assumption having appeared at the Council of Congregation of 2009. It was thought that the 32nd General Chapter would not opt for a few "apostolic orientations" as it had in 2005 for Asia, the Near East Mission and youth and vocations but would rather recognize certain provincial apostolates as capable of "rallying" (mobilizing) the interest of the Congregation.
A number of criteria were selected: conformity with our fundamental orientations; collaboration with the Assumption Family; ability to accept religious from other Provinces and volunteers; lay-religious collaboration; international dimension; vocation ministry, etc.
The Chapter decided to confide the selection of those works presented by the Provinces to be considered :Mobilizing" (1) to the Plenary General Counsel. The PGC will monitor these to follow their development, evaluate their economic and human needs, and the possibilities for volunteerism...
Why all this? Two reasons: promote a certain "esprit de corps" and stimulate our missionary zeal. By recognising the mobilizing character of a particular apostolate, the Congregation would commit itself to assuring its continued existence.

(1) ISEAB of Butembo (RD-Congo), Youth Hostel Adveniat (Paris), "Accompagner" (Belgium), St. Peter-St. Andrew Center (Bucharest, Romania), Assumption College (Worcester, USA), Network of schools in Tulear (Madagascar) and Bayard.

All in formation

The formation of candidates determines the quality of our religious life. After having adopted in 2005 the new *Ratio Institutionis* (compendium of the norms for formation), we had to take stock.
On the level of the **initial formation**, new questions are being asked, because of the inter- cultural character of our communities. Formation needs to be more international, especially for the philosophical and theological studies; but postulancy and the novitiate will be done rather in the cultural environment of the young, even if this poses problems for formators. We are considering an International Formation Commission, to promote meetings of Masters of novices, to form the formators to the cultural diversity, to encourage the exchange of students, etc.
Special attention has been given to **languages**: postulants and novices should be formed in a language they know well and each religious is expected to try to master two international languages. Lastly, we shall create "international formation centers" animated by international teams. And, considering the earlier CAFI, the wish was expressed that there be international meetings of young religious but these should not be burdensome.
Continuing formation will be taken up by provincial or continental commissions entrusted with the elaboration of a plan. And an international session should be organized. Without forgetting the sessions of the RIAD, which will continue with the other congregations of the Family.
Innovation: the Chapter wishes a new style of formation for Superiors, more spiritual along with techniques for animation, accompaniment, management of disagreements and taking into consideration internationality.
The **laity** have not been forgotten! The International Lay-Religious Commission could elaborate a formation plan for their purpose, adaptable to each Province. And we very much encourage the common formation of religious and laity – including lay formators! -, in view of helping each other, while preserving the vocation of each!

My Voice at the Chapter

During these past six years in Rome as Secretary General, I came to realize that the orientations and apostolic axes issued in the Chapter of 2005 were taken very seriously. The General Counsel was passionate about moving things forward: internationality and solidarity of our communities and foundations, especially the Mission to the Near East with Bucharest, the Asian Mission in the Philippines and the mission in West and East Africa. New vocations, the sharing of our charism with the Assumption family, our Sisters and the Lay people, were all successful endeavours.
I am now waiting for this Chapter to launch us beyond the grandiose themes to prophetic ways of responding to today's urgent needs: such as, the increase in vocations in Viet Nam, the calls from China, India, Vietnam and Korea preparing our Asian Mission.
This would be so many fruits that the members of the Chapter could take home with them to share with both religious and lay people.
According to the first echoes, communications in this Chapter are going well, both ad intra and ad extra, thanks to the "*Diary of the Chapter*" and the website www.assumptio.org. We could have inaugurated a blog to keep in touch with "our little religious family", as Fr. d'Alzon was wont to say.
In short, I notice that "la frutta" - the basket of fruit, as we say in Italian - will be varied and overflowing, promising good nourishment with the promise of flowers of hope for the future.

Fr. Lucas Chuffart (France)

I came to this Chapter with a lot of expectations : that we be shown ways to grow today in this concrete world where we live and ways to live and express our faith, to become enthusiastic for the fraternal life, to locate ourselves in the Kingdom and to help each other to enter that Kingdom.
And I came a bit discouraged, marked by the opacity of a hostile world full of gloom.
I changed perspective when the brothers helped me to see that, sure, we may be implicated in the painful experiences of a world breaking apart, but a new world is coming to life. God also loves this world in crisis. It is thus possible that all may be renewed in Him. The Lord wants us to anticipate the coming of his Kingdom; the Father by the Spirit always makes his work move forward. Let us be collaborators, men of hope.
And Sunday the 8th, the Lord offered us a day of recollection with Fr. Sandro Laini of the community of Florence, a very wise man. One idea struck me, but not for its newness: the Lord is Family, our mission is to help grow the Family of God. We are not to wait for it to fall from the sky, nor look for complicated things in our apostolate. We who claim to be characterized by a family spirit, let us do everything to live as Sons and as brothers.
The lay Assumptionists long to live this. They will unite themselves to us to strengthen the communion and thus make present the Kingdom by witnessing before this world that it is wholesome to live as brothers and sisters and children of God.

Fr. Niceto Calle (Provincial of Spain)

Personally, I am very impressed by the older religious at the Chapter. I have come to a real school of life and work. I am filled with the wisdom that energizes the members of the Chapter and enables them to dig deep in the past and the present, and find the real challenges for the Assumption in the Church as pertains to faith, communion and solidarity with the poor with whom all Assumptionists, religious and lay, are invited to search for solutions so that humanity can be reborn in Christ.
To do this, we need to return to the Word of God, love of the Congregation and our charism. We need to revisit the sources of our Augustinian and Alzonian spirituality. We need to walk in the foot steps of the great men of the Church and the world who showed us, by their various witnesses' the prize we win when we commit ourselves to the cause of God and man, His creature.
In a special way, I hope that this Chapter will be for all Assumptionists, not only an important warning thanks to its good and wise orientations and decisions, but also and especially, another "Kairos" to confess in love and forgiveness, in justice and peace, in truth and reconciliation, in listening and dialogue, in solidarity and sharing, in work and sacrifice, the name of Christ.
To conclude, I want to encourage everybody to get to work. Just as hope in Christ never fails, so we will lack nothing for our spiritual, material and effective life...as long as our first and last cause at the Assumption remains the total consecration to live in Christ, poor, chaste and obedient for the ART. Thank you.

Fr. Jean-René Bayengo (Butembo-Africa)

How they « interpret » our Chapter

During ten days, six young ladies, as efficient as they are sympathetic, have assured the simultaneous translation of the Chapter discussions. The 'Diary of the Chapter' asked Barbara, Charlotte, Claudine, Corinne, Eva and their leader Lucie how they see us.

*** What amazed them**

Unanimous response to this first question: "Your hospitality has been tremendous!" Not being accustomed to this from other groups for whom they have worked, they underscore for example "everyone has shown us such great kindness", but also "the friendship among you" (Corrine). Lucie can't get over "that you take such an interest in us":"You know our names, you kindly greet us in the morning and you welcome us to your table!" Apparently, not that commonplace….

Other surprise: the way our group functions. "As concrete -- including for the economic questions – and effective as the general assembly of an enterprise!" estimated Charlotte. "Your method is thoroughly tried and tested. Given your large number, the organization is perfect" (Barbara and Eva)

Last reason for astonishment, the material conditions in which they are welcomed: "The rooms (at Due Pini) and the food (at Casa La Salle) are very pleasant, especially for volunteers!" adds Claudine.

*** What they have discovered**

The first thing learned by our interpreters is of a professional nature. Little familiar with religious matters, this field attachment has helped them to become familiar with new realities: "A lot of the vocabulary was unknown to me: liturgical terms, ecclesiastical titles …" (Charlotte). Or then, known words have taken on new meaning: "communion" is not just the Eucharist, and "conversion" is not always a changing of religion (Claudine)!

Beyond words, there are religious realities that they had no idea of: "That priests have a sense of humor!" delighted Eva. Lucie, for her part, said she was impressed because "you live poverty, not misery, but a real sobriety": "I knew the Church only by clichés: with you, I see it in truth, and I am amazed."

This kind of discovery even inclines Corinne to consider specializing in the religious field: "I am not a believer, but I find fascinating this universe which is totally new for me!"

*** What they feel inclined to tell us**

Without putting their heads together, three of them take the offensive on the same theme: the Church and women! They calculated, at Saturday's festive meal at Due Pini, the work done by the Oblates of the Assumption: "They wait on you at table, but they do not participate in your Chapter … That's shocking!" (Eva) "Your assembly is missing half of humanity and of Christianity…" (Corinne)

But what shocks them even more, is the impossibility for women to have access to responsibilities in the Church, to begin with the impediment to priesthood: "And yet, you are not women-haters, on the contrary I clearly see that you very much respect women!" (Lucie)

Claudine, for her part, prolongs one of the Chapter discussions: "Do not be afraid to 'lose' novices, if they discover along the way that they have taken the wrong road." Charlotte, lastly, wants to congratulate the Assumption for all these initiatives aimed at the youth: "At a time when so many of them are distancing themselves from the Church, you play the card of the future!

Today's Program

Morning

Plenary Assembly:

- 1st examination: Territorial organization; Statute Rule of Life (Lay); Messages.
- 2nd examination: Mobilizing Works; Finances; Formation; Youth and vocation; Languages; Postulation.
- 3rd examination: Fundamental Orientations.

Noon

Cocktail with Brothers of Christians' school

Afternoon

Plenary Assembly:

- Documents

Letters from our readers

Take courage for the remaining days! We've been praying for you all at Gervais Quénard Community and especially for those who have accepted responsibilities if the Congregation. Hope, the new team will deepen your initiatives and the orientations of the 32n General Chapter so that, as one body, we may take the Congregation and its apostolate to quite waters of God's Kingdom. My suggestion about the visible unity of the Congregation: let's vote three to five socio-economical projects and concentrate on them successively as a congregation and not as provinces or territories.
Paulin Kakule, aa (Butembo – Africa)

Les Laïcs - Ami(e)s de l'Assomption de Toulouse, à l'occasion de leur réunion mensuelle «Vivons de l'Esprit de l'Assomption», ont fêté l'élection de Benoît Grière comme Supérieur Général et de ses assistants en portant un toast à cette bénédiction qui nous est donnée par l'acceptation des frères pour ces tâches.
Nous les assurons de nos prières, de notre soutien et de notre amitié...
Merci à vous tous, tous les capitulants.
Les Laïcs-Ami(e)s de l'Assomption de Toulouse (France)

Gracias por ese '*Journal du Chapitre*' que nos haces llegar día tras día. Él nos ayuda a vivir dicho capítulo y sus trabajos, como si estuviésemos presentes en el aula. Si a ello añadimos, las fotos del Hermano Didier nos resulta una gozada acercarnos a él.
Gracias, igualmente, a todos los componentes del Capítulo por el esfuerzo diario para sacar a flote el trabajo. Hoy he podido comprobar que a las tres orientaciones del Capítulo 2005 les han dado una nueva aportación práctica: nivel personal con la relectura de la vida, el acompañamiento espiritual y la práctica regular de los sacramentos sin olvidar la formación permanente. Un verdadero acierto y un compromiso para todos y cada uno de los religiosos y laicos. También el nivel comunitario me parece muy bonito el compartir la Palabra de Dios, la oración y la vida como signos del Reino. Mi experiencia es, que a veces, compartimos más con los laicos que con nuestros propios hermanos de comunidad.
La tercera dimensión el la misión y también aquí subrayáis, que nuestro trabajo parroquial u otro, le demos una dimensión más comunitaria.
Gracias, una vez más por todo vuestro esfuerzo y por ayudarnos a vibrar con las reflexiones de los capitulantes. Que Dios os bendiga a todos.
P. Julián Lucas, aa (Leganés – España)

Au nom de la communauté du noviciat AA de Juvisy-sur-Orge, je tiens cher Benoît, à t'exprimer ma joie et ma reconnaissance pour ta disponibilité face à la nouvelle charge que te confie le chapitre général. Merci d'avoir accepté d'accompagner la congrégation sur le chemin qui s'ouvre devant elle et de l'aider à relever les défis de son action dans le XXIe siècle.
P. Jean-Claude Erhart, aa,
maître des novices (Juvisy – France)

Merci pour le '*Journal du Chapitre*' qui a permis à tous vos amis de vous suivre.
Alors que se profile la fin de cette assemblée, je voulais vous dire un mot de la part des Orantes. Participant ce matin à l'Eucharistie, je priais pour vous et, comme vous peut-être, j'étais frappée par la lectures des Actes: «...l'Esprit-Saint leur dit: 'détachez pour moi B et S en vue de l'œuvre pour laquelle je les ai appelés'... Ainsi envoyés en mission par le Saint-Esprit, ils descendirent...prirent un bateau - un train, un avion - ils annonçaient la Parole...»
Alors, bonne route, courage, Joie et belle Mission à tous!
Sr. Yolande Champagny, Orante de l'Assomption (Créteil – France)

Allow me to add my words of gratitude and appreciation to those of so many others of us who are not physically present with you.
Thanks to Father Richard and his Team, for leading our little family with compassion and challenge over these past years ... helping to bring us to where we are today.
Thanks to Father Benoît and his new Team for accepting the call to servant leadership for the days and years ahead.
Thanks, too, to everyone who is part of the Chapter (Delegates as well as all the support staff) for the delicate and difficult work you are doing of «listening» and «orienting». And a special word of thanks to Father Michel for the special gift of the *Diary of the Chapter,* which allows us to be "in Chapter" with all of you.
Fr. Donald Espinosa, aa
(Brighton – North America)

Father Bernard Le Leannec elected Secretary General

This Breton, at age 60, will stay in Rome but with new responsibilities. The General Chapter elected him to be the Secretary General, replacing Fr. Lucas Chuffart. Fr. Bernard did his Novitiate and his Theological studies in Strasbourg where he obtained a Masters in Divinity and a Doctorate in Canon Law. He was ordained in 1978 and served in our parish in Bordeaux from 1979 to 1981 when he was called to "*La Croix*". In 1989, before the fall of Communism, he went to Moscow and became the Pastor of Saint-Louis-des-Français. Since 2009, he has served as Procurator for the Congregation in Rome.