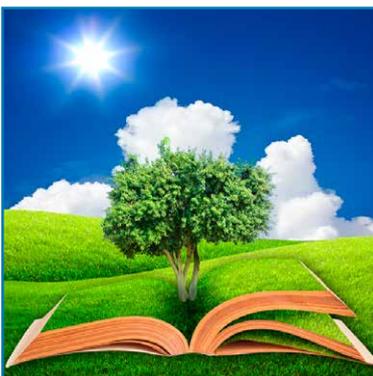


# A News of the Assumption



## EDITORIAL

# The Kingdom and its demands

*« Ours is the task to live what the Lord has asked of us without hesitation or regret, but with the conviction that God will never leave us. »*

# Agenda

## Plenary General Council

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- n° 5 : **December 2-10, 2019**, in Rome.
- n° 6 : **June 2-10, 2020**, in Worcester (United States).
- n° 7 : **December 3-11, 2020**, in Nimes (France).

## Ordinary General Council

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- n° 15 : **September 9-28, 2019**.
- n° 16: **November 11-15, 2019**.
- n° 17 : **December 11-12, 2019**.
- n° 18 : **February 10-14, 2020**.

## Benoît

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- **July 9-24**: United States and Québec.
- **August**: France.

## Marcelo

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- **August 5-September 3**: Chile.

## Didier

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- **July 8-August 5**: France.
- **August 15-31**: Madagascar.

## Thierry

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- **July 16-Sept. 5**: DR-Congo.

## Miguel

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- **July 9-22**: United States.
- **July 23-September 2**: Mexico.

### *On the cover*

A group of girls in Angola (photo M. Marciel): a survey is in progress for an Assumptionist foundation in this country by the Provinces of Africa and Brazil. Read Fr. Marcelo's travel report, pages 16 and 17.

## A new edition of the Rule of Life

Actualized following the 33rd General Chapter (2017), after having already been modified by the previous Chapter, our Rule of Life was in need of a new edition that would incorporate successive changes.

This re-edition is organized in two steps:

-an interim version, with a soft cover, is already available in the three languages for the new religious or young professed who didn't already have a copy (it will be up to the Provincials to let the Secretary General know how many copies are needed);

-in the future a hard-cover version will be produced for all religious---in the three languages; thereafter, all old copies can be discarded expeditiously.

Additionally, a budget has been allocated for a revised version of *Ecrits Spirituels* in French, that will be finalized shortly. The Spanish version will follow, and we are waiting for the English version, which is currently in preparation.

**Rule of Life  
of the  
Congregation  
of the  
Augustinians of the Assumption**

**A.A.**

## The Kingdom and its demands



**Fr. Benoît Grière**  
General Superior  
of the  
Augustinians of  
the Assumption

I recently had the joy of receiving the final vows of some young Assumptionist brothers. It is such a deep privilege for me to see our religious family grow with the welcoming of our new brothers ready to work for the Kingdom of God. In Kinshasa in April, eleven brothers of different nationalities (Congolese, Madagascan, Ugandan, Togolese) committed themselves until death. In June in Vietnam, seven brothers from that country pronounced their vows as well. I pondered these questions during these two celebrations: “Do these brothers know exactly what they are committing themselves to? What kind of future are they promised? What joy will they have, what sorrows will they experience? What passion will incite them?”

I have been an Assumptionist for 30 years beginning with my postulancy in 1989. That was the year that the Berlin Wall fell and with it an aspect of the history of the world marked by the inevitable end of the Marxist block. Since then, many events have shaken the world and the Church. Due to my age, I could become a bit nostalgic for the good years---those of my mission in Madagascar, or those years accompanying the young in our houses of formation---but I can say that despite the difficulties of certain days, I have never regretted answering the call of Christ to the Assumptionist family.

Today’s world calls us to have an abundance of wisdom. The on-going collapse of a centuries-old vision and organization of the Catholic Church can elicit distress and sadness, but hope is not lacking. The attitude that I recommend is that of the wise, who know that everything is in the hands of God and that he himself is a witness of his greatness and unfailing love. It is not wise to withdraw to any Olympus, to take the “higher ground” as if the world “below” was not good enough

for us. It is better, moreover, to grow from the interior and to find peace in our hearts, remaining present and vigilant in the midst of this world that God loves unceasingly despite everything.

The brothers who made perpetual vows will have to deal with the difficulties of the Kingdom that, truthfully, we ourselves have to live. However, do we talk enough about these challenges? Do we prefer a relative mutism so as not to taint the celebration? During the days of Easter, I reread the retreat preached by the Jesuit, Yves de Montcheuil, prior to his execution by the Nazis. He had entitled it: “The Kingdom and its demands”. The best service that we can provide our young brothers is to witness to the radicalism of these demands and to our choice in life. It will be of no use to soften the message of Christ, since the faith is neither a sleeping pill nor a tranquilizer. Ours is the task to live what the Lord has asked of us without hesitation or regret, but with the conviction that God will never leave us.

Therefore, listen again to these demands! “Who loves his father or his mother more than me is not worthy of me” (Mt 10, 37). “Whoever puts his hand to the plow and looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God” (Lk 9, 62). “The one who endures until the end, he will be saved” (Mt 10, 22). And those of us who are missionaries, we cannot help but be challenged by this: “Do not acquire any gold or silver or copper coins to put in your belts, no bag for the journey, no tunic to change into, no sandals, no staff. The worker, in effect, is worth his keep” (Mt 10, 9-10)? The Kingdom cannot be realized in us and around us unless we fully accept to live these demands. Along with Emmanuel d’Alzon, let us not be afraid to proclaim: “That your Kingdom come!” ■

# Calls, nominations, changes...

Father Benoît Grière, Superior General, with the consent of his Council, called

## ■ TO THE PERPETUAL PROFESSION

- 1) **RAKOTOMALA Herinirina Jean Christien**  
(Madagascar) 29/05/2019
- 2) **RABENIRINA Simon Pierre**  
(Madagascar) 29/05/2019
- 3) **RAMANANDRAIBE Rolland**  
(Madagascar) 29/05/2019
- 4) **RANDRIATAHIANA José Daniel**  
(Madagascar) 29/05/2019
- 5) **NDRIAMAMONJY Florent Régis**  
(Madagascar) 30/05/2019

## ■ TO THE DEACONATE

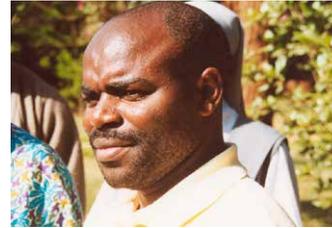
- 6) **NUNEZ RUBIO Juan Manuel**  
(Andean Province) 12/02/2019
- 7) **VU VAN VAN Huê Charles**  
(Europe) 12/02/2019
- 8) **GONZALEZ Eddy**  
(Europe) 29/05/2019
- 9) **RASOLONJATOVO Jean Aimé**  
(Madagascar) 29/05/2019
- 10) **KAMBALE Benjamin**  
(Madagascar) 29/05/2019
- 11) **KATEMBO KAMERA Dalmon**  
(Madagascar) 30/05/2019

## ■ TO THE PRIESTHOOD

- 12) **CAD BA Vinh Pierre**  
(Europe) 12/02/2019
- 13) **RAKOTOMANGA Pio Soldier**  
(Europe) 30/05/2019
- 14) **SANTANA VARGAS Cristian**  
(Prov. Andina) 30/05/2019
- 15) **PALUKU MASIMENGO Vedastus**  
(Prov. Andina) 30/05/2019
- 16) **RANDRIAMIZAKA Alphonse**  
(Madagascar) 30/05/2019
- 17) **RADIMILAHY Jean Pierre**  
(Madagascar) 30/05/2019
- 18) **KAMBALE KANYAMA Jean-Bosco**  
(North America) 18/06/2019
- 19) **LÓPEZ SOLÍS Marciano**  
(North America) 18/06/2019
- 20) **CERVANTES Rodel Sapalo**  
(North America) 18/06/2019

## ■ FORMATOR'S APPROVAL

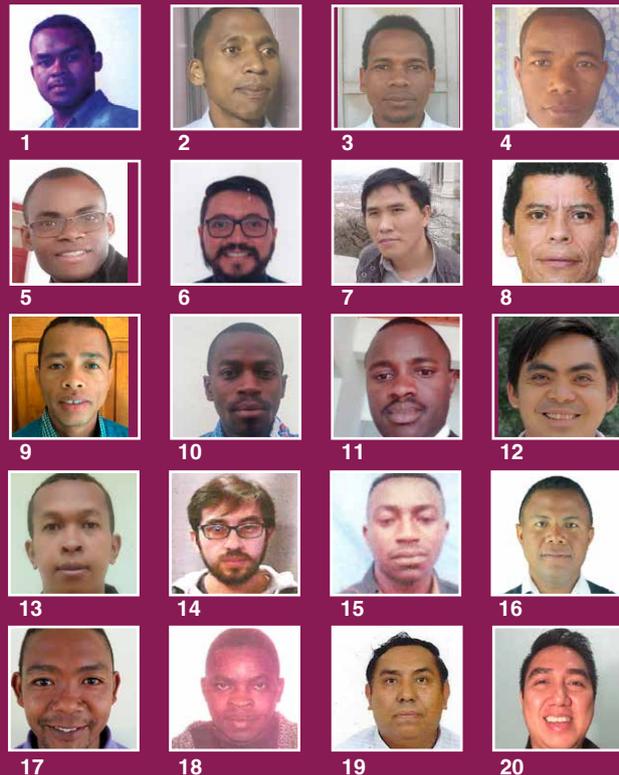
Fr. Benoît Grière, Superior General, with the consent of his Plenary General Council, approved the appointment of **Fr. Ephrem Kasereka Kapitula as Superior of the Scholasticate of Bulengera** (RD-Congo, Province of Africa).



## ■ HOUSE OPENINGS

Father Benoît Grière, Superior General, with the consent of his Plenary General Council, gave his approval for the opening of:

- an apostolic community in **Lomé** (Togo, Prov. of Europe);
- a parish pastoral community in **Mwanza** (Tanzania, Vice-Prov. of East Africa).



# The Assumption at the time of Vietnam

The 4th session of the Plenary General Council (CGP) of this mandate was held at Vũng Tàu, Vietnam, from June 9 to 18: an opportunity to discuss many of the Congregation's issues, of course, but also to closely discover the young and yet varied face of the Assumption in this country and this continent.

The CGP, thanks to these two weeks spent in Vietnam, has set itself on local time: everyone has done so by advancing or delaying their watch quite considerably, but above all the whole group - General Curia and Provincials (with the sad exception of the Frs. Yves Nzuba and Henri Kizito, without visas) - experienced a beautiful immersion in the culture of a country, even a continent, that many discovered. But can we say really that the Assumption has now become Asian?

What is certain for the participants is that they will no longer see the Assumption as before. Together, they experienced, at the start of their stay, the perpetual profession of seven brothers in Saigon and measured their very young face, both reserved and festive (with fireworks in the church at the end of the celebration... and incredible banquets!). Together, they prayed in a language they did not understand the first word but could see, in a palpable way, how much their brothers were committed to it. Together, they reflected on the future paths of the congregation in this region which, after only one or two decades of life, will become a Vicariate and thus receive a real degree of autonomy...



Perpetual profession of seven Vietnamese Brothers in Saigon, June 8, 2019.

The prospect of this next step was raised before the Council by the Frs. Bernard Holzer (Philippines), delegate of the Superior General for Asia, and François-Xavier Nguyen Tien Duong (known as «Fax», from Vietnam), delegate of the Provincial of Europe.

The first one reviewed all the preparatory work carried out since the 2011 General Chapter, creating an «Inter-Asian Coordination», which will therefore lead to the birth of the Vicariate of Asia-Oceania. But, he stressed at the

outset, «the Assumption remains a fragile reality in Asia. The Congregation is still in a state of foundation in Korea (after 27 years), the Philippines and Vietnam (after 14 years), despite the missionary dynamism, the number of vocations and young people in formation, and the first works that express its charism. And to underline the great diversity that characterizes these three countries, with their specificities (histories, languages, cultures, social structures, political systems, religions and ecclesiologies, apostolates): it will still take time and patience ▶

## >> Plenary General Council

to build the unity of an Asian Assumption»! However, these differences do not prevent religious from working together for a better service of the Kingdom of God in this continent.

It is therefore not surprising that this variety is found in the preparation of the Vicariate, carried out at several speeds and with different attitudes, note B. Holzer: from enthusiasm to fear in the face of the unknown, even opposition from some. The expectations regarding the project and the organization of the Vicariate also vary according to the people and even the countries. As a result, observes Father General's delegate, «we all speak of 'Unity in Diversity' for the Vicariate, but we do not put the same things under the different terms...»

The continental reality itself is not unanimously accepted: «For some, Asia does not exist, it is a Western vision.» It is then a real challenge to develop a common conception, an organization and apostolic projects for the future Vicariate. But a consensus exists, provided by the theme of the last Chapter, thus reformulated under these latitudes: «To be men of communion in Asia» through the triple dialogue advocated by the bishops of this continent: with cultures, with religions and with the poor.

As for Father François-Xavier, he evoked the current realities of the Vietnamese Assumption, in his country but also beyond: did you know that the 73 Vietnamese professed today in the Congregation are equally divided between 37 living in Vietnam and 36 in formation or on mission in eight other countries? Among them, 19 are priests (9 in Vietnam), 16

perpetually professed non priests (4 in Vietnam) and 38 temporarily professed (24 in Vietnam). To this number are added 7 novices, 11 postulants and 13 candidates. A rather impressive record, even if it must not hide certain weaknesses either.

The Assumption currently has five communities in Vietnam: a postulancy (6 candidates in Saigon-Tran Van Ky), a scholasticate (27 brothers in formation in Saigon-Fatima) and a social community (36 children welcomed at the orphanage), also in Saigon; a novitiate in Ba Ria (currently 7 novices); and a parish in Vinh, whose community welcomes five postulants, while taking care of two student homes and chaplaincy in 12 hospitals.

The apostolic orientations of the congregation in this country mainly go to youth ministry (100 students are welcomed in 5 homes), solidarity (one house for 40 workers, supported by a network of benefactors), pilgrimages, media and communication (a Bayard subsidiary publishes religious books for children, a local version of *Prions en Eglise*, as well as the *Do Cat* on social doctrine, a bestseller!)... Not to mention the formation of our young religious, in connection with the female congregations, which requires great energy and no less skills.

Benoît Bigard, Provincial of Europe, provided the Council with statistical data concerning the future Vicariate as a whole: 80 religious currently live in Asia, out of the 389 that the Province of Europe has in all. In addition to 13 postulants and 12 novices, they are divided into 32 brothers

in formation, 5 perpetually professed non priests and 18 priests. One religious in four in this Province is now from Asia: 20% Vietnamese (the French are now only 29%), 3% Filipinos, 1% Koreans and 1% other Asians. An Indonesian has just been accepted into the novitiate.

When we look at the age curve of the Province of Europe, the peak of Asia on the side of the young people corresponds to that of the Europeans among the older ones. According to a projection of numbers made by the Province of Europe, in five years' time, this could lead to a total of 104 religious living in Asia, while the European continent will decrease from 247 to 183 religious, West Africa from 39 to 57, etc.

B. Bigard has a strong conviction: *"We must trust our young Asian brothers to invent the Asian Assumption, while accompanying them, and not want to establish the congregation there according to European schemes. How can we make room for ways of doing things that are different from our own? They have their own know-how, which just needs to be proven."*

Benoît Grière, Superior General, confirming the analyses heard: *"It is true, we are still in foundation, and we must ask ourselves how to achieve autonomy, in the long term, while remaining linked to the whole Assumptionist body."* The mission of the Assumption has only just begun!

**Fr. Michel KUBLER,**  
General Secretary

## The challenges of the Church in Vietnam

The historian and journalist Augustin Vuong Dinh Chu, who was invited to present the Church in his country, came to the CGP with a clear message. In particular, he outlined the challenges it faces today. Thus:

- **the prophetic role of the Church:** the Church is quite free in Vietnam, but in society, there are still many violations of human rights, injustice, moral degradation, environmental devastation... Faced with this, will the Church keep silent for her own safety, or raise her voice to defend the common good, even if it means paying the price?

- **inculturation:** both an ancient and a contemporary problem, which requires concrete orientations in liturgy, music and sacred art...

- **the role of the laity:** clericalism, the current problem of the universal Church, is never pub-

licly mentioned in the Church of Vietnam, even if it is felt everywhere. Thus the laity has a very passive role, with the sole task of going to Mass and obeying the parish priest.

- **the holiness of pastors :** in a society of consumption and pleasure, with much corruption and lies, this holiness seems urgent for the success of evangelization: witnesses are needed more than preachers.

A. Chu's conclusion: *"To overcome these challenges, we need God's grace, but also our own efforts and courage. And I firmly believe that the Augustinians of the Assumption can contribute effectively to this process, because this is also your vocation: to serve the glory of God and the happiness of the human being. »*



Fr François-Xavier Nguyen Tien Dung, Delegate of the Provincial of Europe, addresses the GPC.

## Solidarity in Assumption Campaign 2019

As every year, the CGP calls on the whole Congregation to show solidarity in a very concrete way with one or another Assumptionist project that needs to be supported in the world. This Assumptionist Solidarity Campaign is therefore not yet completed for 2019, to the benefit of the "Mujeres Emprededoras" project developed by the lay Assumptionists of the "Mi Hogar Asuncionista" Foundation in Bogota, Colombia.

For 2020, the CGP has decided to propose to the generosity of all the communities and provinces a project presented by the Province of Africa and located in DR Congo: it is a question of building a bridge in Bibwa, to replace a very fragile footbridge and thus facilitate and secure the way to the school that our brothers have just opened there, in the Kinshasa Region. The estimate is in the order of 10,000 USD.

If the 2020 Assumption Solidarity Campaign raises more than this amount, the surplus will go to a project from the Vice-Province of East Africa in Uganda: "Public address system for youth ministry", for youth ministry in our Kyabakadde parish in Kampala.

## Mobilizing Works

As is its custom and duty, the CGP has evaluated several “mobilizing works”: works that the whole body must support, but which must also stimulate the whole Congregation.

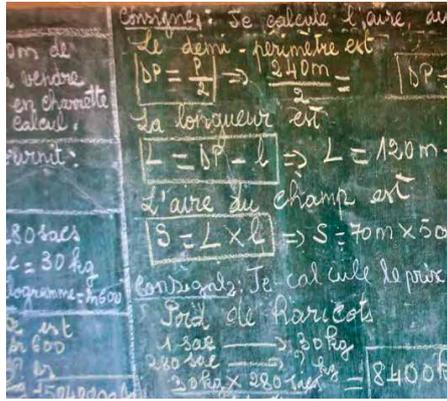
### The network of bush schools (Madagascar)

This mobilizing work was presented by Fr. Etienne Ratalata Rafanambinantsoa, Provincial. There are nearly 50 Malagasy schools with a total of about 4,000 students: numbers that are constantly changing, as some are closing and others are opening. Developments never cease: positive, with new buildings and especially good school results, but also negative, with health concerns in particular.

The very positive impact of the “Educare” congress in Worcester (2016) was highlighted, with in particular privileged links between the Ejeda secondary school and those in Belgium: for the first time, two Malagasy religious were able to go to Belgium for a month, meeting leaders and teachers, but also pupils and parents: a very enriching experience! They also took the opportunity to go to Nîmes to meet Bro Jean-Michel Brochec and to Lyon where an association of solidarity with our college is based.

Projects: three new schools will be built, financed by Belgian families. Three others are still “under the tree”, waiting for permanent premises. At the Ejeda College, a new pavilion will be built, financed by the Italian Bishops’ Conference, and a place of prayer is being planned.

Progress: More sustained medical visits lead to a significant improvement in children’s health. Relations with parents



Under trees or in permanent buildings: Malagasy bush schools.

continue to improve, both financially and in terms of student follow-up.

Challenges: Parents are being made aware of the need to pay for their children’s education (they contribute half of the teachers’ salaries). The government has reduced the minimum wage, so we need to find supplements to pay the salaries of our teachers. They are still not very stable, changing employers as soon as they find a better place elsewhere.

On the economic level, the budgets are closed partly thanks to the contributions of parents, partly by donations (Belgium,

Ejeda-Solidarity association), and finally by BDS.

Concerning the link with the Assumption: at the structural level, the work is directed by a team of religious in collaboration with the monitoring committee. The General Treasurer’s office provides support in fundraising, but also in prospecting to find new students. And the support of the Congregation is never denied, corresponding to the spirit of the Assumption that our Province maintains in this work. It is also worth mentioning the departure of Brother Clement Löbel (Province of Europe) from Ejeda College for one year, renewable.

In the end, it should be recalled that this work is a significant place for vocations and formation of candidates for Assumptionist life. However, the major challenge remains self-financing.

### **The Saint Peter - Saint Andrew Center (Bucharest)**

Fr. Benoît Bigard, Provincial of Europe, presents the work and his team: the community was reduced to three members since Michel Kubler left for Rome in 2017, but we have succeeded in strengthening it for the next school year: Frs. Lucian Dîncă and Iulian Dancă will be joined by a young Togolese, Yvon Akpabié, who will study Eastern theology, and Fr. Iosif Gal, a Romanian returning from his mission in Togo. Fr. Jean-Marie Mwamba is appointed to Belgium.

The past year has seen changes at the library: Sister Maria, Oblate in charge of the place, has gone part-time; the library, still well frequented, was the subject of a television report on the occasion of Pope Francis' visit to Romania. History students from the University of Bucharest will do a three-month internship there. This is in line with a better anchoring of the house in the Romanian intellectual milieu, in parallel with the local Church.

The students' hostel has also changed its rules, with a stay limited to one year, renewable once.

The Centre's conferences are keeping pace, with a loyal audience (40 people on average, or 1,000 people over the year). A new feature: Father Jean-François Petit has undertaken to organize annual events at the site of his "Académie catholique du Val de Seine".



Patron saint's day of the house of Bucharest (June 2019).

The commitment in the local Church is faithful: the Faculty of Theology (Lucian), welcoming the homeless by the Missionaries of Charity (Jean-Marie), accompanying an EDC team (Christian Entrepreneurs and Leaders - Iulian), etc.

Economically, the building still requires maintenance that requires the help of the Province. Some benefactors come as reinforcements, as well as some groups welcomed in the house.

In terms of the Oriental Mission, the House of Bucharest is involved in the preparation of the Rome session on Fr. Galabert in this month of July. Fr. Lucian participates in the newly reconstituted Provincial Library Commission.

The Province, for its part, maintains its intention to send young religious or novices on internships to Bucharest to encourage vocations to the Eastern Mission. The brothers of the house are also expected, with the help of the increase in their number, to make themselves available again in order to form the whole congregation for the Christian East and ecumenism.

The Centre's activities can be followed on the website: <http://www.centrulpetrusiandrei.ro>

### **Adveniat Youth Hostel (Paris)**

It is always the Provincial of Europe who presents to the CGP the changes that have occurred since last year in this high place of the Assumption in Paris. The most important is the Auberge's own responsibility, with a couple whose husband is at the Adveniat Foundation and whose wife is on the Board of Directors. Phuc, a young Vietnamese brother, became communication manager.

Gica Pauleț, who is in charge of the animation to replace Nicolas Potteau, who will leave this summer. Fr. Wilson Waweru, Kenyan, will also leave, replaced by Fr. Jean-Valère coming from Togo for studies.

The occupancy rate fell slightly in 2018, mainly due to train strikes and, above all, social movements ("yellow vests") violently blocking the district. As a result, the price of the overnight stay had to be increased slightly. However, the recovery is expected in 2019. The website has been made more adaptable and is more popular. It can be estimated that 20,000 nights are spent per year.

The animation of the place is always based on two main activities: meals with families, and thematic visits to Paris. Outside groups regularly come to the hos-

## >> Plenary General Council



Celebration in the chapel of the Adveniat Youth Hostel in Paris.

tel to meet. A dynamic is thus created around the place, including with renewed musical activities.

The challenge is always to remain present in a very competitive market, where booking platforms act as intermediaries by charging a high commission for short bookings that generate more work...

The involvement of religious is great, but varied: each one has its own sector of intervention, including with the young people of the home.

Self-financing capacity is real, despite fluctuations in attendance. But we are never immune from the unexpected, or even an attack...

The spirit of the Assumption remains present, with the charter that animates the Hostel, especially as the presence of the Church in a changing world and a mission for communion. It is undoubtedly a place of reference for our Province. We would like the a.a. communities to better communicate its existence and its proposals. Eight volunteers were

welcomed last year, and others are expected this summer: the vocational role plays more on this level and that of the home than on visiting clients. This even makes you want to create youth hostels in other Assumptionist places around the world!

For more information, see the website: [www.http://adveniat-paris.org/](http://adveniat-paris.org/)

**The other four “Mobilizing Works”, validated by the 2011 General Chapter and confirmed by the 2017 General Chapter, are Accompany (Belgium), Assumption College (United States), Bayard and ISEAB (DR-Congo): the CGP conducted their annual evaluation last December (see AA Info n° 7).**

## Learning of languages

*The Plenary General Council, meeting in Vung Tau in June 2019, made the following decision concerning the learning of new languages within the Congregation:*

All Assumption religious in formation should learn at least one of the international languages of the Congregation (French, English, Spanish) beyond that which is theirs originally.

The objective goal is that each religious masters the usage of at least two of these three languages.

In the countries where none of the three official languages are used for education, the religious in formation should necessarily learn at least one, and they will be encouraged to learn a second.

# First apostolic appointments

The “first apostolic appointment” of any religious at the end of his formation is fixed within the framework of the CGP, according to a decision of the 32nd General Chapter (2011), and published at the time of priestly ordination (for religious brothers: at perpetual Profession).

We publish here the nominations received by religious ordained priests over the past year (the province indicated is the one that presented the brother for ordination):

**Antoine NGUYEN VAN Duc** (Europe): international community of Nîmes, for 3 years, in youth ministry and schools.

**François NGUYEN DINH Hàn** (Europe) : Vinh for 3 years, in the pastoral care of the parish, the family and health..

**Germain KAKULE MASIKINI** (Africa): St-Monica parish of Njiru, Nairobi (Kenya), especially for youth ministry.

**Dieudonné KATHEMBO TSONGO** (Africa): Bayard-East Africa, for the development of the company in this region.

**Vedastus PALUKU MASIMENGO** (Andean Province): pastoral animation of the schools of Lota (Chile).

**Rodel Sapalo CERVANTES** (North America): parish pastoral care in Mexico.

**Marciano LÓPEZ SOLÍS** (North America): Parish of Tlilapan-Orizaba (Mexico).

**Pierre CAO BA Vinh** (Europe): Project Manager at the Provincial Treasurer Office of Europe.

**Heshima KAKULE SIKULISIMWA** (Africa): parish ministry at the foundation of Kayna (DR-Congo), with particular attention to youth ministry.

**Willy MATADI ASINA** (Africa): Kinshasa, for youth and vocation ministry of the future Vicariate.

**Erasmus KAMBALE MOWAVINGI** (Africa): Beni, at Prince of Peace school complex.

**Gerlace KASEREKA SAFARI** (Africa): Bulengera, to help the treasurer and participate to the training team.

**Janvier KAMBALE KULALA** (Europe): mission to Athens (Greece).

**Fabrice-Marie ADZAKLI** (Europe): to the international community of Nîmes and its aims, while training in clinical psychology for the training of young religious.

**Jean-Claude DIWEDIGA** (Europe): Scholasticate of Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), as trainer, and collaboration with Bayard (development of Living with Christ).

**Vivien DOKOUI** (Europe): Sokodé (Togo), for developing self-financing issues.

**Germain RAKOTOZAFINDRAMOHA** (Madagascar) : Betioky, for pastoral care in rural areas and self-financing through agricultural work.

# “An Assumption that advances on the path of holiness”

In his closing speech at the 4th session of the CGP, on 18 June 2019 at Vũng Tàu, Fr. Benoît Grière, Superior General, insisted on the requirements of our religious life. Excerpts



Our first meeting in Asia is over. (...) We were immediately immersed in the atmosphere thanks to the welcome of our brothers from Saigon. Their kindness and dedication have made it easy for us to adapt. The celebration of the perpetual profession of seven young brothers on Saturday, June 8, was also a strong moment that shows that the Assumption is firmly rooted in Asia and particularly in Vietnam.

Unfortunately, we were amputated with two of our members present: Father Yves Kaghoma and Father Kizito. Unable to obtain their visas, they remained in their province in Africa. I sincerely regret this - and you have all said it, all of you - because our work makes sense to the extent that everyone is present and participating. (...)

The CGP had a copious program and we worked bravely. In

presenting my report I wanted to draw attention to important issues: recruitment criteria, missionary audacity, abuses within the Church, economic life, new foundations, etc. Everything I have been hammering for years is linked to my concern, not to have an irreproachable Assumption, but to have an Assumption that advances on the path of holiness. This Assumption is all of us, with our brothers and sisters without exception. I believe that the Kingdom of God has strong demands and that we cannot sacrifice what Christ Jesus asked us to do to follow Him day after day. (...)

The Assumption in Asia, it is the next perspective of the vicariate in 2020. We understood that here too, there would be local support to be provided to overcome prejudices and give life to our ambition for unity. Bernard Holzer's report and Fr. François-Xavier's presentation showed us a contrasting picture. But we have confidence in our ability to develop the Assumption in this immense continent and to take up the challenge of the three dialogues: with religions, with cultures, with the poor.

Conversion, as we know, is everyone's business. (...) The problem of abuse - all abuses - is now taken seriously in our religious family. For a long time hid-

den in a cultural environment that hid or reduced them, we realized the extent of the problem. Progress is, of course, still to be made, and we will have the opportunity to continue to raise awareness.

Education, three years after the «Educare» congress in Worcester, has also kept us seriously busy. We cannot leave our establishments without strong animation, both humanly and religiously. We need apostles in the world of education. Even if the Assumption is versatile in its apostolic choices, it must honour this aspect of its charism dear to Emmanuel d'Alzon.

Our founder began the adventure of the 1st novitiate in December 1845. 175 years later, we want to remember this history, sometimes chaotic, but always placed under the benevolent gaze of God. Next year, we will have our jubilee year. Several events will mark the anniversary: the Alliance meeting at the end of July, the CGP in December - not to mention the June meeting in Worcester - etc. We want to show our attachment to the figure of our founder, but also our attachment to our religious consecration. D'Alzon wanted religious to work on the announcement of the Kingdom of God. We will remember that. »

# East Africa: a new reality that does not start from scratch

The Vice-Province, created this year, has recently experienced two great founding events: a Provincial Retreat and its first Vice-Provincial Chapter.



The members of the Founding Chapter of the Vice-Province of East Africa (May 2019).

While the Vice-Province of East Africa, decreed by the General Chapter of 2017, came into existence on the first day of this year, we can say that the work of its first Chapter, held from 20th to 25th May, has been the first major effort to discern, express and foster God’s will for our communities in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

“Assumptionist: A Witness and an Agent of unity in a divided world.” The chosen theme is in itself a recognition of the reality they face and a statement of the intentions that drive our brothers in that part of the world:

It was very significant that Father Kizito, the first Vice-Provincial of East Africa, chose Father

d’Alzon’s last words to launch the work of its first Chapter.

- **Is there anything you want, Father?**
- **I want only God’s will.**
- **We are about to part! ...**
- **Submission to God’s will!...**
- **He is the Master! (ES 1461-1462)**

The Vice-Province begins its life acknowledging that it is not starting from scratch. It recognizes that we are heirs, we are called to incarnate in the world the gift that God chose to give our founder and his disciples; we share the same hope.

How do our brothers want to express their ambition to do God’s will in East Africa?

First of all, they were willing to see and recognize honestly and frankly the weaknesses and challenges they face in order to respond to their vocation. They highlighted the challenge of unity concerning not only within our communities, but also in the mission that we are called to carry out in an unjust world, divided by selfishness, fear and the quest for power.

“Buibui wakijiunga pamoja, wanaweza hata kumfunga simba”  
 “When spiders unite, they can even tie up a lion.”

What lion is it that the Vice-Province is trying to bind? No doubt, tribalism and nationalism that can so often divide us, but also does apathy and the search for comfort. The lion is some-

times the fear of change, the fear of a new mission... the scarcity of resources.

During the Vice-Provincial Chapter and the preceding Retreat, we realized that without the effective commitment of each religious to Jesus Christ, who calls us to “be One” in him, we will not be able to live that fraternal communion which will unite our hearts and direct them towards God and his Kingdom. Without fraternal union we will never be credible witnesses of the Gospel.

The diversity and youth of our Vice-Province are a richness and an opportunity to live fully the ideals of the Assumption. Vocation ministry and formation are priorities; and, although we are aware of our economic difficulties and need to work to obtain the means necessary to carry out our mission, our poverty is an opportunity to express that our life and our mission are gifts from God and depend upon Him.

Thank God, young people seeking to respond to the Lord’s call, continue to knock on our door. How can we accommodate them with our limited facilities? How can we give them a proper formation? Towards which mission should we direct them? May the Lord give us the strength and lucidity we need to accompany our young people.

Finally, the Vice-Province has great missionary ambition. We spoke of new foundations in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda; of our parishes, our commitment to education, the future of Bayard-Africa; and of the contribution of the Vice-Province to the mission of the Congregation, since we are a part of that one Body.

May the Lord bestow his blessings on the lay and religious who, in this part of the Assumptionist world, commit themselves to live out God’s will!

**Fr. José Miguel DÍAZ AYLLÓN**  
Assistant General accompanying the  
Vice-Province

## Fr. Kizito : “Let us act for the coming of the Kingdom”

At the moment when the Vice-Province of East Africa was born, her first superior shared her convictions and questions with US.



From left to right: Fr. Henri Kizito Vyambwera (Vice-Provincial of East Africa), Fr. Yves Nzuva Kaghoma (Provincial of Africa), Fr. Miguel Diaz Ayllon (Assistant General)

### How was the first semester of your Vice-Province’s life?

Fr. Kizito: This semester went well, with more joyous than unfortunate events. Since January 1st, we have had the preparation and holding of the Vice-Provincial Chapter, whose work was concluded on May 25th. The great work is already done on the Acts and we will be able to release them at the appropriate time.

Admittedly, to be able to conclude a chapter, a lot of work had to be done. The preparations were a time of frustration, discovery and learning. Not knowing where to start, what to do to move forward, who to turn to for advice, how to formulate the request... we sometimes had sleepless nights. The days were coming along and it seemed like we had done nothing. But it was a joy to discover brothers who were always ready to be of service, to learn to do what we didn’t know,...

At the same time, it was necessary to think of the ordinary daily life of the Vice-Province that was beginning, with in particular files of requests for perpetual vows and ordained ministries that were positively approved. These are reasons for joy and encouragement.



The Chapter Assembly.

**How do you feel as his superior?**

feel a sense of hope. I whisper in my heart a conviction that nothing is simple, but everything is possible thanks to God. I see the reality of the Vice-Province as such, then I say to myself that we must dare to do something in the service of brothers and sisters, with the conviction that God is there for us. God always wants the good, and if we want to do the good, he cannot abandon us, no matter how difficult it may be.

**What do you think are the main strengths and weaknesses of the Vice Province at this early stage of its existence?**

some time now, there has been a growth in vocations. Every year now, the number of novices has increased from 2, 3, 4 to 6 or 8. Departures have decreased compared to the past, especially at the novitiate post

stage. I also note the interest of the lay people of the Alliance for the life of the Vice-Province and the Congregation. We are also fortunate to have easy access to our three countries and to transport without major problems, despite the distance separating the communities. Finally, political and financial stability can also allow for some investment in the Vice-Province.

As for handicaps, there is a lack of rigour in discernment during recruitment and acceptance into vows, tribal or ethnic divisions due to a lack of knowledge of our fundamental Assumptionist fundamentals, a weak sense of belonging to the congregation, a lack of formators... Moreover, the cult of the priest erases the value of religious life: Finally, of course, there is the financial crisis: our Vice-Province is born without any source of income.

**What is your number one objective for the next three years?**

I have no other objective than to act for the coming of the Kingdom of God in us, in our communities and throughout the Vice-Province. Our Vice-Provincial Chapter, in line with the 2017 General Chapter, insisted on unity. During these three years, we want to work to strengthen community life. This will come from a good understanding of our Assumptionist values and the true sense of belonging to the Assumption. The Assumption is the work of God,” said Fr. d’Alzon. We can’t do anything about it without him. With the concern of the religious who is passionate about Jesus and his brother, I would like to accompany my brothers to feel responsible for the Vice-Province and to care for it, as true witnesses and agents of unity from our communities. It is God’s work and he will do it in us and with us.



## Angola, one more step in our Missionary Adventure

In the first CGP of December 2011, Father General proposed to the Provincials of Brazil and Africa to start collaboration between their provinces for a foundation in Angola. On December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013, two Congolese religious, Roger and Jules, arrived in Brazil. In December 2015 the General created a reflection and exploration team for a foundation in Angola made up of Fathers Luiz Gonzaga, Protais Kabila and Marcelo Marciel, Assistant General. Our first trip to Luanda (the capital of Angola) took place from 16<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> January, 2017, with visits to the dioceses of Luanda, Caxito and Viana. Unfortunately, the Provincial of Africa could not join us on that first trip because of visa problems.

The Canonical Visitation to Brazil in March 2019 launched

the Angola project anew, and we resumed contact with Monsignor Antonio Jaca, the Bishop of Benguela diocese and Administrator of Caxito diocese, where we had been welcomed during our first visit to Angola.

For this second trip to Angola, Fr. Luiz Gonzaga, Provincial Superior of Brazil, and I were joined by two sisters of the Brazilian Congregation called “Irmãs Auxiliares de Nossa Senhora da Piedade”, who are also interested in founding in the country. Once again, Fr. Yves, the Provincial of Africa, was unable to travel because of visa problems.

Our first contact in the city of Benguela was with a Sister who informed us that the city has grown significantly in recent times and there are several new

districts with no religious presence or any parishes nearby. She told us that if we want to settle in the diocese, missionaries are always welcome. The suburbs of Benguela need missionaries and is well connected with the centre. As for formation centres, Benguela boasts a seminary for philosophy and theology that include students from other dioceses. It is, in fact, the largest seminary in the country - 300 seminarians - and there are also private universities.

The Bishop of Benguela, Monsignor Antonio Jaca, invited us to explore his diocese, a very large one. He told us that we would be welcome, that they needed missionaries, and that they were arranging for us to go on a tour round the extremities of the diocese and to visit sever-

al rural communities. At the end of our meeting he said: ‘when visiting the different sectors of the diocese, wherever your heart beats the strongest, you can settle there.’

The tour began with a visit to a religious community on the outskirts of Benguela in order to learn something about the situation of the local Church and also about the cost of living for a community. As for the Church, it is in the process of creating new parishes in these new districts. In each neighbourhood there are people who are responsible for the sector, called Sorbas, and these are the ones who give permission for the purchase of land and for settling there. There is a need for literacy projects, and for education of children and adults. There are also multiple sects that corrupt families by constantly asking for money. The average number of children per family is 12, and many of those children

are not baptized. Worship attendance is high at Sunday masses, patronal feast days and processions. But youth unemployment is also high in these outer reaches, and so is drug abuse. Schooling opportunities are few, which results in rising levels of violence and criminality.

Finally we made a stop in a parish run by the Saletinos in the district of Catumbela and then in a new pastoral sector also entrusted to the Saletinos, called Luongo, which is home to the Catholic Polytechnic Institute of Benguela and where the Bishop intends to create a new parish to be called Saint Francis of Assisi; the church is under construction, with a large plot of land already ring-fenced. It is a large pastoral sector, and still expanding. Also, nearby there is a chapel annexed to a housing centre for the military.

After discerning between the different possibilities with the Sisters, we decided to speak with the Vicar General, Father Eduardo, to convey our wish for eventually making a pastoral insertion in the New Parish of St. Francis of Assisi (Luongo). At the end of our visit the bishop welcomed us into his diocese and insisted that the community should live within the mission site.

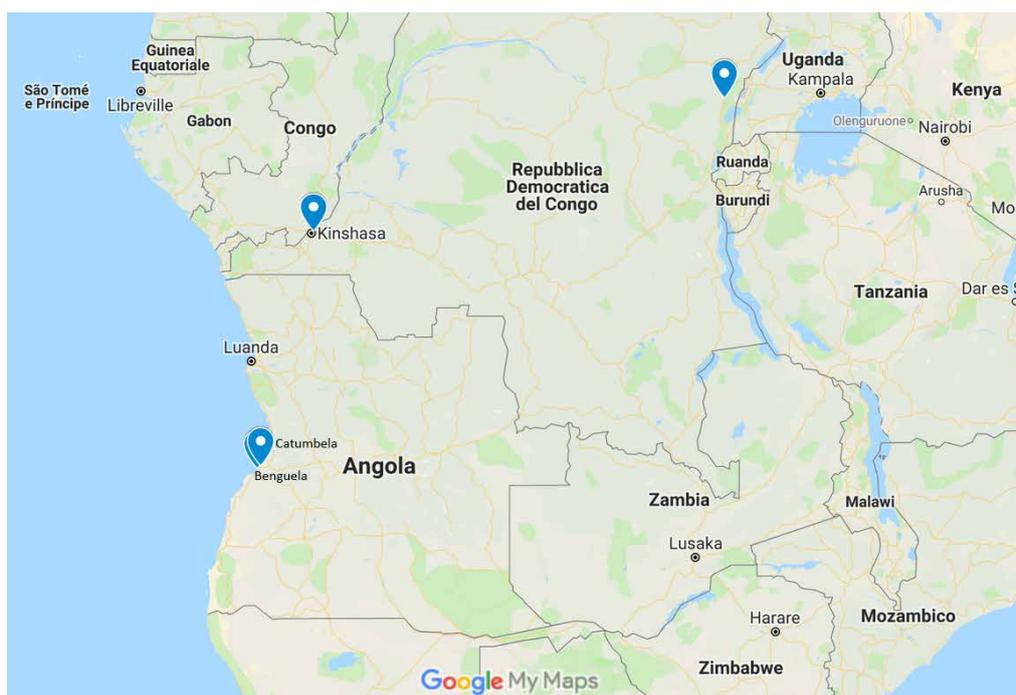
Don Antonio Jaca came to Rome in June for the *ad limina* visit and called at our house to meet the Superior General and to express his wish and joy that the Assumptionists be established in Angola - specifically in his diocese; he also mentioned his purpose to open up new apostolic opportunities, in the media for instance, for which there is great need.

**Fr. Marcelo MARCIEL**  
Vicar General

### Some data

Currently Angola has a population of about 29.2 million.

Christianity is the prevalent religion: 93.5 per cent of Angolans are Christian, 4.7 per cent practise ethnic (indigenous) religions, 0.6 per cent are Muslim, 0.9 per cent agnostic and 0.2 per cent non-religious. Of the Christians, 72% are Catholic, and the remaining 28% Baptists, Presbyterians, Pentecostals, Methodists, Lutherans or some other small Christian groups.



# Fr. Benoît Grière: “In Africa, we want to work for justice and promote peace.”

During a visit to Ouagadougou, the Superior General presented to La Croix Africa his vision of the congregation within the African continent.

**The Augustinians of the Assumption are present in Africa, in areas affected by insecurity, religious fanaticism, or immigration. What actions are they taking to help people facing these problems?**

**Fr. Benoît Grière:** There are many challenges around the world. The Assumption, where it is present, tries to contribute with its modest means to work for concord, peace and justice. Our action is often discreet because it is a question of awakening consciences and training people so that everyone finds their place in civil society to transform it according to the spirit of the Gospel. In DR-Congo, we founded a university in the Butembo region more than 15 years ago. The eastern part of DR-Congo is in the grip of a latent war that does not say its name but where men, women and children are regularly massacred. We want to work for justice and promote peace. This requires the education of young people, in particular and the training of leaders of Christian communities. We do not want to resign ourselves to the situation and we advocate dialogue and exchange everywhere. Faced with the omnipresence of Islam, we wish to have religious capable of contributing to dialogue with this

religion in order to overcome mutual prejudices and foster fraternal understanding. Currently, we are training two religious in Islamic studies and they are courageously learning the Arabic language...

**Your congregation is the owner and sole shareholder of the Bayard press group with its subsidiary “Bayard Africa” in Burkina Faso. What are the challenges of Bayard’s presence in Africa?**

The centre of gravity of Christianity is shifting southwards on our planet. The challenge for Bayard is to support this movement and meet the needs of African men and women, particularly in terms of religious training, education and the promotion of justice. Bayard, by settling in Burkina Faso, also wants to create the conditions to create new editorial proposals that will be thought by Africans and for Africans. This requires time and patience. The Assumption is not intended to establish a company whose sole purpose is commercial. Bayard’s coming to Burkina Faso responds to a missionary call: it is a question of spreading widely the message that Christ gave to men in his Gospel. African youth, who represent a considerable part of the local population, need to

be supported for their human and spiritual growth. We have the audacity to believe that we can contribute to this ambition through the presence of our media work. We will also be attentive to the needs of African families and clergy.

**What are the other Assumptionist projects in Africa? In which areas do they operate?**

It is difficult to list the various projects in which we are involved. As I said earlier, there is education in all its forms: schools, colleges and universities. There are parishes and the formation of a responsible laity in Christian communities. We are also engaged in the first evangelization, especially in Tanzania where we preach the Gospel in areas where this has not yet been done. We work in the field of agriculture, for example by looking for seeds that are resistant to the various “pests” that affect them (viruses, parasites, etc.). We are engaged in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. Our deep desire is to foster communion among all people.

# A new mission in Brazil

The foundation of the parish community of Cerro Azul last year allows the Province of Brazil to broaden its pastoral horizons.

*“Go therefore, make disciples of all nations” (Mt. 28:19).*

Faithful to these words of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and animated by the missionary spirit of our founder, Fr. Emmanuel d’Alzon, the Assumptionist Province of Brazil has just opened a new community in the southern part of the country. Since last year, the Assumptionists have settled in the diocese of Paranaguá, in a parish called Nossa Senhora da Guia, located in the small town of Cerro Azul. Cerro Azul is a small city of 18,000 inhabitants, and is about 80 kilometres from Curitiba, the capital city of the province of Paraná. The city is best known for its orange production. The majority of the population works in the fields.

Our new community of Cerro Azul is made up of three religious. Two Brazilians (Marcos Lucio Bento De Souza, superior and parish priest, Joimar Sella) and one Congolese (Justin Kasereka Munga). This makes it an international community.

Our first mission in this part of Brazil is evangelization and vocational animation. Nossa Senhora da Guia parish was founded in 1934. It has 24 small communities, all located in rural areas and far apart. We make the effort to visit each community at least twice a month.

Until then our mission is limited to pastoral animation: sacramental celebrations, catechesis for children and adults, formation of extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist and ministers of the Word, formation of altar boys.



In the future, we wish to have a group of lay Assumptionists and to vary our apostolate by creating, for example, a social work, according to the needs of the community.

The good news is that since the presence of the Assumption in this parish, there has been an increase in the number of faithful and active participation in parish activities. The proof is that this year we had more than 180 catechumens who received confirmation and first communion; and more than 60 marriages celebrated. Thank God for that!!!!

As the parish has been in existence for almost 100 years, it is normal to see many things and buildings in advanced disrepair and in need of major reform. It is in this sense that the community’s greatest project is the renovation and enlargement of the church, which increasingly no longer contains the number of faithful who come to pray on Sundays; and the parish house (presbytery). We hope that with the grace of God and the contribution of all, this project will be realized.

Currently there is a proliferation of evangelical or Protestant churches in the city of Cerro Azul. A challenge can be for us Assumptionists, who are called to promote ecumenism, (RL 16 and 18). In addition, Cerro Azul is a city open to the large city of Curitiba and is much influenced both positively and negatively by the latter. As a result, in recent years, some young people have begun to engage in drug use and trade, something that was almost unthinkable in the region in the last ten years, according to the former inhabitants. Hence the urgent need to support young people in order to fight against this great scourge that characterizes Brazil’s major cities. But how? These are so many pastoral challenges among so many others before us. But in spite of all this, we have the hope that with the help of the Lord, our mission will bear good fruit.

*“As the Father sent him, Christ sends us, with the promise of his Spirit, to serve our brothers and sisters by proclaiming the Gospel.” (RV 13)*

**Fr. Justin Kasereka Munga**

# Pope Francis and the Little Sisters of the Assumption

Receiving the Union of Superiors General on May 10, Pope Francis urged the religious to “be in service... but not as servants”. And he added: “If you want to play the servant, do as the daughters of Father Pernet, the Little Sisters of the Assumption, who are nurses, servants in the homes of the sick; do as they did and still do: that is good because it is a question of service.” The Argentinean Pope has praised the LSAs on many occasions: here is why.

The story of Pope Francis’ relationship with the Little Sisters of the Assumption goes back to the time when he was born. He has repeatedly stated on several occasions:

*“I was less than a day old when a young novice from the Little Sisters of the Assumption came to our house in the Flores district of Buenos Aires and took me in her arms... I remained in touch with her all of her life, until she was taken to heaven a few years ago...”*. (2016).

*“In simple ways, the chores in the house and the care she gave to the sick, they showed the presence of Jesus Christ better than any sermon... The Little Sisters continue to work in many countries throughout the world with that same tenderness and mercy that Father Pernet witnessed throughout his life”* (in 2017).

On the occasion of his visit to the United States, Pope Francis accepted an invitation extended to him by the Little Sisters of the Assumption and the lay people associated with them to visit the East Harlem district. The Pope listened attentively to the local people (the poor, the homeless, the forgotten of our society) who told him of their concerns and needs, and who wished to be blessed by the Pope.

**On August 15, 2010, the feast of the Assumption, Cardinal Bergoglio said in his homily:**

“Mary left and went without delay. Mary in a hurry... Mary did not waste time, she knew that her cousin Elizabeth was in need and she departed without delay.

I want you to you know that when I speak with the Virgin or whenever there is something to settle, I say to her: “Hurry, you who know how to hurry, hurry up...” Mary, the woman in a hurry.

This brings me to an image that I treasure. A group of women from Junta Street, number 3000, who, after mass, went out “in a hurry” to serve and didn’t come back until noon. They rushed out to work as maids in homes where there were women who needed help to clean the house, to send the children to school... poor people, people who could not pay for an assistant. Maids, servants to the poor. That was always impressive.

I was always impressed by the habit they used to wear at that time, when they came out with that veil backwards shaped like a bag that filled up with wind as they walked so fast.

I remember, in 1959, when I was in Rosario, near the Jesuit parish, I saw a sister passing by riding a bicycle in that habit, imagine the picture, she was cy-

cling to offer service to a family.

In my house they were very much loved. My grandmother was one of the ‘Monicas’, there was great familiarity. One of them held me in her arms for two days after I was born.

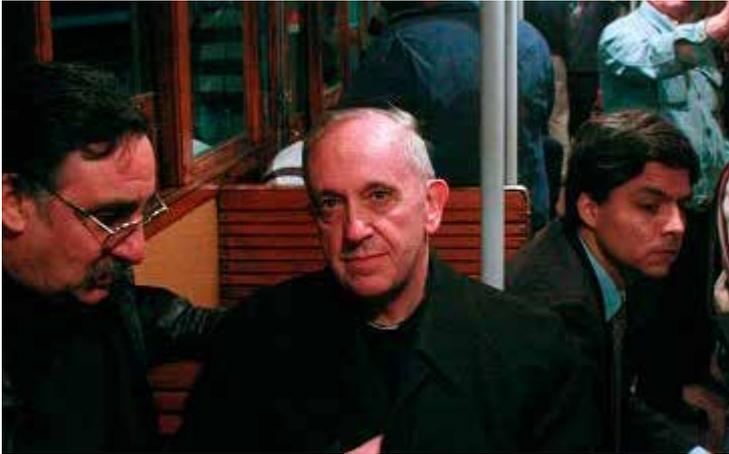
Dad and mom told us about them, they said that they followed the Rule of St. Augustine; that they were not allowed to eat in the homes where they served as maids and nurses, that they came back home to have their lunch.

From time to time my dad or my mom, but usually my dad, took us on a visit to Junta Street. There was a bridge to cross when it rained and everywhere was flooded. In the neighborhood they were known as the “the little sisters of the bridge”, because of that bridge.

But let us return to our theme: Mary in a hurry..., women in a hurry in their service..., women who brought to those homes the motherliness of the Church, the motherliness of Mary. Let us give thanks to God...

People understood this, they grasped that the Church was their mother. My father told me that in the factory where he worked there were several co-workers who had come from Spain, Republicans, “priest eaters”.

One of the workers fell ill with a kind of purulent herpes. He was



Mgr Bergoglio, then Archbishop of Buenos Aires (Argentina)

full of purulent sores. And the housewife had a job to look after him, so my father went to talk to the Mother Superior, Mother Marlene, and explained the situation to her; he said: “Look, Mother, this man is going to mistreat you, he will not let you in”. Mother Marlene said: “I am going, myself”.

She did go, and on the first day she had to hear the worst things that can be said to a woman... She patiently went about the different tasks she had to do. She treated his sores, sent the children to school and left... This went on for about 2 months.

The man gradually loosened up and, after a week he asked: “Little sister, please... why did you ever become a nun?”, the questions were gradually coming forward... This man felt he was cared for with the tenderness of a mother.

Eventually he went back to work... One day, as they were leaving the factory, a nun happened to pass by, not a Little Sister, a nun from a different Congregation... and another worker let off a rude remark at her; then our man knocked him down with a single blow saying: “to the priests and to God, say whatever you want, but don’t interfere with the Virgin or the nuns”.

Such is the motherliness of these women and of every religious woman; the Church is mother, and a woman who consecrates herself as a witness of this motherliness of the Church. Mary and a woman who consecrates herself to God are witnesses of this motherliness.

On this day, the Virgin is awarded this recognition by Jesus the servant. We remember that she took care of him by serving.

Let us look at Mary, always ready to serve, and let us thank God because in Argentina these women organized themselves in order to carry out their mission; at a time when there was no talk of immersion, but they were immersed up to the crown of their heads.

Let us thank God because these women have the charisma of Father Etienne (Stephen) and Mother Mary of Jesus and, through their simple work, they were able to reveal to our people that Mary is a mother and the Church is a mother.

To you, I thank you...; to you and to your predecessors, I thank you. Keep being in a hurry... It’s worth it...

## The Assumption of Bucharest, crossroads of the Orient and the West

*The acts of the symposium on the 80th anniversary of the presence in the Romanian capital have been published.*

One year has elapsed following the symposium organized in Bucharest on the 80 years since the inauguration of l’Institut Français d’Etudes Byzantines (May 5, 2018). The volume of these acts appears in the Editions Gutenberg under the coordination of Lucian Dîncă. Many people expressed their desires to have a written record of the event published. For this reason, a book project was born highlighting the accounting of the proceedings of that day. Additionally, one can discover several unpublished archival documents concerning the preparations and installation of the Assumptionists in Bucharest in 1934 up until their expulsion in 1947.

Without clinging to a nostalgia for the past, this book is written equally on the continuity of a history that he intends to perpetuate in the years to come. For this reason, one will find testimonies of people who share with us a taste for the actual mission of the Assumptionists in the service of Christian unity. We must consider them as a form of acknowledgment for a type of work which, if there is no further need for justification, rests on consolidation and perpetuation.

This volume was released within weeks of the visit of Pope Francis to Romania (May 31-June 2). As different as they might be, each of these events contributes in their own way to accomplishing the most treasured wish of Christ: . . .”That all may be one. . .so that the world believes”.

**Fr. Lucian Dîncă, Bucarest  
(the article appeared in ATLPE n° 22)**

# Novitiates in South America

We complete here Patrick Zago's great series on the history of Assumptionist novitiates, with a South American perspective by Fr. Julio Navarro.

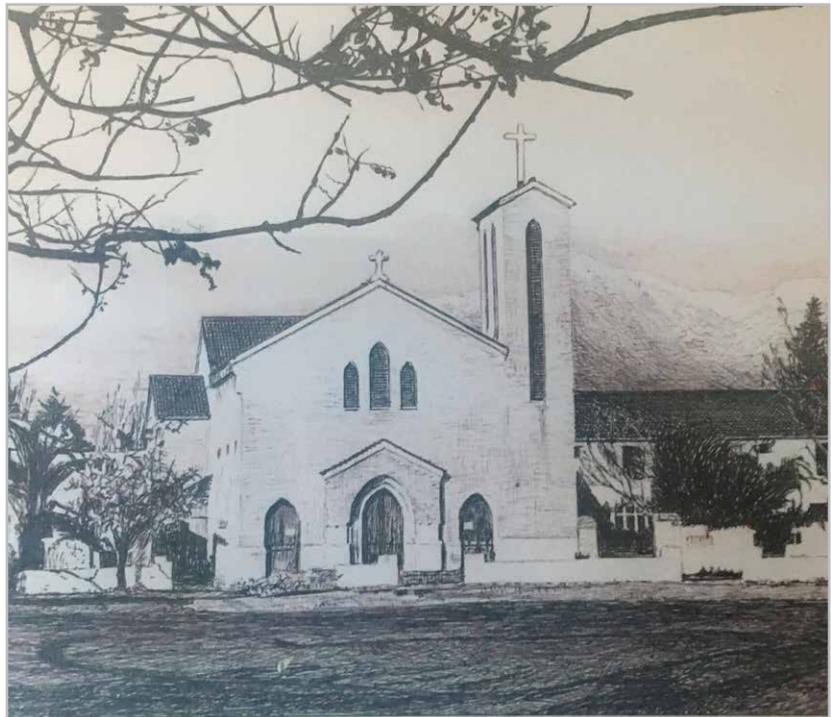
## Establishment of the Assumption in South America

The first religious sent to Chile and Argentina belonged to what was called "The Mission of Chile" (1890-1923). The first ten Assumptionists arrived in Chile on 29 October 1890 and took possession of their first mission post in Mendoza (Rengo) on 5 November, under the authority of Fr. Stéphane Chaboud (1857-1921). September 30, 1910 is considered to be the date of the foundation of the Assumption in Argentina, because it is the day of the arrival in Buenos Aires of Fr. Romain Heitmann (1869-1941).

At the time of the division of the congregation into Provinces, the communities of Chile and Argentina became "Vicariate Provincial" (1923-1953) dependent on the Province of Bordeaux. Only two were the Vicars during this period: Father Seraphin Protin (1876-1946), from 1923 to 1929 residing in Buenos Aires, and Father Zénobe Goffart (1880-1963), from 1929 to 1953, residing in Santiago.

The Province of South America (or Province of Latin America or Sudamericana), erected on August 15, 1953, by Fr. Wilfrid Dufault, Superior General, under the patronage of Our Lady of Lourdes, included the communities of Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and Colombia. In 1961, the new community of Costa Rica was added.

When Brazil became Province in 1999, the Province of South America became the Province of



El Golf, Santiago.

Chile-Argentina. In May 2004, the Region of Colombia became a Region of the Chile-Argentina Province.

And from 2013 it will be known as the Andean Province, comprising the communities of Chile, Argentina, Colombia and Ecuador (decision of the Plenary General Council of December 2013).

## The first novitiate in South America (1)

The first novitiate in South America was constituted on November 21, 1926, in the Community of **Santos Lugares**, Buenos Aires, Argentina. The novice master was Fr. Stanislas Piton (1893-1950). He began with two coadjutor brothers of Italian origin, and

the first two Argentine Assumptionists: Fr. Agustín Luchía-Puig and Fr. Gabriel Kearney. During the year, two Chilean postulants were added, one Spanish and one Argentinean, all four of them as coadjutor brothers, and one Argentine choir brother, the future Fr. Enrique Tiscornia. Nine novices in the space of a year! Of the seven Argentinean vocations, five persevered: the three priests and Brothers José Fornés and Norberto de la Torre; also Fr. Miguel Campos, Chilean. Unfortunately, what seemed like a promise of vocations for the future in Argentina does not last long. The superiors decide to transfer the novitiate to Chile, where there seem to be more staff resources.

## - NOVITIATES IN CHILE

We can speak of three very distinct stages:

**1st step: Novitiate at the Golf**, because of the war that prevents relations with the Province.

Chilean vocations, coming from the Apostolic School of Mendoza (Rengo), go to France to do their novitiate at Pont-l'Abbé d'Arnoult and then study philosophy and theology at Layrac. The first to leave for France were four on April 12, 1934; others would follow. But in 1939, the Second World War broke out, which stopped the sending of future Assumptionists to France.

- On February 17, 1942, a group of five novices took up residence in the new formation house in El Golf (Santiago). The Novice Master is Fr. Isidore Gayraud (1874-1958). In 1943, four Chilean students managed to leave France and integrate into the golf community. Of these first nine, six became Assumptionist priests.

- In 1945, Father Jean de Dieu Danset (1878-1967) became the novice master and trainer of the other students in the Golf. In 1945 there were twelve novices; in 1948 there were nine (from 1947 onwards, young religious went back to France for their theological studies).

- In 1954, still at the Golf, there were seven novices, with Fr. Stanislas Pytko (1922-1984) as Novice Master: four Argentines and three Chileans. We are at the beginning of the creation of the new Province of South America (erected on August 15, 1953). In 1956, there were thirteen novices: nine Chileans, one Argentinean, one Spanish but Spanish from Argentina, the first Colombian Assumptionist (Fr. Silvio Herrera) and one Chilean lay novice. (2)

## **2nd stage: a Novitiate for the whole of Latin America**

Between 1957 and 1966, it was a new stage, very fruitful in vocations and significant for its internationality. The novitiate is transferred to **Los Andes** and becomes the Latin American no-

vitiate, with novices from Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Spain and even a Mexican. The Novice Master is always Fr. Stanislas Pytko. On February 4, 1957, eight novices took up the religious habit: five Chileans (one lay novice), two Spanish from Argentina

### 1) Bibliography:

- Fr. Roberto Favre, A.A., *Los Assuncionistas en la Argentina. 1910-2000, Cahiers du Bicentenaire d'Alzon 2010*, no. 8, Buenos Aires 2009, pp 38-39 and 302.

- Fr. Francisco de Paula Blachère, A.A., *Génesis de la Assuncion Argentina, Edicion a cargo de la Profincia de America del Sur, buenos Aires y Santiago de Chile*, mayo de 1990, pp 45-49 ; traducion Fr. Juan Donoso Zavala, A.A. (the original manuscript in French is found in the Archives of the Province ; Fr. Blachère ends his account in 1927).

- See also : *L'Assomption e ses œuvres*, no. 316, November 1927, pp. 166-167.

2) In his report to the first Provincial Chapter of 1958, Fr. Régis Escoubas, Provincial Superior, gives these figures: 'The total number of religious in the Province, one year after its creation, which is in 1954, are: 65 priests plus 8 transferred, 6 lay brothers, 4 students in theology, for a total of 84 religious. To this day (April 1958), we are 70 priests, 17 students (6 in theology plus 11 in philosophy), 4 choir novices, 1 lay novice and 8 lay professed brothers, for a total of 110 religious. A nationality break gives 34 Chileans, 17 Argentineans, 29 French, 17 Belgians, 6 Spaniards, 1 German, 1 Italian, 1 Greek, 1 Polish, 2 Brasileans, 1 Colombian. There is only one novitiate for the whole Province, first established at Nostra Senora de los Angeles (El Golf) and now established

in our house of Los Andes. Let me give you the numbers, first of the novitiate of El Golf, since the foundation of our Province: 21 took on the religious habit; 18 pronounced their first vows. The numbers of the novitiate of Los Andes, which is in its second year: 8 took on the religious habit; 2 (one is a Mexican) pronounced their first vows'.

3) In his report to the General Chapter of 1964, Fr. Joachim Duret, Provincial Superior, writes: 'From January 1958 to March 1963, 44 novices took on the religious habit: 33 choir novices and 11 lay novices. During the novitiate, 13 choir brothers and 5 lay brothers left. 7 Brasileans from the Province of Bordeaux took on the religious habit at Los Andes.' (Report in the Archives of the Province).

4) Bibliography for the first two parts:

- Fernando Aliaga Rojas, *Religiosos Assuncionistas 100 anos al servicio de la Iglesia en Chile: 1890-1990*, Santiago de Chile, 1990, pp 105, 108-109, 230-233.

- Assuncion Chile-Argentina (bulletin of the Province), no. 44, November 1979, pp. 39-40.

- Report of Fr. Regis Escoubas, Provincial Superior, to the Provincial Chapter of 1958, in the Archives of the Province.

- Report of the Provincial Superior, Fr. Joachim Duret, to the General Chapter of 1964.

- Directory of Missionaries and Directory of Religious are a source of great value because are found even the names of the novices of each year.

and one Mexican. In 1958 there will be four novices, all Chileans (two choir brothers and two lay brothers). In 1959 there were eight novices: seven Chileans (one coadjutor) and one Spanish, but Spanish from Argentina.

In 1960 began to come to Chile to make their novitiate Brazilian brothers, accompanied by Fr. Crispinus Krispyn; these first Brazilian novices were five, including the future bishop José Geraldo Da Cruz; there were also eleven Chileans (six choir brothers and five coadjutor brothers) and one Spanish. In 1961 there was a choir novice and seven coadjutor novices, including two Brazilians. In 1962 there were nine novices: six Chileans and three Brazilians. In 1963 and 1964, apparently there were no novices. (3)

In 1965 and 1966, the novitiate was constituted in the new property of **Las Condes** (one of the municipalities of Santiago). Of the seven novices of this period, only two religious have persevered until today in the Assumption, one Chilean and one Argentinean.

Then came the great crisis of vocations. And the new policy of formation in the congregation requires that each religious be formed in his local Church and in his country. (4)

### **3rd step: Resumption after the Council.**

There is no longer a house specially erected as a novitiate; small houses are rented in poor neighbourhoods and people live in a simple and austere way, inserted in the service of the Basic Ecclesial Communities.

The Novice Masters were these Fathers:

Miguel Fuentealba Melo,

1977, 1979 and 1982, to **Robert Kennedy (Santiago), Lota and Valparaíso**; in all 7 novices: 5 Chileans, 1 Brazilian and 1 Colombian.

Jean-Pierre Bouteil, in August 1983 and from 1986 to 1991 (7 years old), in different houses in **Valparaíso**; in all 23 novices: 15 Chileans 4 Brazilians, 2 Argentines, 1 Colombian and 1 Mexican. And from 1992 to 1995 (4 years), in **Pomaire** (a small town of pottery craftsmen, 50 km. from Santiago), where he had a total of 16 novices: 4 Chileans, 4 Brazilians, 5 Mexicans, 2 Colombians and 1 Argentinean.

Julio Navarro Román, from 1996 to 1999 (4 years old), in Pomaire, where he had 21 novices: 5 Chileans, 5 Brazilians, 6 Colombians, 3 Mexicans, 2 Argentines.

Edgardo Muñoz Gutiérrez, from 2000 to 2004 (4 years and 8 months), in Pomaire, where he had 22 novices: 3 Chileans, 9 Brazilians, 6 Colombians, 1 Argentinean, 1 Ecuadorian, 1 Mexican, 1 Filipino.

Aldo Gajardo Álvarez, from August 2004 to 2006, in Pomaire, where he had 11 novices: 6 Brazilians, 3 Chileans, 1 Colombian and 1 Ecuadorian.

In January 2007 the novitiate was transferred to **Mendoza (Rengo)** in a property belonging to the Monastery of Benedictine Nuns. The Novice Master is still Fr. Aldo Gajardo Álvarez. During the four years from 2007 to 2010 he had 13 novices: 5 Brazilians, 3 Colombians, 2 Chileans, 2 Mexicans and 1 Ecuadorian.

Since January 2011, there have not been any novices in Chile.

### **A NOVITIATE IN COLOMBIA**

“In 1959 and 1960, a novitiate was opened in Colombia, in **Yumbo**, near Cali, in a lonely

villa in the mountains. Fr. Régis Escoubas was the novice master. Several candidates Coadjutor Brothers presented themselves. One of them took the habit and withdrew. A choir candidate took the habit and made profession. The novitiate closed its doors for lack of interesting candidates”. (From the report of Fr. Joachim Duret, Provincial Superior, to the 1964 General Chapter).

### **NOVITIATES IN BRAZIL**

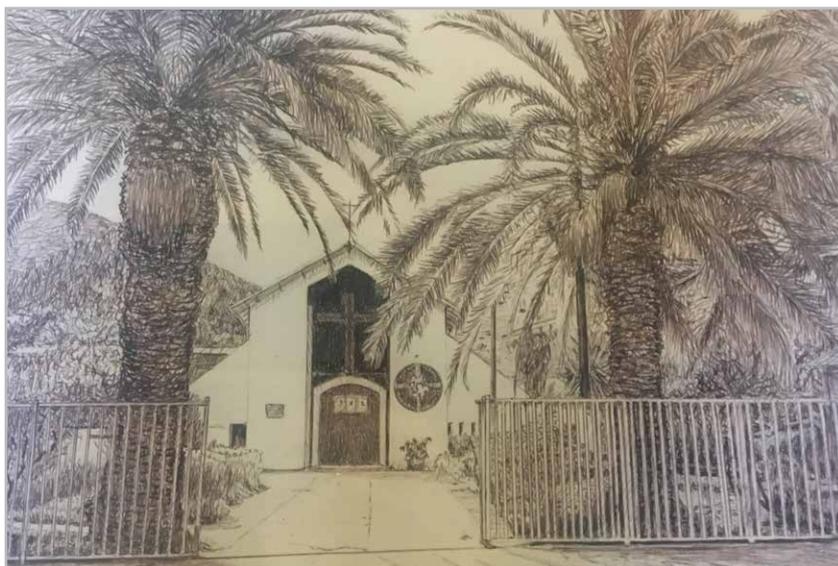
Brother Gwenaël Petton, who spent more than forty years in Brazil, was well placed to give us the details of this story.

**Novitiate of Eugenópolis** (State of Minas Gerais), 1956.

Fr. Timothée Labialle (1905-1976) received the title of Master of Novices in order to be able to take care of the first candidates for religious life, at the same time occupying the positions of superior, bursar, builder of the “Seminário Nossa Senhora de Lourdes” (alumnate), and teacher. In fact, there are three novice lay brothers: Br. Roberto Paulo da Silva, born in Eugenópolis in 1930, first profession in 1957, left the Congregation in 1960; Br. Bráulio da Silva, born in Eugenópolis in 1930, first profession in Los Andes (Chile) in 1961, left in 1966; Br. Pedro Simpliciano Barbosa, born in 1942, first profession in Los Andes in 1961, left in 1967.

**Novitiate “Governador Portela”** (State of Rio de Janeiro), 1965.

Religious of the community: Fathers João (Modeste) Lief-fring, parish priest, Bernardin Le Goff superior and Novice Master, François Marie Le Marec auxiliary, Michel-Ange Gomes, Benoît Bleunven. Brothers Jo-



Pomaire (Chile)

seph Camus (first semester) and Bráulio da Silva. Opening of the Novitiate and Taking of the habit, on February 11, 1965. Novices: Brothers José da Costa Paiva, José Ermelindo da Silva, Carlindo Izidoro Teixeira, Francisco de Assis Ferrarês, João Rubem Pessuto, Juarez Vaz de Meira, Sebastião André de Menezes, Tarcisio Braz Veronese, Eraldo Pereira Dias, José Lucas Vianelo, José Rodolfo Lopes. All from the state of Minas Gerais and the surroundings of Eugenópolis. Finally a novice from Rio de Janeiro whose name is not remembered. First profession on February 11 or 12, 1966. Of all these novices it seems that only one has not made his vows: José Rodolfo Lopes. It seems that all were transferred to Belo Horizonte (State of Minas Gerais) scholasticate of philosophy under the leadership of Fr. Michel Le Ven. At the end of 1968, with the military events (imprisonment of Frs. Le Ven, Berthou and Croguennec, and the deacon José Geraldo da Cruz), it was the great debacle. There was not a single one left.

**Pinhal Novitiate** (São Paulo State) January 1972.

This novitiate had only one

novice: Antônio Lessi, who made his profession in January 1973. Later, he left the Congregation.

**Novitiate of Ibitiura De Minas** (State of Minas Gerais), a few dozen km from Pinhal, 1976.

The Master of Novices is Fr. Fidelis Nulle. Four novices: José Aymard da Silva, Donizeti Aparecido dos Santos, Estevo Fernando Laurindo and Antônio Francisco Pereira. Estevo stayed only the first semester and entered the diocese of São João da Boa Vista, where he will be ordained a priest. Antônio Francisco Pereira, José Aymard and Donizeti made their first vows on January 12, 1977. After a few days of vacation, Brother Antônio F. Pereira left the congregation. Brother José Aymard leaves and enters the diocese, where he will be ordained a priest. Brother Donizeti leaves for the Diocese of Jalès, where he will be ordained a priest.

**Jardim Penha Novitiate**, 1978.

The Master of Novices is Fr. Fidelis Nulle. Novices: José Aparecido Ignácio, Moacir Bertolozo. First professions on January 25, 1979. Brother Moacir leaves after two years. In 1980, another nov-

ice came along: Luis Carlos Pizzi, who will make his first vows on 25 January 1981. In July 1981, he returned to Pinhal, where he was born. Due to family problems, he also left the Congregation.

**Novitiate “Nossa Senhora da América”, 2016.**

After a long interval, during which Brazilian candidates for Assumptionist life pass to Chile for their novitiate, a new novitiate opens its doors in Brazil, this time in Pinhal (São Paulo State). Father João Gomes da Silva was appointed Master of Novices by Father Benoît Grière, Superior General. To prepare for this heavy responsibility, he spent two years in Rome, from 2013 to 2015, at the Gregorian University. The novitiate is inaugurated on Sunday 24 January 2016 under the chairmanship of Fr. Luiz Gonzaga da Silva, Provincial of Brazil and in the presence of Fr. Silvio Herrera, representing the Provincial of Chile, (Andean Province). Jefferson de Oliveira Brazilian, from our parish São Judas Tadeu de Campinas, Luciano Magela de Oliveira, Brazilian from Belo Horizonte (he will retire in the same year) and Jonathan Ruiz Rivera, Chilean, take the habit on the same day. They will make their First Vows on January 8, 2017.

On Sunday, January 22nd, two young Brazilians took the habit: Johnatan Gabriel Lagoeiro, from our parish in Campinas, and Rafael Antônio Ribeiro Chilese, from our parish in Eugenópolis.

**Fr. Julio NAVARRO ROMAN**  
(December 2016 note  
updated by Gwenaël PETTON)

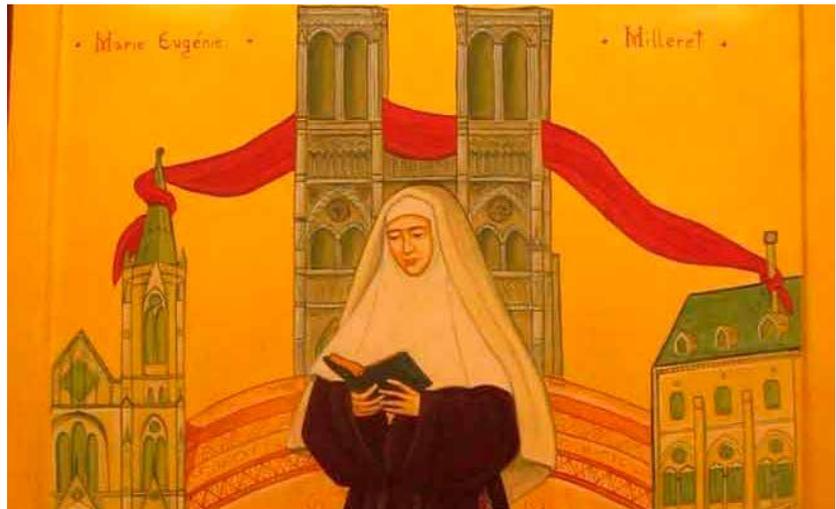
# Notre-Dame of Paris, the founding location for Saint Marie-Eugénie

Because the fire at the Cathedral in Paris has created such an emotional and universal response, take the time to rediscover the significant role that Notre-Dame had in the vocation of Saint Marie-Eugénie, foundress of the Religious of the Assumption. The following are excerpts from her correspondence..

## **Letter to Fr. Picard (November 8, 1862)**

The first stirrings of my vocation came to me under the vaulted ceiling of Notre-Dame during the lectures of 1836. I say that they were the first stirrings, because these thoughts were still quite vague, uncertain. I did not understand the desire to consecrate myself to God and to his Church---where or in what manner. The words of Fr. Lacordaire awakened my faith and made me fully determined to side entirely with the truth. The long hours I spent waiting for him, and the Church itself, where so many Christian generations had passed and whose depths seemed to me to be reserved for the steps of those whose lives are entirely dedicated to God, were also deeply affecting me. This touched me deeply. God had, I believe, placed his first fingerprint on my soul at my First Communion, but I didn't understand that. It was at Notre-Dame that I began hearing his voice.

At the end of the lectures, I really wanted to see Fr. Lacordaire. My spirit had undergone doubts and I also had difficulties with my position. I was given some serious readings from M. De Maistre, M. De Bonald, Bourdaloue, etc., without admitting my thoughts on a vocation and not saying a word. He told me some marvel-



ous things about the religious life that I have never forgotten. He equated it with a gift that one gives to Jesus Christ to help with the work of the salvation of humanity, each one according to his calling---some through their suffering and others through their apostolates and good works. He used as an example the Order of the Redemption of captives, where one promises to Christ to become enslaved for those who he has come to save, *formam servi accipiens*. He was chaplain for Mme de Swetchine, and it was in the two little rooms that she let him use in her hotel, that he met with me.”

## **Letter on the beginnings of the Congregation (April 30, 1881)**

It has been fifty years since I made a vow to become a religious, following a retreat preached by

the Dominicans, with Fr. Abbot Combalot. In 1836, I listened to the lectures of Fr. Lacordaire at Notre-Dame. I was staying with my cousin, Madame Foulon. Thanks to a family that was subservient to the Chapter of the Church, we were assured of three places in the *banc d'oeuvre* (the places reserved for VIPs of the church community); but, because there were a great deal of people, we arrived for the 10 o'clock high Mass. We stayed at church until the lecture, which began at one o'clock. This gave us considerable time to pray. This was a huge grace for me. I loved praying in this church, and it was there, for the first time, that I thought of my vocation. I made plans to see Fr. Lacordaire at the end of the lectures, without anyone knowing. He put me in a violent state such that no one can be placed.”

*(this article appeared in ATLPE n°22)*

# Fr. Matheus Van Herkhuyzen on the way to canonization

For having been a simple religious missionary in the service of the little ones, this Dutch Assumptionist saw his canonization process open 46 years after his death.

On April 29, the Roman Congregation for the Causes of Saints sent a letter to the Bishop of Saint John da Boa Vista in Brazil, Don Antonio Emilio Vilar (SDB), in response to his request of February 19, 2019: it was to open the investigation of the cause of beatification and canonization of the Servant of God Matheus van Herkhuyzen, a Dutch Assumptionist who died in Pinhal of a heart attack on April 15, 1973, on Palm Sunday.

This document is required by the norms to be observed by the Bishops for any investigation relating to the causes of the saints (norms of 7 February 1983). It is in a way a nihil obstat that also corroborates the consultation of the faithful in the diocese and that of the bishops of the region. These three consultations are measures of prudence that the Church takes at the opening of any instruction of this type of causes.

Who is Father Matheus, the youngest of two other Dutch Assumptionist brothers? His portrait could be that of an ordinary religious whose will can be summed up in this simple sentence: "I have sought to carry Christ in all sincerity, always with joy. "Piet-Canisius (his baptismal name) Van Herkhuyzen was born in Nijmegen (Netherlands) on July 5, 1915. He studied at the Boxtel aluminate from 1927 to 1933 and entered the novitiate in Taintegnies (Belgium) on October 1, 1933. He made his first vows

there on October 2, 1934 and took the name of Bro. Matheus. He pronounced his perpetual vows on October 2, 1937 in Leuven, after studying philosophy at Saint Gérard (1934-1937).

After a year in Leuven, he returned to the Netherlands and completed his theological studies in 1942 in Bergeyk, where he was ordained priest on May 31. He then studied missiology in Nijmegen and left in 1946 for Brazil, where he stayed until 1953. He then worked in the Congo mission, where he met an Assumptionist brother, a coadjutor who had been using his talents as a builder there since 1936.

In 1961, they both joined Brazil to collaborate in the training of the seminarians of Pinhal. Fr. Matheus died before his 58th birthday on Palm Sunday 1973. His funeral, presided over by Bishop Tomas Vaquero, was attended by a large crowd. In his mission Fr. Matheus left the memory of a religious "supernatural, zealous, helpful, respectful of the youngest". The body of the Father is buried in the cemetery of the House of Our Lady of the Assumption in Espírito Santo do Pinhal, where he lived with two of his blood brothers, Fr. Canisius who had left the congregation and had been incardinated in the Brazilian diocese of St. Andrew since 1954, and Bro. Stefan who died in 1986, also in Pinhal. All three are buried in the same place.

Curiously enough, no doubt:



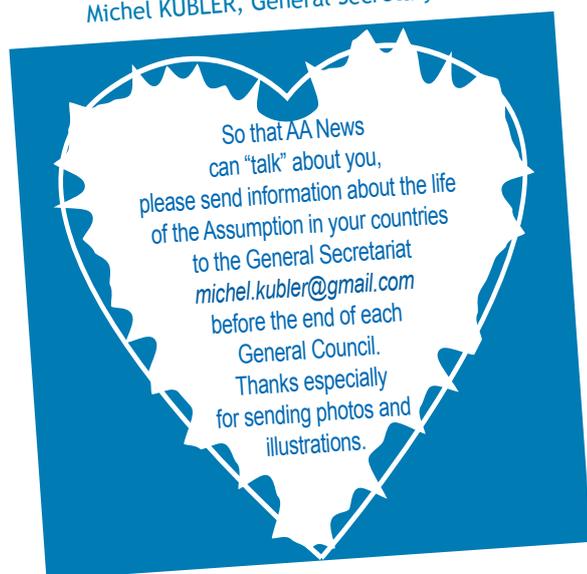
this tomb, located on the heights of the cemetery, will always be in bloom. The faithful had ex-votos there to show their gratitude for the graces obtained through his intercession. It is not uncommon, indeed, to see the faithful coming to the cemetery to lay flowers, light a candle to ask for the intercession of the Father and, when a grace is obtained, they place an ex-voto on the grave as a sign of gratitude. These manifestations of gratitude on the part of the population are one of the reasons that led to the diocesan opening of the canonization process.

Today, the Congregation of the Augustinians of the Assumption has three members whose heroic virtues have been recognized by the Pope and are therefore declared "venerable": Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon (1991), Fr. Etienne Pernet (1983) and Fr. Marie-Clément Staub (2014). The three Assumptionist martyrs from Bulgaria Kamen, Pavel and Josaphat were beatified in 2002.

**Fr. Bernard Le Léannec**  
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Patricia Haggerty and Gilles Blouin, English; José Antonio Echaniz, Spanish

**Model and laid out**

Loredana Giannetti

Composed in June 30, 2019

This no 09 of AA- info is printed in 220 copies:

160 in French

30 in English

30 in Spanish

And 350 electronic shipments.

Agostiniani dell'Assunzione - Via San Pio V, 55 - I - 00165 Roma  
Tel. : 06 66013727 - Fax : 06 6630814 - E-mail : assunzione@mclink.it

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# Our deceased Brothers



† **Father Michel STRAUB** of the community of Albertville (Province of Europe), died on April 6, 2019 in Albertville (France). His funeral was held on April 9 in the Notre-Dame des Vignes Chapel, before being buried in the Albertville cemetery. He was 82 years old.

† **Father Jean-Marie BREGLER** of the community of Albertville (Province of Europe), died on May 6, 2019 in Albertville (France). His funeral was held on May 9 in the Notre-Dame des Vignes Chapel, before being buried in the Albertville cemetery. He was 96 years old.

† **Father Edmund JEURISSEN**, of the community of Leuven (Province of Europe), died on May 12, 2019 in Leuven (Belgium). His funeral was held on May 18 in St. Geertui church, before burial in the Leuven cemetery. He was 86 years old.

† **Father Joannès DUFAUD** of the community of Albertville (Province of Europe), died on May 16, 2019 in Albertville (France). His funeral was held on May 20 in the Notre-Dame des Vignes Chapel, before being buried in the Albertville cemetery. He was 94 years old.

† **Father Wim van der VEER** of the Community of the Netherlands (Province of Europe), died on June 3, 2019 in Volendam (Netherlands). The funeral ceremony was held on June 7 at Sint-Vincentius Church in Volendam. He was 89 years old.

† **Father Aloysius PONSEN**, of the community of Leuven (Province of Europe), died on June 8, 2019 in Leuven (Belgium). His funeral was celebrated on June 13 in the community chapel, before burial in the Leuven cemetery. He was 96 years old.

† **Father Michiel ZEINSTR**A, of the Community of the Netherlands (Province of Europe), died on June 10, 2019 in Boxtel. The funeral ceremony was held on June 15 at H. Plechelmus of Rossum church (Netherlands), before burial in the cemetery of this parish. He was 77 years old.