

A News of the Assumption



ENTER INTO
THE JOY OF
THE LORD!



175
YEARS OF
ASSUMPTIONISTS
IN THE WORLD
1845-2020



EDITORIAL

That I may never be separated from you!

« I dream of an Assumption retrieving the dynamism of the early times and where each one of us would resolutely engage in carrying the Good News to the ends of the Earth. »

Agenda

Plenary General Council

- n° 6 : **June 2-10, 2020** Worcester
- n° 7 : **December 3-12, 2020**, Nîmes.

Ordinary General Councils

- n° 18 : **February 10-14, 2020**.
- n° 19 : **March 18-19, 2020**.
- n° 20 : **April 20-24, 2020**.
- n° 21 : **May 18-22, 2020**.
- n° 22 : **June 11, 2020**.

General Councils of the Assumption family

- **March 13-15: (Paris)**

Benoît

- **January 9-30:** East Africa.
- **February 23-March 10:** Mexico.
- **March 23-April 18:** Andean Province.

Marcelo

- **January 2-30:** DR-Congo (Kivu).
- **February 17-March 1:** Angola.
- **March 3-7:** Education Commission.
- **March 23-April 18:** Andean Province.

Didier

- **January 3-13:** Belgium and France.
- **February 4-5:** Ireland.
- **February 18-March 5:** Brazil.
- **March 16-17:** London.
- **March 23-April 10:** Andean Province.

Thierry

- **January 2-30:** DR-Congo (Kivu).
- **March 4-7:** International Commission of Lay Assumptionists.

Miguel

- **January 2-13:** Korea.
- **January 22-28:** Paris.
- **February 20-March 10:** Mexico
- **April 28-May 15:** Asia.

On front page

"Enter into the joy of the Lord! 175 years of Assumptionists in the world 1845-2020"
This is the logo created for our jubilee year by Brother Blair Nuyda: intended for the North American Province, we propose it here to the whole Congregation.

Letter from the Superior General to the Orantes of the Assumption

Fr. Benoît Grière, Superior General, wrote the following letter on December 17, 2019, to Sr. Anne Huyhgebaert, Superior General of the Orantes of the Assumption, on the occasion of the transfer of the remains of the Very Reverend Father Francois Picard and of Mother Isabelle de Clermont-Tonnerre, their founders, from their ancient convent of Bonnelles (Yveline) to the motherhouse of the Religious of the Assumption in Paris:



Dear Anne,

On December 27th you will proceed to inter the bodies of your founders, Mother Isabelle de Getsémani and the Reverend Father François Picard. Therefore, I wanted to express to you in the name of the Augustinians of the Assumption, our fraternal bond. The Orantes of the Assumption, who were founded in 1896, embody in the Assumption family a permanent presence of prayer at the heart of our world. We all benefit from your daily support and we appreciate it. Thank you for continuing this mission that is so important for us.

Your founders receive the hospitality of our sisters, the Religious of the Assumption, from which a long history unites you. From now on, we will be able to come to pray to Saint Marie-Eugénie of Jesus and also honor Mother Isabelle and Father François Picard in the same pilgrimage. Thanks to our sisters, the Religious of the Assumption, for having permitted this connection.

We look to the future with confidence and we ask Our Lord to support the Orantes in their journey toward the Kingdom. Your Assumptionist brothers will be at your side, as they have been in the past. I pray that the celebration on December 27th brings to the Orantes the grace of renewal. The grain planted in the ground will bear fruit.

I assure you of my fraternal friendship and of my religious devotion.

Fr. Benoît GRIÈRE a.a.
Superior General

That I may never be separated from you!

Our jubilee year will be, I hope, a time of joy and renewal as much personal as communal. The Assumptionist can be defined as a man who has confidence in the grace of God, a man who surrenders totally to the Holy Spirit. With him we can realize much more than we could hope.

The beginning of the year is traditionally marked by an exchange of wishes, but also by resolutions that we make for a better life, for better health or for a better self-image. I leave it to everyone to make these decisions in hopes that they will lead one to greater holiness. But without my insisting, during this jubilee year, on an elementary truth: the more we open ourselves to sanctity, the more will the holiness of Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon be clear and evident.

As for myself, I make my prayer the one said by the priest at the Eucharist: "That I may never be separated from you." I love this, because in its simplicity, it says much about the desire that animates the heart of the believer: that one never be separated from the love of the one who gave everything for us. Often, I allow myself to broaden my prayer and to include in my petitions the totality of the Assumption religious: young and not so young, in formation or immersed in pastoral work. I wish that each of us becomes totally a companion of the Lord throughout this New Year. May we be profoundly rooted in the life of God. To become a saint, is to be in the presence of the Lord all the days of one's life.

There is another prayer that I like that is in the Canon of the Mass, it says: "serve in your presence". We are servants and we work in the presence of the Lord. This resonates with the first prayer that I referred to above. But there is more:

the invitation to serve. Pope Francis regularly insists on missionary work and he asks of the Church, that is of each of us, to resolutely engage in the new evangelization. Therefore we must serve and serve in the presence of the Lord.

The first place of our engagement is naturally the community to which we belong. It is there that the Assumptionist should make of himself a servant for all. The Rule of Life is a constant call that there are no elevated positions in community life, each is called to serve his brother according to his function. The second place of service touches upon ministry, that is to say all that we are asked to do for others. There is a social dimension to our religious lives. In my opinion, one must remember that social issues are a place where one must resonate the announcement of the Good News.

Pope Francis has clearly underlined in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, where he evokes the social dimension of evangelization: "To evangelize is to render present in the world the Kingdom of God." The work for the Kingdom of God is made in a multitude of "services" that we render to others and to our brothers. The jubilee year of our foundation has called this to be a time of renewal and this calls for a doubling of our efforts for the Kingdom of God and the cause of the Gospel. I dream of an Assumption retrieving the dynamism of the early times and where each one of us would resolutely engage in carrying the Good News to the ends of the Earth. Let us never forget that we are in the presence of the Lord and it is he who acts in us.

Happy and holy 2020, good jubilee!



Fr. Benoît Grière
Superior General
of the
Assumptionists of
the Assumption

Calls, nominations, changes...

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

■ to PERPETUAL PROFESSION

1) **SANTIAGO MARTINEZ** Irving
(Andean Province) (11/11/2019)

■ to the DEACONATE

2) **KIM Simon Taeho**
(Europe) (11/11/2019)

3) **NGUYEN VAN Truyen Paul**
(Europe) (11/11/2019)

4) **RANDRIANANDRASANA William Johnes**
(Madagascar) (12/11/2019)

■ to the PRIESTHOOD

5) **FAWIE Armand Lidaou**
(Europe) (12/11/2019)

6) **PHAN VAN Duong François-Xavier**
(Europe) (12/11/2019)

7) **JEONG Christopher Seong Jo**
(Europe) (13/11/2019)

8) **AHOLOU MESSAN Thomas**
(Europe) (13/11/2019)

9) **KAKULE SIKULISIMWA Heshima**
(Africa) (11/12/2019)

10) **KAMBALE MOWAVINGI Erasme**
(Africa) (11/12/2019)

11) **KASEREKA SAFARI Gerlace**
(Africa) (11/12/2019)

• DEPARTURE FROM THE CONGREGATION

The Superior General, with the consent of his Council, has given an indult to leave the Congregation to **Br. Honoré Bassagou WINIGA** (Europe), November 12, 2019.

• DEPARTURE DUE TO INCARDINATION

The Holy See has granted an indult to leave the Congregation to **Fr. William AQUIJE MATTA** (Europe), because of his incardination “ad experimentum” in the diocese of Versailles (France), November 19, 2019.

• AUTHORIZATION FOR THE NOMINATION OF A SUPERIOR

The Holy See gave its approval for the nomination, as Superior of the community of Madrid—Dulce Nombre (Europe), to **Br. Pedro FUENTES BAÑOS**, November 25, 2019.

• OPENING & CLOSING OF HOUSES

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

a) **the opening of a 2nd community in Goma** (DR-Congo, Province of Africa);

b) **The closing of the community in Toulouse** (France, Province of Europe).

• APPROVAL OF FORMATORS

Fr. Benoît Grière, Superior General, with the consent of his Plenary General Council, gave his approval for the nomination of the following:

a) **Fr. Nicolas POTTEAU** as Master of Novices at St. Lambert-des-Bois (France, Province of Europe);

b) **Fr. Wilson GICHUKI WAWERU** as Master of Novices at Arusha (Tanzania, Vice-Province of East Africa);

c) **Fr. Erick RAHARIVELO** responsible for formation for the Province of Madagascar



P. Potteau



P. Waweru



P. Raharivelo

Synodality, a challenge for the Assumption

Among the many issues addressed by the 5th session of the CGP, held in Rome from 2 to 10 December, synodality is a reality already present in our functioning, but also a challenge at all levels.



The participants in the 5th session of the Plenary General Council, at the Generalate.

It was a clear desire on the part of the Superior General to introduce this theme into the reflection of our Congregation. We know how much synodality is constantly put forward by Pope Francis: conceived for ecclesial life in general, this fundamental intuition of Vatican II must be adapted to consecrated life. According to the ancient adage, “*Quod omnes tangit ab omnibus tractari et approbari debet. What concerns everyone must be approved by everyone*». Everyone knows the Synod of Bishops (which recently held an assembly

on the Amazon) or diocesan synods; one also thinks of the many collegial bodies involved in the government of the Church... But what can be said and done within the framework of our religious family?

Opening the CGP’s reflection on this theme, Fr Benoît Grière first of all recalled the biblical anchoring of the notion of synodality, with multiple references to the People of God and its capacity for discernment by *sensus fidei*. The teaching of the Magisterium has, since the Middle Ages, taken

up and developed this idea (cf. in particular *Lumen gentium*) of the inerrancy of the People of God in matters of faith and morals, thanks to the Holy Spirit. Not to mention the institutions already mentioned, born of the Council to implement this co-responsibility between «all» and «some» (the ministers), both universally and locally.

Unlike collegiality, which presupposes equality among participants and a common decision, synodality tends towards a consensus among all, followed by a ▶

>> Plenary General Council



The Plenary General Council is a privileged place of synodality.

decision by one.

Father General referred in particular to two documents of Pope Francis: the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (2013), a true programme of the present pontificate which insists on decentralisation and the personal encounter with Christ by each one, and his declaration for the 50th anniversary of the Synod of Bishops (17 October 2015).

What, then, can be said in the context of the Assumption? Collegiality focuses on the General Chapter, while synodality, under the responsibility of the Superior General, is the responsibility of the Plenary General Council in particular. It is therefore a question of «deliberating in Church», in order to spread ecclesial communion, before the decision is taken by whomever has the right to do so. And it is clear, as we go around the Provinces, how much unity among such diversities is a challenge! It is necessary, therefore, to speak and listen to each other, to consult and advise, to discern and decide.

The members of the CGP, thus directly involved in the exercise of synodality, took time to reflect,

in groups and then together, on ways to improve this synodality. Many avenues were evoked, concerning communication, the preparation of the CGP, its working methods... It is indeed difficult to feel concerned by decisions concerning the other side of the world. Subsidiarity and decentralization require a better mutual knowledge within the body. The quantity and variety of subjects to be dealt with in the Council can be detrimental to the involvement of everyone. The role of the laity must also be taken into account, especially in our mobilizing works, where synodality could also be developed. Without forgetting, through all these processes, to always remain attentive to the Holy Spirit!

P. Michel KUBLER
Secretary-General

Noteworthy: The International Theological Commission has recently published a reference work, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, available online in several languages: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_index-doc-publ_it.html#Documenti.

Deploying congregational communion

«Our goal is to promote and grow unity between us and the whole body of the Assumption. There is a missionary dimension to this communion: we are called to carry the Word of God, to proclaim it, to celebrate it and to live it.

- *Speaking and listening to one another*

Speaking and talking to each other is a community act, because language is a community reality. We talk to each other, we exchange, we talk to each other, it's making social connections. We must also want to talk to each other, beyond all rivalry and without any desire to dominate. We must therefore overcome a certain violence and have a minimal openness to others. We have to move from rivalry to partnership.

- *Consulting and advice*

It is necessary to listen to the People of God, to our brothers of communities, to the lay people who journey with us. In view of a decision to be taken, we must consult widely to have the various opinions of the body. Even if the superior who seeks the opinion of all remains free to follow it or not, he must listen beforehand.

- *Discern and decide*

Diversity must be at the meeting point of the exchanges in order to have the opinion of as many people as possible. The criterion, as Pope Francis says, is «the renewal of evangelization». »

(excerpt from the presentation of Fr. Benoit Grière, Superior General, to the CGP)

A new feature: the Real Estate Medium Term Plan

The CGP has put into action a device, unprecedented up to now, which allows for a better planning and coordination of the building efforts in the Provinces in the field of real estate.



The Austin House philosophat in Arusha, Tanzania.

While often the various Provinces of the Congregation launched works according to their own agenda and possibilities, the General Bursar stressed the need for better coordination of projects and efforts. Brother Didier Remiot reminded the CGP of the purpose of the «Medium Term Real Estate Plan»: requested by the Chapter of 2017 (cf. Acts of the 33rd General Chapter, n. 135), this plan was prepared with the Economic Council of the Congregation (CEC), which participated - as is now customary - in the first two days of work of the CGP.

This absolutely new document that gathers together an impressive number of information constitute, according to Benoit Grière, Superior General, «not

a straitjacket, but a dashboard to help the projects move forward». Published one year later than planned, it covers the years 2020-2023 and will be updated every three years. The aim is to make it a tool at the service of financial coordination and solidarity within the Congregation. Each Provincial Council has been able to study it since September. It does not cover all the needs, but those that have been sufficiently defined and evaluated in terms of costs to be taken into account.

It is specified that the projects thus selected do not become «untouchable», but remain adaptable according to the evolution of situations. Finally, the inclusion of a project in the MTP does not guarantee that it will be retained by the Plenary General Council. The

Real estate projects selected by the PMC

- For 2020:
 - The extension of Austin House (Philosophers' Study House in Arusha ,Tanzania - Vice-Province of East Africa);
 - A provision to participate in the costs of the next foundation in Angola (Provinces of Africa and Brazil);
 - The purchase of land to build a school in Kinshasa-Masina (Province of Africa).

- The Plenary General Council also welcomed the following projects, while deciding that they could be implemented in the following years of the MTP :
 - Extension of the Kizito House Novitiate in Arusha (Tanzania - Vice-Province of East Africa) ;
 - Construction of a community residence at Mahamba College in Butembo (Province of Africa);
 - Construction of a community residence on the Vulamba site of the UAC in Butembo (Province of Africa).

>> Plenary General Council

MTP is only a tool at the disposal of the CGP, which retains some of the projects presented according to the priorities of the congregation and the means available.

The General Treasurer presented the details of this Plan, as the Provinces went through the process, with a description of each real estate project, the apostolic project that justifies it, the financing foreseen (local contribution, expected help from BDS, Interprovincial Solidarity), a commentary from the CEC, etc. The General Treasurer presented the details of this Plan, as the Provinces went through the process. The total cost of the projects included over the 4 years in the medium-term plan would amount to €2.85 million, of which local funding will provide €1.17 million, BDS €500,000 and Interprovincial Solidarity €943,000.

As Father General pointed out, this work is indeed unprecedented as such: whereas in the past, buildings could be financed from time to time by the Congregation, we now have only one interlocutor. Such a plan implies the common commitment of all: everyone - and not only Europe! - has to see how concretely he commits himself, and at what level; the share of BDS is also important. Finally, these real estate projects are meaningless without apostolic projects: schools, pastoral works, etc. Now, these are cruelly lacking in some Provinces, and so they must be given absolute priority. Apostolic projects, concluded the Superior General, are more important than novitiates and scholasticates: the *raison d'être* of the Assumption is not formation, but mission! ■

44% of active Assumptionists work in parishes



An exhaustive survey conducted by the Provincial treasurers and presented by the CEC to the CGP enables us to measure the numbers of religious working in parishes for a significant time in their apostolates: there is a total of 206, that is, 24% of the congregation (879 religious in all, of whom there are currently 297 students). If only the active religious are taken into account, this proportion rises to 44 %.

This proportion varies according to regions: out of the total, 67% of the religious in Brazil practice a parish ministry, 47% in East Africa, 36% in the Andean Province, 34% in Madagascar, 31% in North America, 20% in the Province of Africa and 14% in that of Europe. ■

Reminder : Campaign of « Solidarity in Assumption » 2020

Each year, the CGP launches for all the Congregation a call to solidarity for one or another of Assumptionist projects in the world. This mobilization often takes place during Lent.

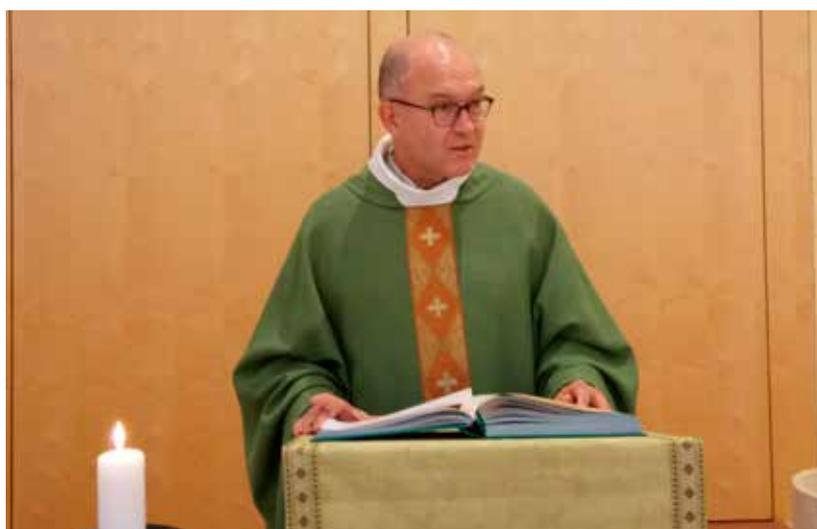
Remember that the “Campaign for Solidarity in Assumption” for 2020 has as its objective the **construction of a bridge at Bibwa (DR-Congo)**: the community established on the periphery of Kinshasa is, in effect, among other missions. The community is responsible for a primary school to which the students have great difficulty reaching because of a natural obstacle. A replacement of the actual fragile passageway with a bridge would facilitate and secure access to the school.

All the communities, but also the works and the parishes dependent on the Congregation are invited to contribute, to the extent of their possibilities, to make this gesture of fraternal solidarity.

“Let us be more relevant in our work”

In his closing remarks of the 5th session of the CGP, on December 10, 2019, in Rome, Fr. Benoît Grière, Superior General, insisted on the reference to “fundamentals” of the Assumption. Excerpts

I



« We are happy to have welcomed for the first time the Vice Provincial of the East. Kizito has adapted well and I hope he was happy with his Roman discoveries and of the CGP. We are also very pleased that we were joined by Fr. Yves, who was also absent last June. Sadly, this time, it was Fr. Dennis who had to miss the meetings because of pneumonia, but, thank God, he is improving. (. . .)

We began with our Provincial Treasurers who, for a week, worked under the direction of Br. Didier. They were very diligent and their work enabled us to move forward toward a clarification of our economic realities. The two days that we worked with them gave us access to quite a bit of information of prime im-

portance to better determine our apostolic choices. (. . .) The study of international solidarity and of the budget in Rome show us that we have a regular increase in our expenditures.

This is due to formation and the increase in the number of young men, but also because of an emphasis on certain expenses. I invite the Provincials and the Provincial Treasurers to be attentive from now on to the budgets of the houses of study that they conform to our call for modesty and simplicity: it is up to them to evaluate what is necessary and what is incidental. (. . .)

The CGP also worked on formation. The presence of the Secretary General for Formation really helped us in understanding

various reports. I want to thank Vincent Leclercq for the contribution that he provided us thanks to his dynamism and seriousness in the study of the files. The CGP also proceeds through example with the *modus operandi* relating to the 1st apostolic nominations. We have simplified the process and that will allow us, I hope, to be more relevant with the nominations. I reiterate that we all have to make an effort in the “management of our human resources” and that means by a better identification of the available positions and the training to be provided for them. (. . .) Taking into account specialized studies should be a breakthrough for our Institution that requires men seriously formed in ecclesiastical and secular disciplines. (. . .)

Our reflection on the criteria for discernment of vocations points to the urgency of making a significant effort to be more judicious in our work. The young men who come to us have the right to an accompaniment of quality based on truth, charity, patience and freedom. It’s useless to postpone to later the responsibility of refusing a candidate if the perceived limitations are too great: we, too often, leave to others the responsibility of deciding, which is not the right thing for an Assumptionist. Truth is the condition of true freedom of the young person in his journey. It is also the price to pay to promote a genuine religious fidelity. (. . .)

The jubilee of our 175th anniversary will begin in a few days. I wish that we can live it in joy, as I wrote in my letter of indiction. Joy is also the feeling that should animate us despite the difficulties that confront us.” ■

The first Vicars of East Africa and Asia-Oceania

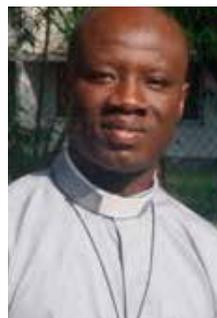
Fr. Benoît Bigard, Provincial of Europe, has named as of January 1, 2020, the two religious who will pilot the establishment of the newly created Vicariates.

The Vicariates of Asia-Oceania and East Africa will be launched as of January 1, 2020. After consultation with the religious concerned, with the approval and agreement of the Superior General in his ordinary council, and according to the statutes of the two vicariates, the Province of Europe has named:

- **Fr. Pierre TRAN VAN Khuê, Vicar of the Vicariate of Asia-Oceania,**
- **Fr. Georges Komla Demenya HOUSSOU, Vicar of the Vicariate of East Africa,**

for three years beginning on January 2, 2020.

Fr. Pierre TRAN VÃN Khuê, a 46 year old Vietnamese, is originally from the diocese of Vinh, province of Nghê An. Before entering the Assumption, Pierre obtained a license in English from the University of Saigon. He was among the first Vietnamese brothers in the Congregation. He made his postulancy in France and made his first vows in 2000 at Juvisy sur Orge. He received his canonical license in moral theology from the Catholic Institute of Paris in 2005. After one year of pastoral work in London, he was ordained there in June 2006. He returned to Saigon where he assisted in establishing a foundation. He returned to France in 2012 until 2014. After this he was sent to Vinh where he became pastor of a parish until this time. Pierre has undertaken many responsibilities throughout his religious life. He has been a local treasurer, a superior, a member of various councils and, notably, with the inter-Asiatic coordination working on the establishment of the Vicariate.



Fr. Georges Komla Demenya HOUSSOU, a 38 year old Togolese, is originally from the diocese of Atakpamé. Before entering the congregation, Georges received a license in anthropology and educational sciences and gained much work experience in this area.

His faith journey is marked by his commitment to Charismatic Renewal, of the JEC and of the university parish of Lomé. He pronounced his first vows in 2011 at Sokodé (Togo) and continued his studies at Ouagadougou (philosophy), then in Kinshasa for theology, where he completed his studies. After one year of pastoral work in Sokodé and his ordination in June 2017, he was sent to Rome where he completed a license in Islamology at the PISAI, the Pontifical Institute in Arabic and Islamic Studies, conducted by the White Fathers.

(from the letter in "A.A. News" of the Province of Europe)

The Assumption is jubilant for its 175th anniversary!

As the Congregation's jubilee year opens, several Provinces have set up programs at all levels. Here are some of the projects that have been reported to us.



AT THE CONGREGATION LEVEL :

- International Lay-Religious Session in Nîmes (27 July - 1 August).
- Participation in the National Pilgrimage of the Assumption in Lourdes (12-17 August).
- In the second half of the year, possible foundation of the mission in Angola.
- Session of the CGP in Nîmes from December 3-12, with the solemn celebration of the Jubilee Year.

NORTH AMERICA :

- In addition to local celebrations in Mexico and Quebec City, the Jubilee was inaugurated in the United States at the Christmas Mass at the Chapel of Assumption College.

- A provincial proposal for a ju-bilee retreat is being prepared for regions, communities and even individuals. That of the Emmanuel House community at the Trappistine house in Wrentham, MA, in July will be open to brothers from other communities.
- A list of themes for prayer and reflection will be proposed for each month of the jubilee year.

EUROPE :

- January 1: Launch of the Asia-Oceania and West Africa Vi-cariates with local Forums in the summer of 2020.
- Provincial Retreat (16-22 February 2020): «Being a missionary disciple listening to the evangelist Matthew», preached by Fr. Marc Leroy in connection with the Superior General's letter on mission.
- Communication: Jubilee coloring of the Advent and Lenten Newsletter; Facebook filter for the 175th anniversary; setting up of the new Province website; short videos with witnesses (religious and lay) on our charism for today (for social networks and websites); relaunch of the collection «Assumptionist Memory», gathering outstanding testimonies of the life of the Congregation in recent decades.
- Provincial meetings: Alzonian Day on July 4 in ND ▶

des Victoires (Paris) on «Love of the Church»; Provincial Forum in Lourdes (August 18-22), prepared by a year-long animation in the communities.

- Inaugurations of the church of Sokodé-Komah (Togo) and possibly of the new orphanage in Saigon (Vietnam).

BRAZIL:

- Opening of the Jubilee Year with a solemn celebration in Rio de Janeiro in February, presided over by Cardinal Orani Tempesta.
- In Campinas, a grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes will be built and blessed in the house of formation on February 2.
- Missionary Week in Cerro Azul from July 19 to 26, to make the Congregation known in the most recent foundation of the Province.
- Prayer Triduum in each of our parishes from November 18 to 20.

MADAGASCAR :

- Celebrations: August 15 or 30 (St. Augustine) in our parish of ND de l'Assomption, in union with the diocese, with a prayer triduum; the different posts served by the Province (parishes, districts, college, chaplaincy) are encouraged to organize themselves to celebrate the jubilee; ordinations and perpetual vows will be made during a jubilee celebration.
- Animation through the media: Radio Don Bosco in Antananarivo, as well as the radios of the diocese.
- Exhibition planned on the foundation with the Oblates: the novitiate is responsible for making a demonstrative painting on the beginning of the Assumption.
- Making T-shirts or polo shirts with an Assumptionist or Alzonian character.

The Jubilee... in the land of Fr. d'Alzon

The 175th anniversary of the founding of the Augustinians of the Assumption should be marked by various initiatives in his native region. For example:

- In the church of Sainte-Perpétue, in the heart of Nîmes, a side chapel of the sanctuary should be dedicated to the evocation of Fr. d'Alzon.
- At the shrine of Notre-Dame de Grâce in Rochefort du Gard, a commemorative plaque could come to recall the pilgrimage that Fr. d'Alzon made there on 6 October 1872 at the head of 5,000 men and which was at the origin of the National Pilgrimage («Pilgrimage of the Banners») to Lourdes the following year.



- The alumni of the Ste-Odile aluminate in Scherwiller (whose centenary will also be marked in 2020) will go on a pilgrimage in the footsteps of Fr. d'Alzon from 7 to 10 May, together with Fr. Marie-Bernard Kientz.

The Assumption of Africa celebrates a twofold anniversary



The year 2019 saw the celebration of the 90 years of the presence of our Congregation on the African continent, at the same time the 50 years of the Province of Africa.

On September 9, 1929, six Assumptionists from the Province of Belgium-Holland left Marseille for the Belgian Congo: four Belgian Fathers (Conrad Groenen, Henri Piérard, Marie Jules Celis, Baudouin Ponsaerts) and two Dutch Brothers, Ignace Nelissen and Antoine Sanders. The team arrived in Beni on Sunday 14 October in the afternoon, at the end of a five-week journey through Kenya and Uganda.

Since 1906, the Sacred Heart Fathers had already founded two large posts in Beni and Kimbulu. Work in the area, part of their Vicariate, was not flourishing and the Dehonians could no longer replace the religious who were succumbing to sleeping sickness caused by the tsetse fly. Moreover, the region was separated from the heart of

the Vicariate by 800 km with dense forest: Bishop Gabriel Grison (1860-1942), apostolic vicar, took 45 days to walk from his bishopric of Stanleyville (today Kisangani) to Beni.

The mission where the Assumptionists ended up is a vast territory almost twice the size of Belgium, located in the east of the Congo, crossed by the Equator. Mountainous in the Southeast, low in the West, it has several climates and, in 1929, was covered with dense forest. The Wanande, mainly farmers, make up the largest part of the population, along with Pygmies, who live by hunting and gathering and whose survival is today in danger because of the anarchic destruction of their ecosystem.

When the Assumptionists took over this part of the Vicariate of the Dehonians, every- ▶

thing seemed already conquered by the Belgians. The missionaries move around quite freely, without fear of being attacked by the population. They arrive in an animist country attached to its ancestral culture, with its beliefs and practices. The first contact of these peoples with the Gospel is not easy, because of the difficulties of the language, the adaptations necessary for evangelisation, the diversity of cultures and the harshness of the environment. Like their predecessors Dahonians, many of our Fathers had health problems, due to the climate and the mountain walks, causing heart problems.

The Assumptionists, moved by faith and the passion of the Reign, faced all difficulties so that the Good News could penetrate to the heart of the great African continent. One by one, parishes, schools and chapels grew like mushrooms on the hills, fruit of their courage and sacrifice. Baptisms and marriages, later ordinations and professions made the local Church grow, to the point of speaking of "African miracle".

After 90 years of presence in the Congo, we can say with gratitude that the Gospel is truly rooted in the hearts of Africans. The main concern is now on the side of the natives to inculcate the Good News. The Assumption can be proud of this with vocations and works that are the fruit of the pioneers whom we honor like our ancestors. At 90 years of age, we have grown up... but we are still young. This is not without its challenges. Solid and varied formation, fidelity, the study of Augustine and Emmanuel d'Alzon, interculturality, the socio-political context of the Congo are our current questions.

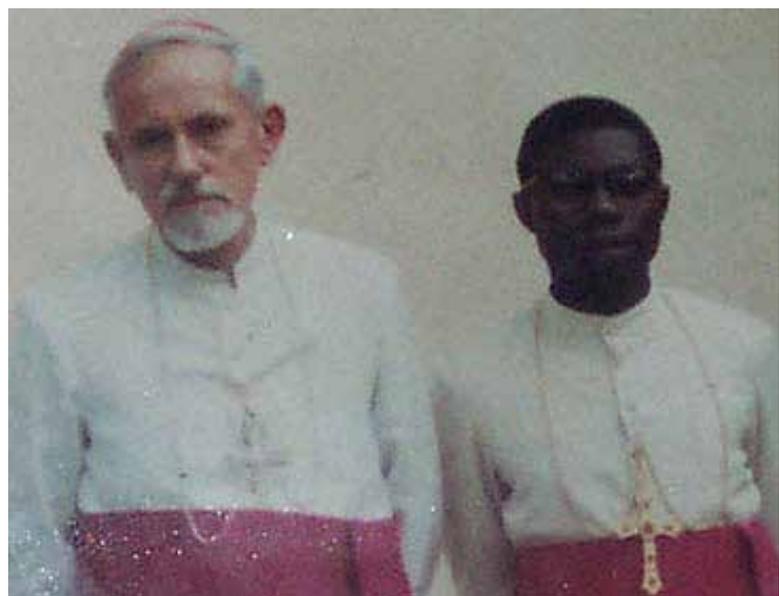
This double event, the 90 years of presence and the golden jubilee of the Province, was celebrated on August 28, 2019. In the immense church of Kitatumba, around the bishop surrounded by the Provincial and dozens of priests, brothers, sisters and the faithful who had come in great numbers, thanks were given to God and to the whole Assumption for the sacrifices made; 17 novices took their vows while other brothers celebrated their silver jubilee. The numerous presence of our Oblate Sisters, the first missionary women in our region, testified to the fraternity that has always existed between our two religious families.

Besides the large and flourishing diocese of Butembo-Beni, Bishop Henri Pierard, the first bishop, founded two diocesan congregations: the Brothers of the Assumption (F.A.) and the Little Sisters of the Presentation (P.S.P.); the latter are already on mission in other dioceses of the Congo, as well as in Uganda and Sicily (Italy). The good collaboration between the Assumption and the diocese contributes to the evangelical witness and the very pride of the faithful. We implore Our Lady of the Assumption to continue to pray for the Assumption and for Africa so that the Reign of God may take root in our hearts.

P. Victor NDAKASI

The last "founders"

Of the 133 Assumptionist missionaries who have worked in the diocese since the origins, eight are still alive: Frs. Louis and André Nagels (Belgians), Joseph Delvordre and Lucas Chuffart (French), Henri Schilder (Dutch), Giuliano Riccadonna (Italian), Theodore Fortier and John Franck (USA). Nine are buried in Africa lands: Father Leopold who was beaten to death by thunder while confessing, Henri Beaudouin, Adam, Edgard, Simon, Cyrille and Gilbert (Ouganda).



Henri Pierard, a.a., one of the founders of the Congo mission, and his successor as Bishop of Butembo-Beni, Emmanuel Kataliko.

Foundations on African soil

Two new communities have just been born, in Tanzania and Togo, while a third is being planned in Angola: Africa shows itself to be decidedly welcoming to the Assumption!

IN THE COASTAL TOWN OF MWANZA, TANZANIA

The Vice-Province of East Africa has just had a new birth: the parish community of Mwanza, in the diocese of the same name in Tanzania. This diocese, the new land of our mission, is located in the northern part of the country, on the left bank of Lake Victoria. Erected in 1987, it currently has 44 parishes.

The Assumptionist missionary adventure in this part of Tanzania began with an official trip in August 2019 to concretize the founding steps undertaken by the Assumptionist leaders of East Africa. Two religious priests then left our Kijenge parish in Arusha for Mwanza to found this new one. The choice had already been made for the out-post station of Mwananchi, a sector of the parish of Jesus the Good Shepherd of Buzuruga, entrusted to the Claretian missionaries. Situated some 6 km from the city centre, Mwananchi is a well-located district, not far from the bus station on the way to the neighbouring countries as well as to the interior of Tanzania.

We were presented to the faithful of our future parish on September 22, 2019 by the vicar general of the diocese, in the presence of the parish priest of Buzuruga. Our parish of Mwananchi will be dedicated to Saint Paul, apostle of the nations. The faithful then expressed the joy



Parish of Saint Paul Apostle Mwananchi in Mwanza (Tanzania).

of now having their own pastors for a pastoral outreach, and committed themselves to collaborate with them in all aspects of pastoral life.

Our foundation in Mwanza is essentially pastoral in its beginnings: to implant the Assumptionist charism and spirituality, parish animation of proximity in mutual collaboration between priests, the faithful and the bishop.

Most of the faithful of Mwananchi come from the stone hills overlooking the city. To reach their homes, often inaccessible to vehicles, they have to climb these stone hills, a real «rock city» as some inhabitants like to say.

As with any foundation, it takes patience and self-denial to be able to establish a religious community with the boldness, generosity and selflessness that are characteristic of the Assumption. Mutual support and encouragement to bring this new foundation to fruition are more than necessary. We now await the official opening of the parish by our Archbishop, Mgr Rénatus Nkwande. The Assumptionist community already exists and pastoral services have begun. The collaboration between priests and faithful looks promising in what will soon be our 5th parish in Tanzania.

P. François NZANU

>> Life of the Provinces



The new community of Lomé (Togo).

IN THE CAPITAL OF TOGO, LOMÉ

It was at the Ordinary General Council of June 2019 that the Superior General, with the agreement of his council, gave the approval for the opening of a new Assumptionist community in Lomé, in the capital of Togo. This decision brings the number of communities in West Africa to four. The new community of the Augustinians of the Assumption therefore opened its doors on September 1, 2019 in the archdiocese of Lomé. It is composed of Brothers Lucas Sezouhlon (superior), Yves Atidepe (bursar) and Thomas Aholou.

The community is located in the deanery of West Lomé, in a district called Adidogomé, between the Christian communities Sacred Heart of Jesus of Wonyomé and that of Saint John the Baptist of Yokoé to which the community of brothers is attached.

In the clauses of the agreement signed between the local Ordinary, Mgr Denis Komivi Amuzu-Dzakpa, and the Assumptionists, the new community will invest itself in the apostolates of inter-religious dialogue, ecumenism, youth ministry, including vocational animation, and the Lay-Religious Alliance. The pastoral activities will be set up gradually,

in dialogue with the Provincial Council.

The Small Christian Community of Saint John the Baptist, on which the Assumptionists are called to collaborate for the mission, has about 2,000 faithful, with a youth that is quite dynamic and well committed. Also noteworthy is the presence of women congregations, such as the Little Sisters of the Holy Family and the Sisters of Divine Providence of Ribeauvillé, who have also recently settled in the parish territory.

This Yokoé Christian community is under the responsibility of two diocesan priests: Frs Jean-Noël Akpabie (in charge) and Narcisse Wonyo. It is a small and growing church in need of pastors. The presence of the Assumptionists will certainly be a new breath of fresh air to accompany the pastoral activities in this area of the archdiocese of Lomé, where the Comboni missionaries have invested much in evangelisation.

It will be a fair opportunity for the Augustinians of the Assumption to mark their presence with a beautiful pastoral care inspired by the charism of the congregation. While waiting for the opening of the pastoral year at the level of the Christian community of Yokoé, which will organise the pastoral activities, the brothers will provide occasional services in the parishes and out-post stations, in collaboration with the priests responsible for the Christian community.

P. Yves ATIDEPE

(article taken from **ATLPE**
Bulletin No. 24, October 2019)

ANGOLA'S TRAIL GETS CLEARER

During the December CGP in Rome, the Superior General announced that he had received the formal invitation from the Bishop of Benguela to found a community in his diocese: «If we accept it, we will go to Angola for a new foundation». The question now is how to support this project on both a human and economic level, in order to decide whether or not the foundation will take place. This will be the objective of a third preparatory trip, which will take place in February 2020 with Fr. Marcelo Marciel, Vicar General, and two concerned Provincials from Africa and Brazil.

Our future location is planned for Luongo, in the district of Catumbela, in the parish of St. Francis of Assisi, very close to the Catholic University and the new international airport (5 minutes by car). The planned number of religious is three, coming from Brazil and Butembo. A community of Brazilian Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy will be our pastoral partner with the project of a school.

So we are not yet at the stage of foundation for the moment: it will be up to the CGP to take stock next June. But, if all goes well, the implementation could begin around October. That is why this dossier was presented as a «jubilee year project» for the 175th anniversary of the Congregation.

M. K.

My Experience in Ecuador

An African religious on mission in Chile tells of his discovery of the Assumptionist presence in Ecuador: in praise of diversity!



Beginning of the Mass in honor of Saint Peter on June 29, 2019

On June 18, I left Chile for Ecuador, at the request of Father Provincial, Juan Carlos Marzolla, so I could share community life with the community of Riobamba and take part in the novena preceding the celebration of the feast of San Pedro de Licán. The Novena was preached by Fr. Jean-Aimé Kakule Virivusigha. As in previous years, the parish community had numerous commitments in terms of masses and various celebrations; the presence of at least one more religious priest was therefore necessary to lend a hand in whatever needed to be done.

So, we formed a wonderful community of three priests during this time of preparation for the great celebration of San Pedro de Licán: Fr. Mauricio Riquelme (parish priest), Fr. Jean-Aimé (treasurer) and me. The novena began on June 19 and finished on June 28 with Vespers of the solemnity of Saint Peter and Saint Paul. By tradition, however, at the parish of San Pedro de Licán only Saint Peter, the patron saint of the parish, is honored.

My main task during the novena was to hear the confession of parishioners who wanted to renew their relationship with God through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, while Fr. Jean-Aimé celebrated the Eucharist; to have spontaneous meetings with the faithful who came from all parts of the Province of Chimborazo, of which Riobamba is the capital city, and listen to their problems and concerns; to enhance the sense of fraternity among the brothers in the religious community; and to cooperate as far as



possible in all of the community activities and the parish or diocesan programs.

My experience in Ecuador for three weeks was very beautiful: magnificent landscapes, a pleasant and healthy climate, a society “not yet secularized” that maintains its cultural, human and religious values, honoring them with pride; a society where the priest is loved and greatly respected as a man of God, and where churches are still regarded as sacred places; an Assumptionist community that is very hospitable and concerned that a visitor feels welcomed and lacks nothing; a community of lay Assumptionists eager to know and live out the charisma and spirituality of our congregation; a population where young people and children still go to Mass, etc. I was very impressed by all of

this, and made aware of the fact that Chile, where I have lived for seven years, does not represent all of Latin America. I must say that I am happy to have had the opportunity to get acquainted with this other Latin American country. I wasn't able to get to know, either on a cultural or religious level, the coastal and Amazonian Regions, or the Islands (Galapagos); but I feel happy with my new knowledge of a large part of the Inter-Andean Region (La Sierra), its people, its mentality, its spirituality.

I am grateful to Fr. Juan Carlos Marzolla who allowed me to travel to Ecuador, not only to meet the religious community of Riobamba, but also to get to know the culture and the popular religiosity of that part of the country. Many thanks to the religious community, Fathers Mauri-

cio Riquelme and Jean-Aimé, for their welcome, for the fraternal sharing and for making me feel at home. I thank the lay-religious Alliance for receiving me and for the opportunities we had together to proclaim the Kingdom. May you persevere in spite of the difficulties. We have in common only one Master and Lord: Jesus Christ; one Mother: the Virgin Mary; only one Church; one founder: Father Emmanuel d'Alzon. Thank you for responding to the call of the Spirit. We need you for the task of evangelizing this our world. Don't let anything discourage you.

Fr. Isidore Bakanja KASONDOLI
SIHAYA
Community of Rengo
(article taken from the newsletter or the Andean Province
[Boletín de la Provincia Andina]
Nº 240, May-June 2019)

Holiness as rebirth

It is no coincidence that our congregation was founded on December 25, 175 years ago in 2020. This date marks the journey of Fr. d'Alzon, who lived an intense bond with the mystery of the Nativity.

Since Christmas Eve 2019, we have entered into a jubilee year. The feast of Christmas takes on a special character in the congregation in more than one way. First of all, it is because it is the feast day of our founder.(1) This day of the birth of the child of Bethlehem is also the day of the foundation of the congregation. Whether one chooses the date of Fr. d'Alzon's entry into the novitiate with his first companions in 1845,(2) or that of his first public vows in 1950,(3) or his perpetual vows in 1851,(4) it is always Christmas which marks these founding moments.

During all the first years of foundation, the brothers made sure that the entry into the novitiate, first profession or perpetual profession coincided with the feast of Christmas. This was the case at Mireman at Christmas 1853, where Fr. d'Alzon established the novitiate for the first five lay brothers. At the college in Nîmes, Christmas 1854 was celebrated with particular enthusiasm because of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception proclaimed in Rome a few days earlier. It was also the occasion that year to see the formation of the first tertiaries within the college and the launching of the work of Saint Francis de Sales. This tradition would continue in the foundations of the Assumption as in Cligny (1858) or later in Andrinople (1870).



The importance of this date is also due to the fact that Mother Marie Eugénie pronounced her perpetual vows on December 25, 1844 with the first four nuns of the Assumption.(5) And that is why Fr. d'Alzon wrote to Mother Marie Eugénie: «Behold then, the first four stones are going to be placed on the crib of the Infant Jesus.» Ten years earlier, while in Rome, he wrote to his mother and his friend Luglien: (6) «I will say my first Mass on Christmas Day.» We know that this was not the case because he was not ordained a priest until the next day.

Emmanuel, the southern

Moreover, Emmanuel will never forget his Cévennes and Provençal roots, especially on Christmas Eve when we used to do «Christmas Eve dinner» - in Provençal, calendo. This big supper served on Christmas Eve, before midnight mass, was full of symbols: a table covered with three white tablecloths - to designate the Trinity - with three lit white candlesticks and the three saucers of wheat germinated from Sainte-Barbe. The supper consisted of seven lean dishes, in remembrance of Mary's seven pains, served with 13 rolls followed by ▶



13 desserts representing the Last Supper with the twelve Apostles and Jesus. These 13 desserts were eaten on the return from Mass and remained on the table for the next three days, until December 27th. These Christmas traditions were very much alive in Nîmes and dear to Fr. d'Alzon's heart when he wrote to Mother Marie Eugénie: «What is traditional in Nîmes is the nougat, to spend Christmas without nougat would be for a Nîmois a misfortune without consolation.» (7)

Alès, capital of the Cévennes

Provençal Christmas carols were heard everywhere, to celebrate the sacred moment, some accompanied by the flute or tambourine. In some villages, the mass was in Provençal accompanied by a live

nativity scene where villagers in costume represented the Holy Family (Jesus, Mary, Joseph), the Magi and the shepherds. Some villages maintained the tradition of the «pastrage»: during the midnight mass, a newborn lamb was brought either on a cart decorated with straw and leaves, or in the arms of the shepherds who came to the church in procession. Sometimes a «pastoral» accompanied the mass, a theatrical representation of the Nativity sung and spoken in Provençal by characters in traditional costumes. There was not a place without a nativity scene, essential to the festival. Fr. d'Alzon was penetrated from a very young age by these traditions so well described by Frédéric Mistral, who was received at the college in March 1959.(8)

Alès, the capital of the Cévennes and a stronghold of the Huguenot resistance, keeps the traces of these traditions so dear to the heart of Fr. d'Alzon. We find them in the paintings of the Venetian school preserved in the Colombier d'Alès museum, works on the theme of Christmas: Bernardino Gatti's Flight into Egypt, Fra Paolini da Pistoia's Holy Family, the Adoration of the Magi and the Adoration of the Shepherds from Francesco Bassano's workshop. Provence has kept this culture of the crib and the santons (santoun, «little saints») created so that the crib can flourish in the intimacy of each Provençal family.

The perpetual incarnation

But it would be wrong to limit Fr. d'Alzon's perception of Christmas to a simple nostalgic and

sentimental attachment to local traditions or to calendar coincidences. His overall reflection on time left nothing to chance. It was a question for him of discovering in it the traces of God and the means of reaching him in humility, poverty and obedience. For this, he spoke of «preparing to bring Our Lord into the world, like the Blessed Virgin in Bethlehem.»(9) And he explains: «Our Lord became incarnate once in the Blessed Virgin; a second time through the Eucharist (the first time in the Upper Room and since then every day); there is a third and perpetual incarnation of Jesus Christ in the regenerated humanity, in that portion of the elect which is the Church; and finally, there will be another incarnation in glory.»(10) It is a question of being «humble, poor, obedient like Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin in Bethlehem», by ridding oneself of self-centeredness. He wanted the first quality of the Assumption to be recognized was «the simplicity of means.»(11) During a retreat in the chapel of François Ier Street at the beginning of April 1873, he declared: «The Incarnation is the union of a God with humanity. I will be happy to come in you,» said Our Lord Jesus Christ. Just as he became incarnate, just as he came into the world in a stable in Bethlehem, so he wants to be born in the stable of our hearts. Let us imitate the shepherds who came to worship him in his swaddling clothes. Let us carry within us the Child God, we must be the fathers of Jesus Christ when he comes into us. We must cry out: «I live, it is no longer I, it is J.C. who lives and reigns in me». The life of the Christian is the perpetual incarnation of God in his heart, until at the end he becomes one with God. «(12) Christmas at

d'Alzon's house is an opportunity to renew this incarnation, to be reborn to a new life of holiness. (13)

To Marie Correnson, on December 17, 1874, he wrote: «May the feast of Christmas be for you a time of renewal. Try to be born to a new life with the child Jesus, wrap yourself in his swaddling clothes, lose yourself in his littleness and let him live at ease in the midst of your heart to purify it, to set it ablaze it, to make it fruitful. «A few days later, he wrote to her from Nice on December 22nd: «I ask the Child Jesus to give birth to you on Christmas night to a brand new life of holiness, patience, humility and love.» A few days earlier, in an instruction to the Oblate Sisters, he had said: «Let us prepare ourselves seriously for the feast of Christmas, so that Our Lord may be born in us; our hearts must be so well disposed that the divine child will find his delights there; does not a mother prepare her layette for the son she is expecting? It is an immense work that I am giving you to do; see the exquisite delicacy that you must bring in the acquisition of the virtues that you lack. Delicacy in sincere humility, delicacy in charity, delicacy in poverty, etc., etc., etc. » (14)

“Go to humility”

Couldn't he have thought of this when he saw the work of God being carried out by his hands and the work of the Incarnation being repeated in this way? «God wanted his Son to be born in a manger, to spend his first year in Egypt, and then to hide his life in Nazareth, just as he wants this or that disposition of life from you, and you only have to submit to it.» (15) According to him, «To take pleasure only in

1. Letter to Luglien d'Espigny of 24 December 1830, in *Lettres du Père d'Alzon*, vol. 1, pp.178-180.
2. François Surrel (1806-1857), Paul-Elphège Tissot (1801-1895), Eugène Henri (1815-1874), Charles Laurent (1821-1895) and René Cusse (1822-1866).
3. Fr. d'Alzon pronounces his vows in the chapter room of the community at the Collège de l'Assomption followed by those of the brothers: Henri Brun (1821-1895), Victor Cardenne (1821-1851), Hippolyte Saugrain (1822-1905), Etienne Pernet (1824-1899).
4. Fr. D'Alzon pronounced his perpetual vows during the midnight mass in the chapel of Collège de l'Assomption and received those of Fr. Brun, Brs Saugrain and Pernet and Fr. François Picard pronounced his first vows and his final vows at Christmas 1852.
5. Letter to Mother Marie-Eugénie of Jesus of 20 December 1844 in *Lettres du P. D'Alzon*, vol. B, p. 210.
6. Letters of 18 November 1834 to Madame d'Alzon and to his friend Luglien d'Espigny, in *Lettres du P. d'Alzon*, vol. A, pp. 734-740.
7. Letter to Marie-Eugénie of 20 December 1845, in *Lettres du P. D'Alzon*, vol. B, pp.413-414.
8. See: Frédéric Mistral, *Mes origines, mémoires et récits*.
9. Letter to Louis Chabert of 17 November 1871, in *Lettres du P. D'Alzon*, vol. 1X, pp. 212-213.
10. To the Religious of the Assumption in Auteuil, August 1861, in *Cahiers d'Alzon*. X1, pp. 9-10.
11. Closing instructions of the General Chapter of 1868, *Ecrites spirituels*, pp. 130-132.
12. Unpublished notes, Org. Ms ACR DA 6, pp. 16-18.
13. It is pleasant to see the same accents in the Apostolic Letter *Admirabile signum* of Pope Francis on the meaning and value of the crib, signed at Greccio, on 2

December 2019.

14. Fourth instruction to the Oblates, on 4 December 1874 (unpublished text).

15. *Les instructions du samedi*, Paris Maison de la Bonne Presse, 1932, pp. 118-133.

16. 'Nous l'avons ce divin Enfant, grandissons avec lui.', Saint Augustine, Sermon 196, 3.

17. *Prêtre et Apôtre*, X, no. 111, May 1928, pp. 139-143.

18. In *Cahiers d'Alzon*, 11 : The Eucharist, light of life, p. 23.

19. *Ecrits spirituels*, pp. 892-895.

20. To the Assumptionists of Nîmes in September 1879, in notes of Br. Matthieu Lombard, unpublished.

21. On 24 February 1861, Lenten sermon at Saint-Charles of Nîmes church, in *Ecrits du P. Baily*, 18, pp. 187-194.

God, to rely only on his strength and perfection, to live only by his life, these must be the modalities of this incarnation, quoting St Augustine: «*Ecce habemus infantem Christum, crescamos cum illo.*» (15) Who is he, this child of the manger, he asks himself - and he immediately replies: «He is the one who is going to give all spiritual riches; he is the father of the poor, and he wants to establish true charity on earth. All the poor are relieved by Jesus Christ.» (17) And the culmination of this un-inhabitation of God made man is accomplished in the Eucharist: «God takes my heart for a manger and he puts himself into it, after coming down from the altar.» (18) And Fr. d'Alzon concluded: «Will you offer this heart to this little

child, your God, who became man to save you? Examine and know how to make an effective resolution... to make your life the means to glorify God? Do you want to? Go to Bethlehem, go to the Saviour, go to the humility of his manger, and, contemplating the annihilation of a God who made himself a little child to save you, cry out in your turn: Glory to God who treats me with such great kindness that he wants to put this glory into becoming my Saviour! « (19) We are, thanks to our character as religious and priests, [called to] realize this incarnation in other souls like St. Paul: *Filioli quos iterum parturio donec formetur Christus in vobis* (Gal 4:19). But then it is necessary to prepare oneself in advance for the pains of childbirth. In the same way, we should not be surprised to encounter sadness and pain in our apostolate, and the magnificent spectacle of the work we do should make us overcome them with ease and joy. » (20)

God wishes that one day we may celebrate, more than the anniversary of our foundation, the *Dies natalis* of Father d'Alzon with the whole Church which will have recognized how much he had incarnated during his life on earth the face of the Emmanuel: "The king of the saints must live in us: *Vivo, jam non ego, sed Christus vivit in me* (Gal 2:20), he said, and therefore all my thoughts, all my aspirations, I take them into the bosom of God; this is the doctrine of holiness in the Church! This holiness resides in her head and that head is Jesus Christ, from whom holiness flows in the members as well as life in our bodies. » (21)

P. Bernard LE LÉANNEC
General Postulator



In Brazil, the opening of the beatification proceedings of Fr. Matheus

The diocesan proceeding for beatification of the Servant of God Matheus Van Herkhuizen, a Dutch Assumptionist, who died in Pinhal (Brazil) in 1973, was opened on 7 December 2019. To this effect, a diocesan tribunal was created. The first step was to recognize the body during a Eucharistic celebration presided by Bishop Emilio Vilar, of the diocese of Sao Joao da Boa Vista. His remains were then transferred to Saint John the Baptist church where they now lay in a sarcophagus.

Emmanuel d'Alzon and the Youth Work in Nîmes (2/2)



All the buildings and the property of Mont Duplan today. A real estate operation is planning to build an apartment building there.

This is the second part of Jean-Michel Brohec's historical research on this little-known and eventful work, taken up by Fr. d'Alzon in the context of his diocesan ministry, not without impact on his young congregation.

Fr. d'Alzon's correspondence testifies that there is no lack of ideas on how to make the best use of this new location in the interest of the young congregation, but there is little mention of the first project of the work. He speaks of establishing the novitiate there, installed on the premises of the College; another time he wants to reserve this place for novices with greater intellectual capacity, the novitiate at Le Vigan, run by Fr. Saugrain, becoming a kind of superior aluminate; then he thinks of establishing a scholasticate there and of making this place the «mother house». In a letter to Fr. Emmanuel Bailly (April 2, 1874), Fr. d'Alzon rejoices at the imminent arrival of future novices:

“Here is the list of the young men we will have shortly: Noël arrived; Ménétrier, from Franche-Comté, whom Noël will tell you

about; Victor Cry, a philosopher in Bourges, who made a poor impression on Fr. V[incent] de P[aul], warmly supported by Mgr. de Ségur, Mme de Gouy, his protector from childhood, and the superior of the seminary of Bourges; Victor, a domestic, very intelligent, warmly protected by your brother; Théophile Durafour pour les Châteaux, a charming child who comes to read to our Fathers in the refectory; an Irishman, he arrives this evening to be a lay Brother; Collin, a pupil of M. V[incent] de P[aul], who is a very intelligent man, warmly protected by your brother; and, of course, the young people we will soon have: Noël arrived; Ménétrier, from Franche-Comté, of whom Noël will speak to you; Victor Cry, a philosopher in Bourges, who made a poor impression on Fr. Collin, a student of M. Roussel, will be able to attend the humanities aluminate, at least I hope so; plus two teachers from the minor seminary in Paris for the month of October.

You see that things are taking a good turn, if we are saints. But you have to come. The big question for me is to know whether since the aluminate is done at the Oblate house, the ▶

real novitiate should not be done near me, at the Windmills, at least for a while. That is a very big question. Something drives me to consecrate myself to this novitiate from May 8 [18]74 to February 1 [18]75. Pray and have others pray in this regard. »

The prospect that he himself will take care of the novitiate at Mont Duplan worries Mother Marie-Eugénie (letter of 16 April to Fr. Picard). Alexis Dumazer, who wrote to Fr. Emmanuel Bailly on 6 April:

“It seems to me dangerous that Fr. d’Alzon should take charge of this work alone as he seems to have resolved to do. He will never be able to reside there sufficiently and he needs as socius a former religious [understand: a former religious] and not just one of his novices.... I am still afraid on this side an arrangement that will soon unravel and bring about a new abortion. You know what the attempt at Mount Duplan has cost the Congregation as a religious; I tremble to see the Father settling there only with novices and it seems to me that it is our duty to tell him these things while accepting that he will take them into account as he wishes”. (to E. Bailly, April 6).

Hippolyte Saugrain, the general bursar, for his part, fears an increase in expenses. Fr. d’Alzon himself remarks on this:

“Fr. Hippolyte is sulking. He says he is ill. It is possible, but above all he is unhappy” (to Fr. Picard, 10 January 1873).

“This small foundation, to which I attach the greatest hopes, has not been without bitterness. In a meeting of the principal religious where the accounts were settled, I had thought that out of the income of Montmau (1) they would give me 3,000 or 4,000 francs. Fr. Hippolyte opposed it,

offering a derisory means, that of having me give so much from each house. It was the certainty of having nothing. Fr. Picard said that it was better to live on alms. I preferred it too, and I will start begging when I have nothing left. The general bursar will have the 30,000 francs of income from Montmau or Le Vigan. Finally, we must do things for God alone. These little humiliations are good foundation stones of the work and detach the heart from human attachments. “(to Marie Eugénie, December 10, 1872).

A disputed sale

But things aren’t going as planned. As soon as the Assumptionists took over the work, D’Alzon had to face a double challenge that reflected an opposition, if not to his person, then at least to the way in which the work, buildings and direction would be appropriated.

In September 1872, a group of five Nîmois who did not seem to belong to the Work wrote to Jules Simon, Minister of Justice, Worship and Public Instruction, to contest the procedure for selling the property and its price. The sale took place amicably, between the bishop and his vicar general, whereas the law would have required an auction. They also judged the price, 20,000 francs, excessively low in relation to the buildings and the situation (it had been envisaged, for a while, to establish the prefecture of the Gard). The authors of the procedure estimate the real price at 38,000 or 40,000 francs.

D’Alzon points out that, with one exception, the authors of the protest are all unknown. He wondered whether they were «Protestants with little interest in Catholic works,» or whether it was not a manoeuvre aimed at «raising

the price of the premises for the youth work» (letter to Bishop Plantier, 30 September 1872) so that there would not be too much disproportion in relation to the neighbouring land that could be sold to the army to establish an artillery barracks there.

In his reply to the minister (October 8, 1872), Bishop Plantier justified the sale on the grounds of the disastrous state of the diocese’s finances (obeyed by the construction of churches in Nîmes) and the needs of the seminary «whose indigence is extreme. He concedes a slight favour to the Vicar General, but it would be justified by the obligation to maintain the work in this house. In another letter to the prefect of the Gard (27 December 1872), the bishop added an argument: public opinion would not accept that the work should move away, and if it were to leave the premises, this could lead to dreadful discontent and unrest.

Finally, after other events, political interventions (including that of Numa Baragnon, deputy and former student of the Assumption), the proposal of purchase by a group of elders, an administrative inquiry..., a decree of the administration of cults of 8 June 1873 authorized the sale of the Prophette property to Father d’Alzon, for 20,000 francs and under the terms and conditions of the deed of 22 June 1872.

Internal tensions

In October 1872, Fr. d’Alzon and the novices from Assumption College moved into the new premises. Brother Norbert Mathieu had been sent there in July to replace Abbé Argaud as a matter of urgency. But he was not well received by the young people of the Work and left the congregation. He was replaced by



The property of the Argaud Work today.
 Above, on the left, the buildings and the garden planted with trees of the adjoining Assumptionist community. Above, on the right, an unbuilt square located in the extension of the property, land acquired by the d'Alzon Institute.

Fr Dumazer, himself giving way in October to Fr Blanc, just out of the novitiate.

After a time of «furious opposition» (letter to Fr. V from Fr. Bailly, October 2, 1872), life resumed its usual course. Fr. Blanc leads with the support of the commission of the elders. He celebrated services, preached, and organized times of prayer. D'Alzon also intervened: he renewed the offices, accompanied a pilgrimage of young people to Notre-Dame de Rochefort, preached for All Saints' Day... The feasts were celebrated (Christmas Eve, Mardi-Gras...), games and sports activities were maintained and even renewed. Thus the young people of the advisory board bring from Paris equipment for the gymnasium: rope ladders, trapeze, swings... Everything seems to be going well.

But in March 1873, Fr Blanc also left the congregation and joined the diocesan clergy. Fr. d'Alzon, who was also very busy,

could not get more involved in the running of the Work. The absence of spiritual direction (we would speak today of «pastoral animation») was felt. The religious exercises are less well attended. Games are less successful. A bad spirit is settling in, the relationship between the older boys and the «middle age boys» is deteriorating, the latter envying the «privileges» of the elders. It is even said that «some even enjoy destroying games or personal belongings that fall into their hands» (Gazette de L'Œuvre, August 17, 1873).

The commission, which embodies authority, is criticized and has difficulty enforcing the regulations. It is, however, the application of the rules that makes the Work more than just a patronage. At the beginning of 1874, the commission, weary of criticism and in opposition to the orientations that Fr. d'Alzon wanted to promote, resigned. He re-establishes it with authority.

What does d'Alzon want?

It seems that he wished to re-orient the Youth Work towards a more explicit and strongly Catholic, even vocational, formation. Added to this was the idea that to do this he needed to address young people from a higher social milieu.

As early as December 1872, in a letter to Fr. Picard (December 21, 1872), he spoke of establishing «a kind of Third Order among the youngest. They are the most pliable... The old will go away, the young will arrive and perhaps in this way we will do them good and decide to give themselves to God». Vincent de Paul Bailly (June 2, 1876), he mentions «a Catholic propaganda work». He wants the older people to cooperate with «a group of distinguished young people at the head», and he appeals to the children of the large families of Nîmes. According to Abbé Argaud's «historical notes», «agreement with the members of the Work was impossible». The «distinguished young men» did not want to mingle «with the present members of the Work who were of a much inferior condition to their own».

A group of former members addressed a letter to Bishop Besson on his arrival in Nîmes, speaking of «vexations» they had suffered. D'Alzon is said to have discredited the work, for example, by putting at its head «ridiculous directors, young men of 20 years of age, brothers of the Assumption, who, since then, have thrown their trousers down and are the first to laugh at having found themselves, without knowing it, directors of a Work for Youth» (letter not dated).

The facts prove them right: named in turn, Bro. Norbert Mathieu, Fr. Blanc, Bro. Eugène, Bro. Désiré left the work and the

congregation. The latter, replaced by Fr. Francesco Chichkov (2), left without warning, leaving at the station a note addressed to Fr. Emmanuel Bailly who, in a letter to Fr. d'Alzon, did not go quietly: very severe judgment at first and a little scornful: *"This poor brother, good but foolish... a foolishness that has often pierced through"*, etc. Then he comes to the real question: *"What is the virtue, intelligent or unintelligent, that can resist such a solitude and such an independent life prolonged indefinitely without usual support, without rule, without community, without superior? Brother Eugene had done the same; the departures of so many others end up constituting traditions that the weak and the foolish imitate as a simple and natural thing."* (September 1, 1875)

Finally, the authors of the letter to the bishop think that Fr. d'Alzon does not know how to address young people from working class backgrounds. Thus, his All Saints' Day speech of 1872 is judged by them to be "of real importance, but much too long for young people", and he speaks, they say, "in a dialect" !

The withdrawal of Fr. d'Alzon

As soon as the Mount Duplan premises were purchased and Canon Argaud abruptly withdrew, suspicion reigned. *«What was Father d'Alzon's need to buy the premises if he wanted to continue the Work? We were not so naive as not to understand that Fr. d'Alzon had other plans.»* (Letter from the elders to Bishop Besson) The follow-up seems to prove them right.

In 1877, probably weary of the difficulties of organization and the resistance encountered, Fr. d'Alzon no longer provided a

priest for the Work of Youth (letter to Fr. Picard, July 29, 1877). The elders set out in search of new premises, but the old ones, finding the process «without manner and even brutal,» decided to resist legally. They refused to give Fr. d'Alzon the keys to the house. Fr. d'Alzon asked them not to oblige him to employ «the town sergeants and to take advantage of the opportunity to take over the whole house». He wanted the Work to continue, *«but with people with whom I will be able to have discussions»* (Gazette de l'Œuvre, October 1888, *«Eleven Years Back»*).

On December 2, 1877, the Gazette wrote: *«A retrocession would have been made by the Reverend Father d'Alzon to the Bishop of the Work's building, by notarial act.»* The latter was in fact transferred from Assumptionist tutelage to that of the diocese. After a period of transition which saw the appointment of a priest director assisted by two other priests, a trio which did not seem to have functioned, Bishop Besson entrusted the direction to Father Camille Ferry, a former member of Assumption College, who settled on the spot in November 1878. He brought in the mastery of the cathedral. He was able to straighten out the situation, to recover the spirit and organisation of the Youth Work of the German priests, Daudet and Argaud.

In 1893, it moved and settled on route d'Arles (now avenue Leclerc), on a large piece of land acquired by the association of the elders. It is probably at this time that it took the name of Argaud. In 1919, at the request of the same alumni, the Fathers of Timon-David (named after the founder of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Marseilles) took

over the direction and animation of the Work, which thus regained its institutional independence from the diocese.

In the 1930s, the Assumptionists acquired a piece of land at 3 Route d'Arles, near the Argaud work located at No. 5 of the same road. They built a College there and transferred the one on the Rue de la République. When the establishment closed in 1967 and the Assumptionists sold the building to the Chamber of Commerce of Nîmes, they kept the land adjoining the Argaud Work, on which the primary school was located, and installed the Assumptionist community of Nîmes, thus keeping close, at least geographically, to one of the works initiated by their founder!

In 2012, the Fathers of Timon-David will retire. The two associations made up of elders, one of whom is the owner and the other the manager, expressed verbally for a while the wish that the neighboring Assumptionists get involved in the pastoral animation of the Work, but the request was never officially formulated. The diocese itself, while wishing to have a look at the pastoral development and the future of the premises that could be the object of real estate covetousness, has not responded to this need. One of the pillars of the educational project - Christian formation - has been weakened as a result. It has become difficult to find pastoral responses to the growing diversity of origin, culture and religion of the young people who frequent the work. At the same time, the way of life of the families and the leisure activities of the young people have changed a great deal. In January 2018, Oeuvre Argaud had to cease its activities. The future destination of the premises is currently under discussion.

During its 180 years of existence, it has left its mark on many generations of people in Nîmes who are still very attached to it and it has formed generations of Christians committed to the Church and society.

Conclusion

At the end of this historical overview, we can sketch out answers to the following two questions: why did Fr. d'Alzon want to take control of this work of which he was the initiator in 1872? For what reasons, five years later, did he withdraw from it?

By acquiring ownership of Mont Duplan in 1872 and by taking responsibility for the youth work, D'Alzon seems to have pursued several objectives: to have a more appropriate living environment for the novitiate and for himself than the College, to improve the level of Christian formation of the young people welcomed for leisure activities and to encourage vocations (one of his great and permanent concerns). He no doubt thought he could easily find a director among the religious. But in some thirty-five years of existence, the work launched in rue de l'Arc Dugras had developed its own identity, around an educational project formalised and implemented by Fr. Allemand in Marseilles, applied in Nîmes by the Fr. Daudet and more adapted to young people from working class backgrounds.

By receiving young people in his apartment in the rue de l'Arc Dugras, by his instruction in the catechism of perseverance, by creating the St-Louis de Gonzague association, D'Alzon addressed young people from the middle and upper classes, with a certain level of education. Fr. Vailhé points out, moreover, that he is reproached for not having enough of the popular genre (Biography, T. 1, p. 227).

His first discourse, after having taken up the work of youth on Mount Duplan in 1872, is considered important but not very accessible to young people.

With his friend Canon Sibour (future archbishop of Paris), he had also organized in the years 1836-1839 evenings of conferences and debates for educated young people. They took place on Thursdays at Sibour's home (rue de la Madeleine) on subjects related to literature, and on Mondays at his home, rue de l'Arc Dugras, on questions of philosophy and religion. They were also moments of conviviality (he sometimes offered cigars and punch!). It was within this framework that he attached himself to some academics such as Germer-Durand and Monnier, whom he would employ at the Collège de l'Assomption with the explicit project of working to reconstitute a Christian elite. He clearly thought that the religious formation of the young people of the Work should be of better quality. On this point, one only has to look at the level of his instructions and conferences to the students of Assumption College!

D'Alzon was not uninterested in popular circles: he had a strong social action in Nîmes, which cannot be detailed here. But his origins, his formation, in short, his personality, meant that he did not know how to address young people without much education. It is for this reason that he

entrusted Father Daudet with the animation of the Saint-Stanislas Society, which brings together young people from working class backgrounds.

Through the events recounted above, we perceive another source of difficulty, linked to the very identity of the Work: the place of the elders, the role of the elders and, globally, the mode of operation strongly involving the young (board of directors, superior, advisory board, widely distributed charges). This involvement, which has marked the identity of the Work up to the present day, presupposed participatory modes of decision-making, necessarily slower than the active and energetic personality of Fr. d'Alzon. It is not surprising that the elders and senior citizens came into conflict with him.

Finally, driven by his active temperament and his apostolic intuitions, he did not sufficiently anticipate the human resources he would need to find to pursue the educational project of the work and to give it the impetus he wished for.

However, even his detractors acknowledge that he supported the Youth Work, helping it financially, supporting it with the bishop and a reserved local clergy.

The chapel of the Argaud Work. The wall on the right is adjoining the property of the Assumptionist community. ■

- 1) Wine property, close to Lavagnac, which Fr. D'Alzon received as an heritage. The revenues from that land, like that of the farm of La Valette, in Le Vigan, were used to finance the initiatives of the founder.
- 2) One of the two first Bulgarian Assumptionists who arrived in France in 1866 with Luigi Dimitrov, He is ordained a priest in 1874. After only one year at the Youth ministry, he leaves and joins Fr. Galabert at Mission d'Orient, in September 1876.

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Our Deceased Brothers



† Father **Alexandre BEAUDET**, from the community in Québec (North American Province), died October 26, 2019, in Québec (Canada). His funeral was celebrated on October 31 in the chapel of the Center of Culture and Faith of Montmartre. He was 97 years of age.

† Brother **Alain de BOISSON**, from the community of Albertville (European Province), died on October 28, 2019, in Albertville (France). His funeral was celebrated on October 30 in the chapel of Notre-Dame des Vignes, followed by interment in the cemetery of Albertville. He was 87 years of age.

† Father **Gustaaf (Herman) VAN DE SANDE**, from the community of Leuven (European Province), died on November 8, 2019, at Kapelle-op-den-Bos (Belgium). His funeral was celebrated on November 16 in the parish church of St. Lambert of Muizen-Dorp. He was 85 years of age.

† Father **Robert BROCHIER**, from the community of Albertville (European Province), died on November 11, 2019, in Albertville (France). His funeral was celebrated on November 13 in the chapel of Notre-Dame des Vignes, followed by interment in the cemetery of Albertville. He was 93 years of age.

† Father **Anicet KAHINDO MUNYENZE**, from the community of Kindugu (Province of Africa), died on November 12, 2019, in Butembo (DR-Congo). His funeral was celebrated the same day. He was 57 years of age.