



Friday, June 02, 2023

n° 1

JOURNAL OF THE CHAPTER

The Kingdom of God is at hand.

Living and proclaiming the hope of the Gospel.

34TH GENERAL CHAPTER OF THE ASSUMPTIONISTS - JUNE 01-25, 2023

The Chapter Begins!

Today, in Italy, the «Festa della Repubblica Italiana» is celebrated. It is the national holiday, is celebrated on June 2 every year since 1948, to commemorate the birth of the Italian Republic (1946).

Concurrently, the Chapter is warming up to its work at a steady pace.



Opening liturgy of the 34th General Chapter

On Thursday, June 1, 2023, at 3pm, all participants in the 34th General Chapter gathered in the chapel to invoke the Holy Spirit. Father Benoît Grière, Superior General, presided over the opening liturgy of the Chapter.

The Superior General and members of the Curia entered the chapel in procession. Two lay people opened the procession, carrying two candles in the procession.

All listened to a reading from the Book of Isaiah (40, 1-11) and a meditation by Father Emmanuel d'Alzon on the Kingdom of God (ES 152-153). Then all invoked the Holy Spirit to set our Assembly ablaze.

Then, in procession, we sang our way to the chapter house. We crossed the large garden of the Passionist Center overlooking the Coliseum.

Chapter members took their seats in the chapter house. A painting by Father Emmanuel d'Alzon was placed in the hall.

One of the Judices Causarum then called each participant by name, after checking that he or she had been mandated to sit at the Chapter. Each responded «Present» in his or her own language.

The Superior General then declared the General Chapter legitimately

constituted and officially opened. It was met with applause.

After singing the «Veni Creator», the Superior General concluded the celebration with the following prayer: «Spirit of God, make us receptive to your visit, foster in us faith in the Word that saves. Be the living source of the hope that germinates in our lives. Be in us the breath of love that transforms us and the fire of charity that impels us to give of ourselves through service to our brothers and sisters. [...] Strengthen the inner man in us, turn us from fear to trust, so that the praise of your glory may spring forth in us.»

Setting up the Chapter Coordination Commission

After a break, without further ado, the Chapter proceeded to the elections for the various Chapter offices.

First elected were the Scrutineers, the youngest members of the Assembly, then the Secretary and Pro-Secretary (*): Fathers Michel Kubler and Nicolas Potteau.

Jean-Paul Sagadou (Abidjan) and three Moderators (**): Fathers Ngoa Ya Tshihemba (Manila), Chi Hai Nguyen (Worcester) and Jean-Paul Musangania Kombi (Kinshasa).

The Superior General chairs this team, which also includes a Facilitator, Father Alberto Toutin Cataldo (see interview below).



Jean-Paul Musangania Kombi, Benoît Grière, Jean-Paul Sagadou, Chi Hai Nguyen, Ngoa Ya Tshihemba, Alberto Toutin Cataldo.

Much encouragement and prayer

At the end of the day, the Superior General shared the many testimonies of friendship and solidarity in prayer that he had received: from the Assumption family: the Oblates, the Religious of the Assumption, the Little Sisters of the Assumption and the Orantes of the Assumption. The Superior General of the Augustinians, the Oratorians, the Brothers and Sisters of Picpus... numerous Assumptionist religious and sisters of the family...

(*) The Secretary and Pro-Secretaries are responsible for drafting the minutes, presenting them to the Chapter and keeping the Chapter documents. They are assisted by two technical secretaries, Father Vincent Leclercq and Brother Clément Löbel.

(**) The Promoter chairs the Coordination Commission. He sets the agenda for the entire duration of the Chapter indicating, as he goes along, the matters to be dealt with, in agreement with the Chapter President. The Chapter Commissions keep him informed of the progress of their work.

(***) The Moderators lead the debates in turn, when the President asks them to do so. They give the floor and facilitate discussion and participation by all. They ensure that the subject to be dealt with is clearly situated and that interventions do not stray from it.

Typical program for a General Chapter day

7:30 am: Common prayer
8:00 am: Breakfast
8h30: Lauds
9h-12h30: Plenary Assembly, Commissions...
1:00 pm: Lunch

15h-18h30: Plenary meeting, Commissions...
7:00 pm: Mass



Interview with Alberto Toutin Cataldo, Chapter Facilitator

BY BERNARD HOLZER

Father Alberto Toutin Cataldo is Superior General of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (Picpus). He has been invited to be the «Facilitator» of our General Chapter. This is the first time the Assumptionists have called on an outside viewpoint in this way.

What is your role in this Chapter?
I've been invited to be a kind and fraternal external listener to what the Chapter is going to experience. It's a matter of helping to distance oneself from what is being expressed, to identify questions that arise, to point out possible tensions, and to suggest avenues for in-depth work, while being attentive to the free expression of each individual. Above all, it's about helping the assembly to progress along the path of the spiritual adventure that is a Chapter.

How do you approach this service?
Taking part in your Chapter is an apprenticeship for me. It will help me to organize the next General Chapter of my Congregation. Indeed, I'm always learning...

The morning of Friday June 2

After morning prayers, the morning was devoted to setting up the Commissions: Liturgy , Economic Affairs and Vows.

The morning was marked by two highlights:

- The presentation by Mr. Greg WEINER, President of Assumption University in Worcester, one of the Assumption's mobilizing works.
- The presentation of the Superior General's Report (which all religious received).

Presentation of the Superior General's Report

Father Benoît Grière presented a summary of his report sent to all religious.

He reminded us that his main concern was to bring the Assumption charism to life throughout the world, with the conviction that the Kingdom of God is very near. He invited the Chapter and each of us to be on the lookout for signs of the Kingdom.

He shared with us his vision of the world, society, the Church and the Assumption with their implications and the hope that faith gives.

A few flashes:

- Contemporary man, marked by the primacy of the individual over the group, of individual freedom over tradition, of the future over the past, of the living over the dead, of youth over the elderly
- Secularization and exculturation of religion
- A smaller, humbler, more confessing Church
- The Assumption, a living, growing family: the demographic shift is over. By 2030 (7 years from now), the Congregation will be predominantly African and Asian. Internationality is a fact, but interculturality is still a project to be implemented.

- Community life, a challenge with the rise of individualism, apostolic dispersion, clericalism, the deficit of interiority, fidelity in trial, wounded fraternity, sexual abuse, ethnocentrism and tribalism.

Two figures:

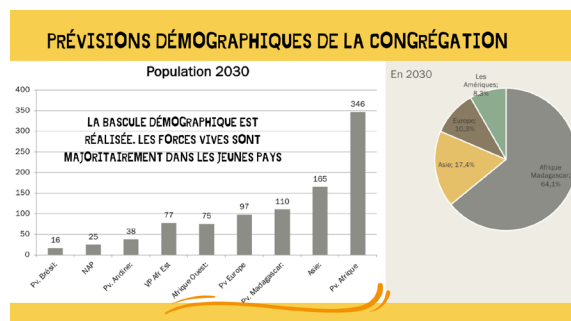
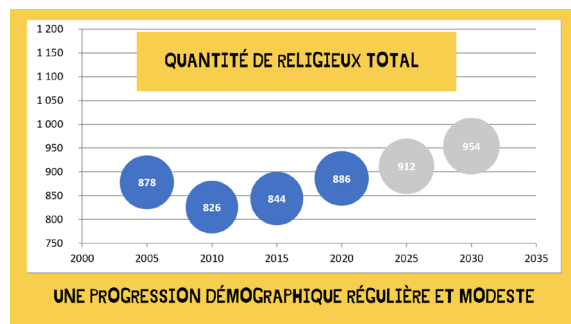
The average age of religious of the Assumption: 42
512 files of perpetual vows and calls to order (in six years)

In concluding his presentation, Father Benoît asked us three questions:

- Are we where we need to be?
- Why aren't we where we should be?
- Are we as we should be?

Quote of the day

«Pastoral care in missionary terms requires us to abandon the comfortable pastoral criterion of «we've always done it this way». I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the objectives, structures, style and evangelizing methods of their own communities»
Pope Francis, «Evangelii gaudium» (33)



Speech by Mr Greg WEINER, President of Assumption University

Greg Weiner presented the University as a mobilizing force for humanizing education in a dehumanizing world. The University is rebuilding.

Its aim is to fire the imagination of its students in a crisis of institutions and transmission.

He makes a spirited plea for «Catholic liberal education», seeking to answer the question: Will the University remain Catholic and Assumptionist? Under what conditions?

Will it continue to educate free-thinking students to seek the truth, linking faith and reason, while market trends impose a specialization oriented solely towards work and competition?

Greg Weiner is convinced that young people are open to this search, and

that Assumption University is capable of offering a humane education in a dehumanizing world, while responding to contemporary challenges.

In a moment of exchange, questions revolved around several challenges for Catholic education: secularization, access to education for the most disadvantaged, the emergence of a new paradigm concerning education, the transmission of the Assumptionist charism and Christian values, the relocation of the University to other parts of the world, the place of the Assumption in the University, the support of teachers...

Interview with Greg Weiner, President of Assumption College (Worcester, USA)

BY BERNARD HOLZER

How did you become attracted to Assumption College?

It was providential. As a political science teacher, I was looking for a new teaching position. As a Jew, I believe we share the same values as Catholics and the same search for truth. The Torah teaches us to «obey and understand». Education is a value. It makes us aware that we are created in the image of God.

What are the two greatest challenges facing Assumption University today?

They are the secularization of society and declining demographics; but, by offering a different kind of education,

based on human values, we have a niche that enables us not only to survive but to progress. Young people have a desire to seek and to do good.

Are you planning to collaborate with our University in Butembo and our language school in Manila?

We need to consider student and teacher exchanges and collaboration with Assumption.

Important And Urgent Information

According to our Rules, every religious, community and Province is entitled to send requests, motions, wishes, suggestions and vows to the General Chapter. The Chapter has decided to accept them until June 11th.

Don't hesitate, the Chapter will give them serious consideration. After the Chapter it will be too late!

Please send them to the Chapter Promoter, Father Jean-Paul Sagadou:

<sagadoujeanpaul@gmail.com >

First impressions of the Chapter

By François Dinh Hanh Nguyen (Vinh, Vietnam)

«My first impression after a day of Chapter is the unity of Pentecost. We come from all over the world with the diversity of nationalities, cultures and languages. But we are united in one body, the Assumption, and we speak only one language, that of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the hope of the Gospel.

As a first-time participant, I thank God for this honor to participate in such an important moment of the Congregation. What can I say about the Assumption today? I see a small tree blooming with many flowers. Seeing its rejuvenation, internationality and interculturality, puts us on the path of hope. »

Program for the afternoon of June 2

3pm-4.30pm: Presentation of the Madagascar Province

17h-18h: Presentation of the Brazilian Province

Program for June 3

9h - 10h30: Open dialogue with the Superior General and group work

11am - 12.30pm: Each group to come up with 2 or 3 priorities and «Discussion» with the Superior General

15h00 - 16h30: Report on the Province of Africa + exchanges

17h00 -18h30: Report on the Vice-Province of East Africa + exchanges

18h30-19h30: Launch of Commissions

FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK: Assumption General Chapter

- Opening liturgy of the 34th General Chapter (viewed by 489 people)

- Interview with Father Richard Lamoureux, former Superior General