

# AA News of the Assumption



- ▶ THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN GOMA
- ▶ THE ART OF DISCERNING AND GOVERNING
- ▶ TRIBUTE TO P. CLAUDE MARECHAL





# Agenda

## Plenary General Council

- n° 2 : May 30-June 8, 2024.
- n° 3 : Dec. 2-11, 2024.

## Ordinary General Council

- n° 7 : April 3-4.
- n° 8 : April 29-May 7.
- n° 9 : June 10-11.
- n° 10 : Sept. 4-20.

## Fr. Ngoa

- **March 4-20:** Brazil (canonical visit).
- **July 6-August 9:** Congo.

## Fr. Benoît

- **March 4-27:** East Africa.
- **June 12-24:** Québec.

## Fr. João

- **March 4-20:** Brazil (canonical visit).

## Fr. Thierry

- Fr. Thierry doesn't see any activity outside of the General House at this time.

## Fr. Étienne

- **March 6-20:** Florence

### On the cover

The humanitarian situation in Goma, in North Kivu (D.R. Congo), is increasingly dramatic, with hundreds of thousands of refugees driven out by armed rebel bands. The Assumption, religious and lay people in solidarity, is tackling this crisis with great energy and few resources. See pages 8-9.

# Pope Francis visits the parish of S. Pio V



It was an event for the Generalate: on March 8, Pope Francis came to our neighborhood parish, S. Pio V, for a penitential celebration as part of the «24 Hours for the Lord». Our community was represented by Bro. Gilles Allard and Fr Alex Castro, who accompanied students from Assumption University (Worcester, USA) on a study visit at Due Pini. Here are their impressions:

*“The papal visit to our local parish church was especially amazing, and the first time that has ever happened,”* said Lance Lazar, the Director of Assumption’s Rome Program. *“I can’t think of any occasion when Assumption students have been closer to Pope Francis.”*

This visit marked the first time a Pope has visited the Church of San Pio V : over 1,500 people were present both inside and outside of the church to catch a glimpse of Francis.

*“The atmosphere was electric and the homily of Pope Francis was gentle and beautiful, a true invitation to return to the Gospel,”* Lazar said. *“He had the entire congregation repeat the words several times: ‘Jesus never grows tired of forgiving.’ He then continued, ‘We may grow tired of asking for forgiveness, but Jesus never tires of forgiving.’ His words were so welcoming and consoling.”*

*“Seeing the Pope in person was such an amazing experience. I never expected to have the opportunity to be just a few feet away from him,”* said Hayley Chenoweth, a member of the class of 2026. *“It really fits with the study abroad experience because you never know what opportunities you will have in another country or what new experiences you will be exposed to.”*

*“I did not expect to see the Pope so close as we did when we visited San Pio V ... it was an unexpected treat that made my experience in Rome better,”* said Thomas Gooney. *“I found the atmosphere in the church to be one of the most unique I’ve ever experienced due to the enthusiasm the audience had for the Pope’s sermon.”*

*“It was certainly an amazing experience to be in the presence of such an influential and important role model for my faith,”* said Max Fuoco. Fuoco’s mother and brothers happened to be visiting him at the Rome campus during the papal visit and were also able to attend. *“Hearing his homily being delivered left a lasting impression on my family and I.”*

*“This was an example of the beautiful serendipity that can happen when in Rome,”* said Lazar. *“It was a beautiful affirmation of the kinds of once-in-a-lifetime opportunities that can happen at the Rome Campus.”* *“I’ve heard of many people going to see the Pope but in this case we got so close, almost even to shake his hand,”* said Evan Mailhot, a member of the class of 2026. *“These kinds of memories are one of a kind.”*

# “I seek the face of the Lord.”



**Fr. Ngoa Ya Tshihemba**  
Superior General of  
the Augustinians of the  
Assumption

I have just made my first canonical and fraternal visit to the Province of Brazil. As it was the first time that I visited the country, the brothers, in addition to the essential moments of a visit of this kind, had the great idea of showing me around the beautiful monuments of their cities. And in

Rio de Janeiro, there is no other choice than the imposing, world-famous Christ the Redeemer! The day before the visit, the brothers said that we should pray for favorable weather, because if there is a lot of clouds, we risk not seeing the face of Christ... Luckily, the weather was not so bad, but you still had to be patient and attentive, because from time to time clouds came and covered that face! It was impressive to see how expectant the tourists were. In waiting, they were busy looking at things that could be appreciated from afar, like the famous stadium of Maracana. And when finally the clouds freed the face of Christ, it was enough for someone to say “He is here ! » or “It happened! » so that everyone takes out their camera for the souvenir photo. This phenomenon, daily in this place of Corcovado, reminded me of the song of Odette Vercauteren which gives its title to this editorial and which you have certainly listened to more than once. Here is the chorus and the first verse which, for me, deserves to be meditated deeply, especially during this Easter season.

*R./ I seek the face of the Lord  
I seek his face deep in your hearts.*

*You are the Body of Christ  
You are the Blood of Christ,  
You are the Love of Christ...  
SO ? What have you done with Him?*

This Easter season is a time rich in celebrations. The face of Christ is at the forefront of all these liturgies. From the decayed face of Good Friday to the luminous face of the Resurrection, our prayer is one: On us, Lord, let your face shine! In fact, the face in question is all simply his Presence. But in Rio de Janeiro as in all of our lives, this face or,

better still, the presence of Christ the Redeemer is obstructed by clouds. And the clouds that hide the face of Christ are numerous, there is no need to repeat it.

So where is he? the readings of this Easter season bring out this search for the face, that is to say the presence of the resurrected Christ. From Mary Magdalene through the apostles to our time, it is the question within us: Where is He? It happens that we look for him where we want to see him and how we would like to see it, and as a result, often we look elsewhere, even though it is already there. Perhaps we are looking for a luminous face of Christ, without wrinkle or stain, but alas, the one that presents itself often seems not to meet these criteria.

The Easter season is the time of encounter with the Risen One, the Redeemer. Let's look for his face (his presence). But after all, it is he who will reveal himself to us, as he did to his disciples. It's not our search, but his grace which will make us see his face. And maybe we will then have the same feelings and the same motivations to continue to announce the hope of the Gospel, without anything to stop us, and we will be able to say, like the apostles Peter and John, to those who come across our way: “As for us, it is impossible to remain silent about what we have seen and heard. » (Acts 4, 20)

To seek and find the face of Christ the Redeemer, there is no need to go to Rio. It is in the faces of these thousands of people displaced by wars, in the faces of these civilians who, under the bombs or in the camps, must make difficult choices. Like these women in Goma, who must choose between prostitution and hunger: a “brutal reality”, wrote the newspaper *La Croix* on the situation in DR Congo. Unfortunately, these suffering faces of Christ do not always make the headlines of the newspapers of the world. Perhaps a rereading of the work *La trace d'un visage*, published in 1992 by our brother Bruno Chenu, can take us back to thinking about our relationship with God and the face of others. There is an indelible link there.

May the joy of Easter give us new life, and may the spirit of our founder Father Emmanuel d'Alzon “pushes us to make the great causes of God and man our own, to take us where God is threatened in man and man is threatened as the image of God.” (RL no. 4) ■



# Calls, nominations, agreements...

Father Ngoa Ya Tshihemba, Superior General, with the consent of his Council, has called:

## ■ TO PERPETUAL PROFESSION

- 1) **Kizito Juma SHEBELLA**  
(East Africa) (02/26/2024)
- 2) **Esso-Tina Romain SIMTORO**  
(East Africa) (02/26/2024)
- 3) **Videlis Mulandi MUSEMBI**  
(East Africa) (02/27/2024)
- 4) **Emmanuel Yoabu MASELE**  
(East Africa) (02/27/2024)
- 5) **Boniface John MUINDI**  
(East Africa) (02/28/2024)
- 6) **KAKULE MBAFUMOJA Justin**  
(East Africa) (02/29/2024)

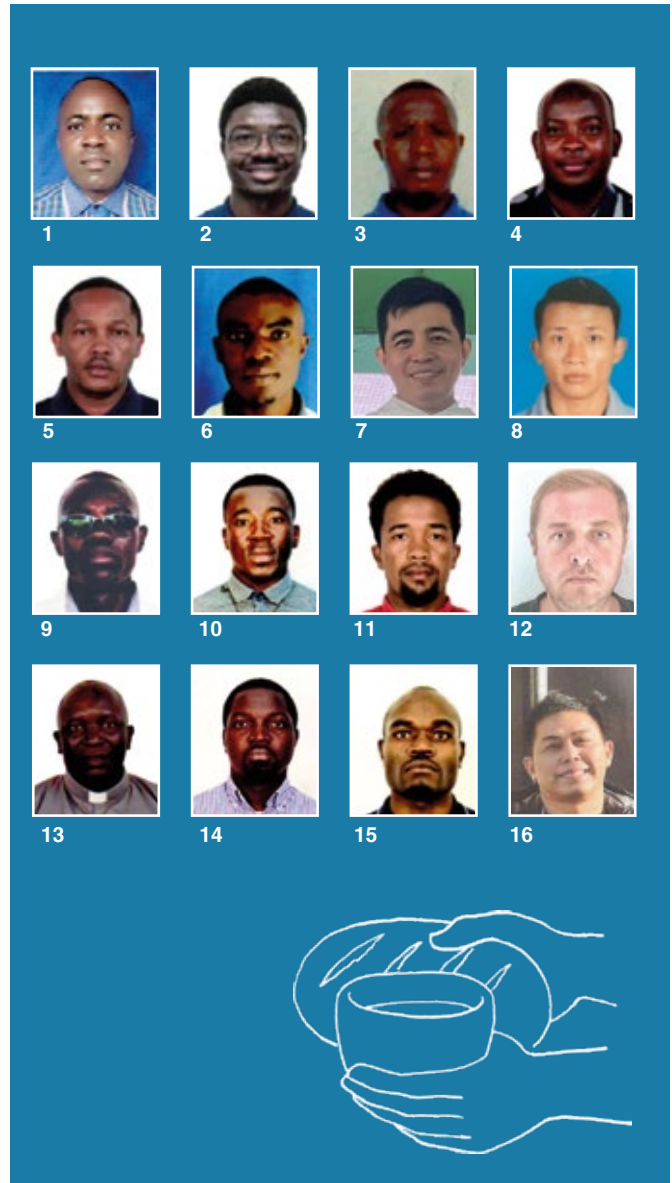
## ■ TO DIACONATE ORDINATION

- 7) **Joseph PANAGUITON**  
(Europe) (02/26/2024)
- 8) **Joseph NGUYEN VAN Phuc**  
(Europe) (02/26/2024)
- 9) **Julius JAGEN**  
(East Africa) (02/27/2024)
- 10) **MUHINDO MUHASA Angéus**  
(East Africa) (02/27/2024)
- 11) **Fabrice ANDRIAMALALARSON**  
(East Africa) (02/28/2024)
- 12) **Pavel TINYAKOV**  
(Europe) (02/28/2024)

- 13) **Evans MACHUMA ELKANAH**  
(East Africa) (02/29/2024)
- 14) **KALINDA Bertin**  
(East Africa) (02/29/2024)
- 15) **Vicent MUTEGEKI**  
(East Africa) (02/29/2024)

## ■ TO ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD

- 16) **Elmer VERGARA**  
(North America) (02/29/2024)



## ■ DISMISSAL FROM THE INSTITUTE

The Holy See, by decree of the Dicastery for the Institute of Consecrated Life and the Society of Apostolic Life, on January 4, 2024, rejected the appeal lodged by Fr. **NAKUDIANGA MABOKO Hervé** (Province of Africa), this following the dismissal decided on May 9, 2023 by Fr. Benoît Grière, then Superior General, with the agreement of his Council. Therefore, F. NAKUDIANGA MAKOKO Hervé will no longer be a member of the Congregation.

# Discerning and governing is a “profession”!

**Father General and his Ordinary Council participated in January, near Lyon (France), in a formation for government in religious life. Here are some lessons to learn.**

“Discernment and government” was the theme of the session organized in January by the Spiritual center of Châtelard, run by the Jesuits in Francheville, near Lyon. It brought together 70 religious men and women of 31 nationalities, members of 14 provincial and general councils. In addition to the essential meeting dimension, this session particularly focused on the expectations and questions of these religious, the sharing of their experiences, concerns, sorrows and joys. Discussions with the organizers with themes for reflection were also very educational. And the daily encounter with the Lord, with points related to the theme, was of course an integral part of the program.



Here are some salient aspects.

## 1- Called to a service of authority

Religious among his brothers, such a one has been chosen, by election or by appointment, to exercise responsibility in provincial or general authorities. The first act, when we learn this choice, is to receive it and live it as coming from God. God’s call is embodied today by this human choice.

Saying “yes” to election or nomination not only honors the trust of the brothers: it is accepting a mission in the continuity of the religious profession. Letting go of a mission, commitments, a place and friends, this brother makes his congregation the first place of his mission, the place of offering one’s life to God and others, the place of service to God and his brothers and sisters.

This religious is called for a service of authority. In today’s world where it is

sometimes contested and discredited, he receives the authority to put it at the service of others. The etymological meaning of this word authority must be considered: it comes from the Latin *augere*, which means grow, increase. The one who exercises authority (*auctoritas*) has the task of enabling others to grow. His mission must be carried out in the service of human and spiritual growth of each member and of the whole body of the congregation.

He does not exercise his own authority. He exercises it according to powers defined in canon law and the proper law of the congregation. By brothers who elected or appointed him, the major superior received authority, power from God. He goes to the school of the “Master and Lord” who washed the feet of his disciples. The service of authority is thus a place of conversion, an invitation to humility, in the image of Christ “meek and humble of heart” who made himself to be servant of all.



Fr. Etienne Ratalata Rafanambintsoa.



Spiritual Center Châtelard, at Francheville (France).

### 2- Exercise government

Called to a service of government, the major superior is the “faithful and wise steward” to whom God entrusts with the care of his brothers and sisters. He needs to be united with God in prayer and in action. It is God who is the Master Builder. The major superior and his assistants are called to offer all their freedom, their intelligence, their attention to the benevolent will of God. They thus become an instrument in his hands.

The Holy Spirit plays an important role in their lives and in their mission. They start by listening to the Spirit, listening to what the Spirit says to the congregation. They encourage action of the Spirit in the congregation and in each member. They let themselves be guided by the Spirit. They let them be governed by the Spirit.

Animated by the Spirit, the major superior and his councillors are called to listening and to obedience of the heart. The vow of obedience becomes for them a concrete path which unfolds in multiple directions: obedience

to election or appointment, obedience to the orientations of the chapter, obedience to the Word of God incarnated in the Rule of life, obedience to Christ and to the Church, obedience to brothers and sisters in listening and dialogue.

Those who are called to government apply themselves to discernment. To clearly discern, the major superior and his advisors personally prepare for council sessions. The agenda, prepared and sent well in advance, helps with this preparation. They must equip themselves with the means to understand the subjects to be covered in council.

The work of a council begins with prayer. Discerning well is the fruit of a grace: a grace to ask by making oneself available to the work of the Spirit in each and by each. Mutual assistance and complementarity to have a good knowledge of the issues to be addressed are important.

Prayer, speaking, silence, listening and exchange contribute to discernment. Each councillor must risk his argument, even if his opinion is the only one to dif-

fer from all the others. Everyone must listen to the others, without resisting the inner movement, in daring to change your mind and giving up on being right.

The major superior ensures that each member of his council can express himself and practice mutual listening. He is open to all opinions, often with points of view complementary, even opposed. Sometimes he needs to take some time to lay it all down in prayer, ask for the grace of an informed decision, free in God’s time and in the maturity of the fruit. The decision should not be made in haste or emotion.

When the decision is made, everyone is called upon to adhere to it even if it does not go in the right direction. of what he thinks. It must be remembered that what is said in the council must remain in the council: the confidentiality is necessary and absolute. For a certain dynamism and creativity, the major superior can decide whether to lead the council sessions with his or her assistants. For certain subjects, he can even resort to the expertise of a person not a member of his council.





The participants at the Châtelard session (look out for the men!).

### 3 - Some aspects not to be neglected

*Interculturality* is an important element for understanding, respect and mutual enrichment in a council. *Internationality*, the languages used require the taking this aspect into account. Interculturality also plays out between different generations, between different intellectual cultures, between different ecclesial cultures. To constitute an intercultural group, it is first necessary to establish relationships between the cultures represented.

However, good relationships, communication and peaceful coexistence are not enough. A council of an intercultural nature will have to take a further step in terms of the tolerance of differences, to experience a process of *transformation*, of *conversion* which will lead it to create, as the fruit of this interrelation, a new culture: a way of seeing, of thinking, of discerning, of acting which will be specific to this council. Rooted in heritage spirituality of the congregation it will produce an inculturation of the charism.

For their personal development, the member of a council will be able to find help in spiritual accompaniment, in different forms of personal encounter with God. The setting up, if possible, of a network of trusted people to turn to will be of great support. To participate in inter-congregational bodies with religious men and women assuming the same responsibility enriches his experience.

Finally, a religious in charge of government must know how to take healthy relaxation with the things that please him, give him energy and give him a balance in his life. He must particularly take care of one's health, in order to always better serve God and his brothers.

#### **An image and an anecdote, to finish:**

*An image:* A congregation is like a garden. God is both the Owner and the Gardener. But he entrusted the major superior and his councillors with the task of collaborating on his Gardener's work. Then the major superior

becomes a bit like the gardener, and his councillors as the tools. The tools would say to the gardener: Be careful, you can't take a rake to dig or a pickaxe to rake the leaves! Learn to recognize our uniqueness! You know the whole garden better than us, but sometimes we know a part of this land better than you.

*An anecdote:* The master of novices asks one of his novices: "Jacques, in whom have you trust, in God or in yourself? » Wanting to respond "in a holy manner", Jacques says: "I have trust in God my Father. » The master continues fraternally: "You are right in saying trust in God. But don't let the conjunction "or" fool you! Have trust in yourself too, because the Spirit works in you, with you and through you, with all the talents that God has made available to you. »

**P. Joseph Étienne Ratalata  
RAFANAMBINTSOA  
(Rome)**

# Is God silent in Goma?

North-Kivu (East of the DR-Congo) is undergoing a humanitarian situation more tragic than ever, particularly in the city of Goma, encircled by armed rebels, where refugee populations flock. Here is testimony from a religious and a lay member in that area.



## What is the situation in Goma ?

Currently, the picture of life in Goma is very somber, because the situation is very critical in five aspects:

-From a **humanitarian** perspective, there is an influx of internally displaced persons who are seeking refuge in Goma. There are hundreds of thousands of people without food or medicine. The drama is extremely alarming under the passive gaze of decision-makers. All these refugees count on divine providence that comes through the Church, some NGOs, the government, and certain individuals.

-From an **economic** standpoint, Goma is being strangled. All the supplies are being cut off by the rebels, with an impact on neighboring villages, including Bukavu. Prices are soaring.

-From an aspect of **security**, we note an overly militaristic presence in the city and its surroundings, with the presence of several regional forces and armed local groups called "Wazalendo", without much coordination in a chain of command. There has been an infiltration of rebels that creates insecurities for the people and their property.

-From a **psychological** standpoint, the population undergoes constant trauma due to the massacres and their survival outside their natural environment. This creates stress, deception, suicide, drugs, alcoholism, fear of each coming day... and a hatred for the rebels and their allies.

-From a **religious** standpoint, we notice that in our meetings and even in confession that some of our faithful are extreme-



ly discouraged, touched by their faith. They have the feeling that God does not respond to their needs and prayers. God seems silent; he doesn't act. Meanwhile there is the conviction that God will act, even if he seems to be dragging on.

### **Is this situation unprecedented? What are the political or economic causes?**

From a political point of view, it's a war of aggression, with certain protagonists demanding compliance with previously signed agreements whose clauses have never been respected out in the open. On the other hand, we officially claim protection of the minority populations and the return of the refugees. However, this belief is not shared by all the population: many are convinced that the aim is to "balkanize" eastern D.R.-Congo. Our country has 450 tribes: why is just one tribe in trouble?

From an economic viewpoint, the natural resources of the region have been coveted by the neighboring countries, supported by the multinationals. Once a location has been occupied by the rebels, we see a systematic pillage of the natural resources and an implementation of illicit trafficking of ores. To this must be added the cultivation of cocoa in the territory of Beni, in the north of the province of North Kivu, where the ADF-NALU (an Islamic army of Ugandan origin, NDLR) and those that become ADF sew terror, slaughter the people, take others as hostages. This has been going on for ten years. In October 2012, our three brothers were kidnapped---Fr. Edmond Bamutupe, Jean Pierre Ndulani and Anselme Wasukundi. In another context in 2016, Fr. Vincent Machozi was beaten

to death. Two clergy from the diocese of Butembo Beni, Charles Kipasa and Jean Pierre Akilimali were also kidnapped in 2017.

### **What are the remedies for this crisis at the political level in the region and in the world?**

To solve the crisis in the region of the Great Lakes, notably in the East of the DR-C, a multi-faceted approach is needed, implicating the political responsibility of the DR-C, of the African Union (UA) and of the ONU. Here are some possible ideas:

**1. Inclusive dialogue:** Encourage a political dialogue among the DR-C and Rwanda, among the underlying multinationals, and all the stakeholders, to resolve the conflicts and the ethnic and political tensions that are unraveling.

**2. Reinforce security:** Reinforce the Congolese and international security forces to protect the civilians, improve effective protection of the borders and the fighting against armed groups

**3. Humanitarian aid:** Provide urgent aid to the populations affected by the conflicts, to provide for their immediate needs of food, water, shelter, and medical needs, and particularly of their psychological health.

**4. Economic development:** Invest in programs of economic and social development to stimulate employment, reduce poverty, and to reinforce the resilience of local communities.

**5. National reconciliation:** Promote initiatives of reconciliation to surmount ethnic and political divisions and to construct a peaceful and inclusive future for all the Congolese. "All are reconciled in Christ": that was the message of Pope Francis to the Congolese people when he came to Kinshasa last year.

**6. Regional cooperation:** Reinforce regional cooperation among the countries of the Great Lakes to deal with the underlying causes of the conflicts and to promote stability and prosperity in the region.

### **What are the repercussions on our communities and the Lay Assumptionists?**

The Assumptionist Lay-Alliance concession in Goma has been invaded by war-displaced people, who have set up makeshift shelters. We have opened the doors of our large hall, which is still under construction, for women with children, so they can avoid being exposed to the elements.

Some Lay-Alliance members who lived in cities bordering Goma have already left their homes; many have gone to live with host families.

This crisis has affected our two communities of Goma (Our Lady of Peace and Parish of Emmanuel, NDLR), which are limited in providing aid, themselves having difficulty merely surviving.

### **What can the Assumption do considering this situation?**

The Assumption is faced with a challenge, that of working toward the creation of an oasis of peace in North Kivu, as recommended by the last General Chapter (*cf. Actes du 34<sup>e</sup> Chapitre, nn. 3, 57, 61, 120-NDLR*). The reinforcement of different peace initiatives, whether through communication but also through material means, in favor of the victims of war.

**Fr. Roger KASEREKA SYAYIPUMA**  
(Goma)  
and **Éric PALUKU KIHUNDU**, Lay  
Assumptionist

# Serving Christian unity in Madagascar

For a year, Father Raymond Tongamana has been responsible for the ecumenical commission of the National Episcopal Conference. A unique experience, which he shares with us here.



The FFKM leaders (from left to right: Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian and Anglican).

## What does your function consist of in the Malagasy Church?

**Fr. Raymond Tongamana:** Since 2003, I have been a member of the Episcopal Commission for ecumenism, and for five years I have been its general secretary. It was created by the Episcopal Conference because Christians from different Churches claim to be disciples of Christ in Madagascar but are divided. Chaired by Mgr Gustavo Bombin Espino, archbishop of Tuléar, it is made up of diocesan delegates.

Its mission is to develop and enhance unity through prayer and ecumenical worship, education and deepening of the faith and theological and pastoral teaching in ecumenical matter. To do this, the Commission organizes formation, conducts research on relations between Churches in the dioceses and at the national level, organizes meetings and cooperation between various denominations, etc. Finally, it represents the Catholic Church within the Ecumenical Council of Christian

Churches in Madagascar (FFKM) of which we will talk further on.

## What is the ecumenical climate in Madagascar currently?

Even if they didn't think much about it at first, the four Churches historically present in the country (Catholics, Reformed, Lutherans and Anglicans – read box) have gradually been brought closer together, worked together and helped each other. Instead of fighting among themselves, they fight together, for example to help victims of natural disasters that often strike Madagascar. They do not just preach the Gospel, but participate in social works, becoming a system identified on the island as being able to provide solutions in socio-politico-economic terms.

This is how the FFKM was created in 1980, a Malagasy form of ecumenism which plays a role of mediator and reconciler in the country. Its voice is listened to and respected, including during political crises such as in 1991 when it helped set up a government of transition. Between the Churches, it has long borne beautiful fruit: reflection on baptism, the eucharist and the ministry, pastoral care of mixed marriages, common translation of the Bible in Malagasy, ecumenical songbook, etc.

On the Catholic side, it was in 1962 that the Episcopal Commission for Ecumenism was born in Madagascar: two years before the *Unitatis redintegratio* decree of Vatican II! Its wide field of ecumenical discussion opens it up to Churches beyond the FFKM, such as the Orthodox Churches.



### Any achievements or projects that are close to your heart?

- I think first of the efforts to be made! Indeed, since the year 2000, the search for real unity has decreased considerably. We have the feeling that the FFKM is deviating slightly from the goal and spirit on which it was founded, with some religious leaders turning to politics: it does not contribute to the effort to unify the Church or the faith. Doctrinal ecumenism is also at a standstill.

Ecumenism must make us work together to protect the environment, because Madagascar is one of the poorest countries in the world and most affected by global warming. Let's act together to protect human rights, justice and truth, in daily life or in the socio-political area.

### How did the cause of Christian Unity arise in your personal life?

- It was first of all a family experience. In the 1970s (Fr. Raymond was born in 1964, Editor's note), relations between Protestant Christians and Catholics in Madagascar were still full of hatred and division, under the influence of ancient wars of religion and rivalries in Europe. In my family, my mother's older sister is Lutheran and we are Catholics. When I was 7 or 8 years old, one of this aunt's children was baptized and my mother forbade me to go there because they are Protestant.

I believe that this is what gave rise in me the fiber of Christian unity. I later realized that the Christian faith calls for mutual love and not mutual hatred. It's very sad to see a family that doesn't get along very well because of the Christian religion.

Later, in 2003, although I had not studied ecumenism specifically, I was appointed delegate for ecumenism in the diocese of Tuléar, and I took the opportunity to fight this hatred between Christians. I showed it by testifying. And like our Assumptionist charism invites us to work for the unity of

Christians, I have seized this ministry so that my apostolate and my spiritual life have an Assumptionist color.

### What do you expect from the Assumption on an ecumenical level?

- For us, Assumptionists, ecumenism is not optional. This is an integral part of our charism: see nn. 5 and 18 of our Rule of Life! A good number of religious of our congregation have tried to embody it in their lives: this effort must be followed. For our Assumptionist Province, I particularly invite that ecumenism be now found in official animation texts and reflections: Provincial and local chapters...

Finally, it is good to note that in order to have an authentic ecumenical dialogue, it is always necessary to remember the commandment of love expressed in the three following attitudes: humility, conversion and love. ■



## Religions in the Big Island

The 30 million inhabitants of Madagascar are divided between:

### 75% Christians, including:

34% Catholics (known as ECAR),  
 18% Presbyterians (FJKM, Reformed),  
 14% Lutherans (FLM),  
 4.5% Anglicans (EEM).  
 4% Evangelicals, spread across a growing number of local denominations.

### 4.5% Animists (traditional religions)

### 3% Muslims

# Ecumenical and interreligious dialogue: a vocation for the Church

**The scholasticate in Saigon, Vietnam, devotes a series of monthly lectures to this topic.**

*“Ecumenical dialogue and inter-religious dialogue constitute a veritable vocation for the Church”, wrote John Paul II (Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, # 29)*

Being aware of the Church’s call as well as trying to deepen the charism of the Congregation, the scholastic community of Emmanuel d’Alzon of Fatima-Binh Trieu has chosen the topic of Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue for its conference activities monthly topics in the academic year 2023-2024.

The first conference was conducted in mid-October by Sister Maria Nguyễn Thị Ngọc Lan, FMM. With the topic “Opportunities and Challenges in Ecumenical and Interreligious Activities in Saigon Archdiocese”, Sister helped the brothers have both a comprehensive and specific view of this movement. As a member of the Interreligious Dialogue Pastoral Committee, Sister has quite detailed answers and practical statistics. Hence, the brothers have had an abundant perspective on religions in Vietnam as well as had seen the necessity of dialogue between Catholics and other believers.

Continuing the thematic series, in early November, the brothers welcomed a Protestant pastor Lê



Pastor Lê Minh Đạt’s conference (left).

Minh Đạt from the North of Vietnam. Through his Christian experience of and his ministry of more than 20 years as pastor, he helped the brothers understand the process of training pastors in Vietnam. During the sharing session, he also presented the Protestant Church’s concept of the afterlife. Through the sharing session, the Pastor showed that Protestants focus on the faith in Jesus as the only and surest means for salvation. On this topic, the Pastor based on biblical foundations to provide evidence and create closeness with the audience.

Furthermore, the lively discussion between the brothers and the Pastor helped the brothers understand more about the knowledge and practice of Eschatology. Thanks to that, the brothers also partly realize the differences in concepts between Protestants and Catholics on the issue of the after-

life. The conference ended with gratitude for each other. Moreover, each brother also had more joy in receiving a small gift from the Pastor.

The series of Interreligious Dialogue activities will continue throughout the academic year at the scholastic community of Emmanuel d’Alzon of Fatima-Binh Trieu as a cross-cutting theme. We hope that through these sharing sessions, each brother will gain more knowledge about other religions so that we can cultivate our preparations to live closer to the charism of the Congregation.

**Bro. Pierre LÊ MINH Th ng**  
(Saigon - Vietnam)

*Article published in ATLPE n  41  
(January-March 2024) -*



# Fr. Claude Maréchal, all facets of the Assumption

Died on October 28, 2023, the 8th Superior General of our Congregation made his faith shine under many facets



The testimonies collected about Father Claude Maréchal, both during his lifetime and at the time of his death, are unanimously to salute a “*warm man, never short of ideas, always eager to intellectual work*”, according to J.-P. Périer-Muzet (1). A man radiant with his dazzling smile, with his obsession to maintain a faithful and rich correspondence with his friends, and through his passion for listening. A priest and a religious man who knew how to deploy the multiple facets of his rich personality in many directions: theological education, journalism, the formation of religious, and of course the most important responsibilities of the Congregation, as Provincial of France then Superior General, 7th successor of Fr. d’Alzon.

One of the most salient aspects of his personality is undoubtedly to have always had the concern to put his personal reflection in the service of the Assumption and the Church. Anxious to maintain permanent formation for the religious, he hosts every summer, from the beginning of the 1970s, the formation session of Les Essarts, with Bruno Chenu, Alain Marchadour and Mar-

cel Neusch. From 1977 to 1983, he represented the religious within the national bishops-priests team of France; and his only book, published in 1980, is aptly titled *Fidèles à l’Evangile. Les chances d’avenir de la vie religieuse*.

It is difficult to summarize in a few lines his twelve years of action as Superior General.

We will be able to remember:

- the founding of the Assumption in new lands: Korea, Kenya, Tanzania, Ecuador...
- the refoundation of the Eastern Mission following the fall of communism (Russia, Romania, Bulgaria), opening the cause of beatification of our three martyrs and re-launching ecumenism;
- the creation of the Vicariate of Colombia, the Vice-Province of Madagascar and the Province of Brazil;
- the relay passed to the local Assumption in Congo;
- an initial awareness of intercontinentality and interculturality;
- the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Congregation (1993);
- taking relations with the laity seriously; ▶

1) Petit manuel d’histoire de l’Assomption (Rome 2003), p. 67.

- his letters to the Congregation as long and dense as a papal encyclical...
- his eagerness to explore all the regions of the Congregation, despite his weakness in languages,
- its determined implementation of the Ratio adopted in 1987, with the establishment of the CAFI and formation for formators;
- his obsession with always articulating the apostolate and reflection: evidenced by his pamphlet *The Spirit of the Assumption* according to Father D'Alzon (1993) and the organization in Rome of a session on the specialized studies in the Assumption.

Concerned about the rise of religious indifference in the West and the growth of Christianity in Africa and Asia, he was chosen by his peers to represent the Union of General Superiors(USG) at the Synod on religious life, convened by John Paul II in 1994.

When the time arrived, in November 2020, for Father Claude to join the community of Albertville, this was certainly not to become inactive: reading, writing, leading meetings in Nîmes and Lyon... He never stopped giving of himself. Only morning jogging, which has always been practiced, ends up giving way to daily walk. According to Father Guy Clerc, superior of the community of Notre-Dame des Vignes, *"the health concerns and fatigue which caused his death on Saturday October 28, following the small lunch, a morning walk, during the time of personal prayer, just before the lauds of the community"*.

Upon his appointment as Provincial, Claude Maréchal wrote: *"Teacher and formator, then journalist on the lookout for the hundred faces of the Church, here I have become an animator of people and communities on a larger scale. In different forms where faith recognizes the trace of God, it is the same mission..."* The Assumption can give thanks to God for the gift it received from such a magnificent brother, who became one of his most valiant fathers.

**P. Michel KUBLER (Rome)**



## A life for God and for men

May 3, 1935: Birth of Claude Maréchal in the village of Cramans (Jura, Eastern France), of a family of three children. His father died when he was 4 years old.

- 1948: Secondary studies at the alumni of Vellexon (Haute-Saône) then Miribel (Isère).
- 1953: Novitiate in Nozeroy (Jura); 1st profession on October 7, 1954.
- 1954: In Valpré, baccalaureate in literature (1955), then studies in philosophy and theology at the Facultés Catholiques de Lyon (1955-1957), interrupted from 1957 to 1959 by military service (including 14 months of war in Algeria). Perpetual vows on December 18, 1960. Ordained priest by Mgr Maziers, auxiliary of Lyon, March 30, 1963 in Valpré.
- 1963: Third cycle thesis (unfinished) in sacramental theology at the University of Strasbourg.
- 1965: Teaches dogmatic theology at the scholasticate of Valpré, then at the Consortium of several congregations (1968). Chaplain of the École Centrale de Lyon. In 1973 he founded the community of Les Brotteaux (Lyon), while directing the magazine *Vivante Église* for Bayard.
- 1979: Moved to Paris (Rue Charcot), he transformed *Vivante Église* into *Chrétiens ensemble*.
- 1984: Provincial of France (1 mandate).
- 1987: Superior General (2 mandates).
- 1999: Return to the Lyon region (Limas, then Valpré in 2000).
- 2005: Master of novices in Juvisy (Essonne).
- 2010: Librarian in Valpré, in community at Lyon-Debrousse then Écully (from 2018).
- 2020: Joined the Notre-Dame des Vignes rest home in Albertville (Savoie), where he died on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October 2023.



# “Stay in service attire.”

## Homily of Father Benoît Grière at the funeral of Fr. Claude Maréchal (Excerpts)

Dear Brothers and dear Sisters,  
*“Stay in service attire.”* » This call from the Lord Jesus resonates today with incredible force. How can we not think of Claude who, last August, was still present at the National Pilgrimage of the Assumption, remaining available to meet the brothers and sisters. I still see him walking with his two canes and his beautiful smile welcoming everyone. Claude remained in his service attire. Saturday morning he was still present in this chapel for the office of Lauds. It is still in his service uniform that he joined his Lord after a life given to the cause of the Kingdom of God.

Nine years ago, at the same time of year, we buried our beloved Hervé Stéphan. He died on All Saints’ Day 2014, and in this chapel on November 4 we celebrated his Farewell Mass. Claude was Hervé’s immediate successor at the helm of the congregation in 1987 and he deepened the intuitions carried by his predecessor.

I am obviously moved to speak on the occasion of the funeral of our dear brother Claude Maréchal, for many reasons. Claude is a man who has had a profound impact on the congregation of the Assumptionists. He was a religious person passionate about the Kingdom of God and all his life bears the imprint of this passion. Allow me to recall some personal memories. In 1987, as a seminarian of the diocese of Châlons-en-Champagne, I presented myself at the pro-

vincial house on avenue Denfert Rocherau. I asked the person in charge of the reception to be able to meet an Assumptionist religious in order to talk about my desire for a vocation. And it was Claude who came to meet me saying he was ready to listen to me. It was with surprise that I discovered that it was the Provincial of France who received me in his office, me the shy young man. But Claude, by his availability and simplicity, immediately put me at ease. He helped me understand what Assumption calls its “family spirit.” Shortly after our meeting, Claude left for Rome for the General Chapter where he was elected Superior of the Assumption. I could highlight the other moments when Claude counted in my journey: the call to perpetual profession, then to priestly ordination... but I prefer to recall his sense of listening and his concern to encourage everyone to move forward.

Claude was an available man and happy with the services he could provide. Service attire, it is Jesus who showed us how to wear it. It is sometimes difficult to understand that the responsibilities that are entrusted to us in religious life are not opportunities to exercise power, but to serve. Claude was totally imbued with the spirit of the Beatitudes. He learned to give himself like Christ for the cause of the Gospel.

He was also an intellectual who put his skills at the service of the life of the Church. He was a student at the time of the Second Vatican Council and he understood that the Church had to take into account the new aspirations of men and women of

that time. He contributed to the renewal of post-conciliar religious life and I can testify that he left a living memory within the Union of Major Superiors in Rome. Claude has been invited to a Synod of Bishops on the subject of religious life. He was the linchpin of participation of the laity to the charism of the congregations and for the Assumption he was an ardent promoter of the lay-religious Alliance. The deepening of the Assumptionist charism was strongly supported by Claude through writings, formation sessions and through his passion to share it with as many people as possible, particularly lay people.

The service for him was in his ability to synthesize ideas and explain them pedagogically. Who doesn’t remember his three-point presentations, often supplemented by a fourth to deepen what he had to communicate! Claude had easy words, but he was an authentic teacher who did not want to move forward without others.

His vast culture allowed him to raise awareness among the congregation of three major challenges which were each the subject of a letter to the religious. The challenge of ignorance, the challenge of disbelief and the challenge of indifference. For Claude showed through his life how to resolve each of these challenges.

Claude kept his service uniform. To honor Claude’s memory, we are invited to follow his example. Learn to know God in Jesus Christ and stay in service attire.

Thank you, Claude, for your life given for Christ and his Kingdom.

■

# For the inclusion of all

**Last December, the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network invited us to pray «for the attention of society to people with disabilities». It published the testimony of Claire Richard, an Assumptionist laywoman**

**M**y name is Claire and I am 42 years old. I am someone who has reduced mobility and I function in a wheelchair. I also have problems verbally, but my mind is very sharp! Those around me often say: "She speaks poorly, her brain is slow...". Not at all!

I work for a company called Umen, that organizes nature outings for people with handicaps and non-disabled people also. I was elected to the Association of the Paralyzed in France, and I am a member of the Commission on accessibility in the town of Toulouse, France. I also have some hobbies (drawing, horseback riding). I have many friends---both handicapped and otherwise. Though my differences may seem large, because I have problems with mobility and speech, I don't feel different from others. I enjoy being among people and interacting with others. That helps me move forward: diversity is part of society and makes it richer.

## Everyone needs to be taken care of

Society's attention isn't the only thing that is necessary for handicapped individuals. Everyone needs, or will need, society to adapt to him/her. Everyone needs to be taken care of. We all need to live with others.

The Commission for Accessibility in Toulouse talks monthly



Claire Richard at Lourdes for the National Pilgrimage (photo I. Andrei).

about the problems dealing with construction and lodging to prepare to welcome those arriving, but it's the roads one must be concerned with. Housing and road inaccessibility are the main causes of exclusion for handicapped persons. An accessible road is also for the elderly, for parents pushing young children in carriages, for others with temporary limitations---in short, for all! We can do many things even if we are severely handicapped, but it takes time: to make plans, to find transportation, to find an aide. . Today, everything is done at the last minute. Meetings at the last minute and invitations on the run are not possible for me. The same is true for parents of young children.

## Everyone can help

As a Christian, I want to be a part of the Church of the future. For several years, I have been part of the National Pilgrimage, in the management team at Accueil Saint-Frai in Lourdes: during the year, I take part in reflections, and on site, I help with the IT side of things. A society is inclusive when it allows everyone to participate. In working toward the inclusion of handicapped individuals, a society works toward the inclusion of all.

Retold by Marianne CÉBRON  
(<https://www.prieraucoeurdu-monde.net>)



# Father d'Alzon and the women

## Part 2: right distance and full freedom

Our Founder met many women in his life. But he left none distract him from his vocation or his mission.

### **A**n attractive man

Everyone can still imagine it today, thanks to a daguerreotype (ancestor of the photograph) from August 1843. The young priest, aged 33, is shown seated, leaning on

two books, his closed fist supporting his right cheek. His biographer Siméon Vailhé writes: *"He's wearing the black flap. Long hair, pulled back in disorder on the forehead, continues in long sideburns on bushy temples and cover the nape of the neck with Gallican locks. [...] The air is pensive, the gaze fixed on a distant horizon. [...] The fine head, the large forehead uncovered, the brow bone clearly defined, the nose slightly arched, the lips thin and tight, square chin, in the Roman style, which we know elsewhere."* (1)

A passport issued in Besançon in July 1843 specifies: 1 m 78, black hair and eyebrows,

brown eyes and colorful brown complexion. Only physical defect: a slight deformity of the foot, inherited from his father, forcing him to wear special shoes which he later abandoned.

Emmanuel d'Alzon was a handsome man. He could have taken advantage of this aristocratic look and his advantageous physique to seduce. He always preferred to step aside in order to let the Lord live in hearts. Seized by Christ, his own heart was no longer to be taken.

### **His relationships with women**

Former prefect of Gard, Baron de Champyans wrote about him: *"The Rt.Rv. d'Alzon, this great heart, has two master qualities in the eyes of God which erase all imperfections: virginity and detachment."* (2)



Abbé d'Alzon's physiognomy at the age of 33 (daguerreotype, August 1843)

Everyone who met him was impressed by its purity. This "virginity" was manifested as much by his words as by his gestures. It shone through his whole being and in his very way of entering into relationship. Cordial, his contact knew how to remain sufficiently distant. Far from any form of seduction or control over the women he met as part of his apostolate, he did not let no one lock him into a particular relationship.

*"His personal reserve was well known,"* notes Father Vailhé. *He never accepted these menu presents that the devotees are so skillful at making and then offering to* ▶

*their confessors. He didn't do any himself. Moreover, his appearance, somewhat proud and haughty, intimidating enough to keep at a distance; then his mockery, his fine points were enough to prohibit familiarities and to disconcert the most daring."* (3)

D'Alzon was quite mocking. Like his sister Augustine, he had the gift of grasping the failings of a character. He reformulated them with humor and a certain irony which could offend his interlocutor. In this way, he preserved himself and avoided any familiarity. According to S. Vailhé, this distance established a "barrier of thorns". The goal: not to encroach on the territory of the other and not let any parishioner or "devout" interfere in his.

He also retained these few faults for a long time: a contact that could seem haughty and give the impression of having fun at the expense of the person you are talking to. To exercise his humility, he was often criticized by those who judged him from the outside. Conversely, "those who had the privilege of being able to contemplate his inner beauty were amazed by it, but in a religiously respectful manner". (4)

### **The closest: Mother Marie Eugenie of Jesus**

The first to marvel at this "inner beauty" was undoubtedly Mother Mary. Eugenie of Jesus. The one who knew him best recognizes his constant purity. His words added to the chastity of Father d'Alzon, which seemed second nature to him. The soul that sought purity and immediately recognized it in the person of Father d'Alzon. And when he himself spotted it in the other, he interpreted it as a gift from God and a sign of vocation.

We read thus: "One of the features which struck me the most in Father d'Alzon and which struck all those of us who approached him: what love of purity in this soul! Like his exterior has always been penetrated by it! How he knew how to inspire him and what an angelic gift God had given him to talk about it, either in his public speeches or in his private reports! It's the lever by which he formed so many vocations!" (5)

"He loved souls in proportion as they were purer," comments Saint Marie Eugénie. He gave himself to everyone, but I only ever knew him to have friendship with people above him. of any suspicion." Recalling that so many enemies had attacked him in multiple ways,

she underlines that "never on this point has a single doubt been able to arise. Despite the works which gave so many relationships, he was never the object of a single suspicion or a single attack." (6)

An incident reveals to us the purity of Father d'Alzon, the nobility of his intentions, his prudence and his humility. Always very courteous, he rushed one day to pick up the handkerchief that Marie-Eugénie has just given up. As she bends down to pick it up, his fingertips meet his hand. "He took them off, as if he had been burned," she says.

Astonished at his strong reaction, she said to him: "But, Father, why do you remember that you are



**Marie-Eugénie de Jésus (August 25, 1817 - March 10, 1898),  
born Anne-Eugénie Milleret de Brou**





**Mother Emmanuel-Marie Correnson**  
 Co-foundress of the Oblates of the Assumption  
 July 20, 1842 - July 24, 1900

*"I knew him in his youth: his outfit was even more severe than it was later. To a continual mortification [...], he joined forms so reserved, so imbued with the most high propriety, that, even when his natural cheerfulness came to light, he lost nothing of dignity and decorum which inspired respect and would not have allowed anyone the slightest act of familiarity. I believe that he always used the greatest caution not to see any doubtful people, to whom he was supposed to do good, only in the confessional or in places where he had a witness, for example, in convents."* (9)

### **Lead souls to God in love and selflessness**

For Father d'Alzon, the vow of chastity speaks for itself of the love of God to those to whom we are responsible for announcing his love to lead them to him. At the College of Nîmes, d'Alzon accompanied *"three children"*: Berger, Barnouin and Goiffon who, around 1840, take their first steps towards the priesthood, but also Belviala who begins his studies of theology in Rome and Boyer who entered the seminary of Nîmes in 1842. There is also Allard who joined the Jesuits and Fornéry who was preparing for Saint-Sulpice... And many others according to a letter from Mounier to Germer-Durand dated June 24, 1842: *"In October next year, we are sending to the Seminary five confreres (members of the Saint Vincent de Paul from the college of Nîmes, Editor's note), and five others are currently learning Latin to prepare for next year."*

The young girls attracted no less the pastoral attention of Father d'Alzon, and perhaps even more so because he confessed a lot. Three superiors of the con- ▶

*a man? To me you are not a man, you are an angel, you are the angel of God."* Father d'Alzon humbly replied: *"Very good for you, but not everyone has the same graces."* (7)

### **His prudence in receiving penitents**

Emmanuelle Bellile, future nun of the Visitation, looks back on her accompaniment of 1837 to 1853 not without some indiscretions or extrapolations. We thus learn that Fr. d'Alzon was very careful when he received guests at his home: *"Father d'Alzon had a man as servant; never has a woman been employed in his service. He received some sometimes, but I noticed that the door to the next*

*room remained open all the time how long the interview lasted. Once, I seemed to hear the servant coming and going in this room, which leads us to suppose that he had made him his supervisor. This remark is to me personal, but there is reason to suppose, when we know the facts and gestures of our good Father, he generally acted like this. He never received guests in his bedroom."* (8)

His love of chastity was able to lead so many souls to the cloister or the service of the Church. This virtue constantly guided him in his apostolate and even in the choice of his friendships and dating. Mother Marie-Eugénie de Jésus is a witness:

vent thus left the Spanish Mûrier School, attended mainly by young workers. He had also several directees who became Carmelites. A name has remained with us, that of a certain Mademoiselle Pelleuc. To Marie Eugénie de Jésus, d'Alzon writes: *"Few days after you made your definitive commitment, I went to give the habit to a novice and receive the profession of a nun, both my former daughters. God must have his designs, because if I had known sooner that you would accept girls without a dowry, undoubtedly the young nun was going to knock on the door of your convent."* (10)

In December 1845, he sent four postulants to the Assumption in Paris, soon followed by two others. He even found female vocations at the *Refuge*. Among the "Madeleines" the more fervent (this expression designates repentant prostitutes), nine took the habit in 1845 and persevered in religious life.

### **Guarantee the freedom of others in spiritual accompaniment**

*"It would be wrong, however,"* notes his biographer, *"to imagine that his enthusiasm pushed people to put more or less pressure on people's wishes. (...) By all accounts, he did not deploy ever untimely zeal. He who, by his nature, was rather impulsive when it came to external works, testified, in this intimate contact with souls, to a prudence and to extreme moderation. Far from responding to the first overtures made to him, he would have rather discarded them; at least, he knew how to subject them to a long test."* (11)

Father d'Alzon was keen to listen more than speak, to welcome rather than impose himself. This

is confirmed by Sr Bellile: *"He never anticipated the moment of grace, he waited patiently until souls were sufficiently prepared to receive it. So he insinuated to them with gentleness such and such practice of renunciation or humility."* (12)

In the spiritual interview, he asked for a written account of the state of one's soul, to better judge "intimate impressions" and above all to bring his directees, he said, *"to analyze well"*. Those directees thus themselves pointed out their progress or their decline. This method became an absorbing occupation for him, as he was so requested to accompaniment. *"He did not complain about it, on the contrary, he solicited it, because he was looking for it before all the interest of souls."*

For the students of Saint-Maur or the Clerc pension, entrusted to him in 1838, he surrounded himself with additional precautions. In order to lead them even more surely according to the particular plans of God, the prudent director inquired about each of them from their mistresses: age, name, character, inclinations, aptitudes, piety. *"Questions made with fairness and never indiscreet remarks soon gave him the key to their consciences. They were delighted to see themselves, from day one, so well understood and appreciated so accurately. From there, an unlimited confidence, a boundless openness of heart."* (13)

However, his support did not always know how to avoid the excesses of his time concerning penance: *"One day – and we have the anecdote from the person himself – he threw in the face of a penitent, who had been rebellious to an invitation of grace, his handkerchief full of blood, saying to her:*

*Here, my poor girl, this is what you have got me cost!"* The handkerchief, as soon as it was picked up, was kept with care. The fact was only revealed after the death of Father d'Alzon, as he was so demanding about confidentiality (14). And when he was criticized for his excessive mortifications, he laughed: *"A good cook must taste all the dishes before serving them"*, or again: *"A doctor must experiment with remedies before ordering them to his sick patient"*.

### **His relationship with Marie Correnson and the Oblates**

Marie Correnson, born July 20, 1842, is the eldest of ten children. His father is the doctor of Collège de l'Assomption and d'Alzon attends the family assiduously. He knows the children and accompanies young Marie. While he senses a particular call for her from the Lord and envisage that she could become the superior of a new congregation, two obstacles arise: the young girl's fragile health and her parents' reluctance. Fr. d'Alzon renounces all haste without imposing anything of his will. At no time does he take his desires for the reality of the other. In his way of accompanying, he had received the gift to stand aside before the work of God, to encourage and trust.

A letter to Mother Marie-Emmanuel testifies to this: *"Do not kill yourself, but in applying yourself to do all things like a true saint, remember that God makes you many graces and it is true of mothers of communities like mothers of families, they are condemned to give birth in pain. A thousand wishes to all our girls. Believe, my dear little Mother, that everything you do is written in letters of gold in heaven, if you have done it perfectly."* (15).



In a letter from September 1876, still very relevant today, Father d'Alzon offers his "spiritual testament" to the Oblates of the Assumption by exhorting them to sanctification in avoiding the slightest abuse: *"You will not be surprised if I speak to you with a certain force. It is important, at the moment we have arrived, to eliminate the slightest abuses and to remind you of the great holiness to which you must strive, if you want to be true missionary nuns."* (16)

For him, the three vows are linked. The vow of chastity is lived in poverty through work but also in obedience through the superiors and the mission of the Institute. These three evangelical counsels together guarantee fraternity and *"great charity among you."* *"Have the same goal, he asks them, even if you don't have the same job. What you won't do by word, you must do it by prayer and work which will be your great penance, unity in obedience to your superiors and great charity among you."*

Father d'Alzon knows how to present his ideas but also to take the opinion of the Oblate superior. From Notre-Dame des Châteaux, while he was thinking of a foundation in Arras, he wrote to her: *"On my rock I think a lot, especially when it rains like today. [...] Arras is, for what we would give to the Sisters, a house for very little boys, where we would like to choose children. Some would come to the alumni, others would be released to Father Halluin's orphanage; it would be a house, where vocations would be sorted. [...] We could find there 10 or 12 good subjects every year. The Oblate who would give us this service would do an immense good to the Congregation of Religious."* (17)



**Mother Emmanuel-Marie Correnson and Father Emmanuel d'Alzon**

Let us note the delicacy of Father d'Alzon. He explains his project clearly but takes care to use the conditional. It replaces exclamation marks with a question mark, to which his temperament would willingly lead him and that his status as founder could have justify. He consults Mother Correnson and gives her time to discern his proposal.

Through this attitude, we understand what chastity implies for Father d'Alzon: an absolute respect for the freedom of others. His letter underlines what it means for every consecrated person: *"Let us rise higher, while stripping ourselves of ourselves and not pursuing with greater righteousness of heart than the glory of God and the reign of his Son."* 18.

**P. Vincent LECLERCQ**  
General Postulator

***End of the second part***

- 1) Siméon Vailhé, *Vie du P. Emmanuel d'Alzon*. T. 1, p. 130.
- 2) Id. p. 133.
- 3) Ibid.
- 4) Ibid.
- 5) Quoted without reference by Vailhé, *Vie du P. Emmanuel d'Alzon*, t. 1, p. 134
- 6) Ibid.
- 7) Ibid.
- 8) Vailhé, *Vie du P. Emmanuel d'Alzon*, t. 1, p. 133.
- 9) Quoted without reference by Vailhé, p. 134.
- 10) Letter of d'Alzon to Marie Eugénie de Jésus (13 January 1845).
- 11) Vailhé, *Vie du P. Emmanuel d'Alzon*, tome 1, p. 135.
- 12) Id. p. 135.
- 13) Id. p. 135-136.
- 14) Id. p. p. 137.
- 15) Lettre de Nîmes, 20 juin 1868.
- 16) E. d'Alzon, *Letters 1875-1879*, p. 829.
- 17) Letter of Fr. d'Alzon to Mère M.-E. Correnson, 25 August 1875, Id. p. 390.
- 18) Ibid.

# Combating abuse: a permanent requirement for everyone

Among the many subjects discussed at the last General Chapter, the protection of minors and the vulnerable took a special place. It requires reflection and some action based on its importance to the Congregation. Fr. Thierry Kambale Kahongya, facilitator on this question, relates the work needed to make the Assumption a safe place.

In his *Letter to the People of God*, August 20, 2018, Pope Francis indicated that “if one member suffers, all of the members suffer with him” (1 Co 12, 26). These words of the Apostle Paul sensitize the Church to the sufferings that are endured in silence by many victims of sexual abuse and other forms of abuse within the Church.

The Holy Father brings attention to all communities on the seriousness of the injuries caused by acts directly toward victims, their loved ones, and the body of the Church. He insists on the urgency to establish a culture that ensures that these situations are not continued. He asks that conditions are created, within the Church, that eliminate the possibility of breeding, within the ecclesiastical community, different forms of abuse and their concealment.

Our last General Chapter was responsive to the requests of the Holy Father. It also expressed the desire to engage the Congregation, and each of its members, religious and lay, to announce and attest to the nearness of the Kingdom through attitudes and concrete actions in abuse prevention.

As worthy sons and daughters of Emmanuel d'Alzon, we have reaffirmed “the need for a proactive



engagement of the Congregation, of the Provinces, and of each religious and lay of the Assumption, to fight against sexual aggression and the phenomena of domination.” (Acts of the 34<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, n. 246). We have full conviction that the persons under our care have the right to safety in our communities and our apostolates.

To guarantee a safe environment for all, the rigorous norms in the Congregation (*Normes applicables dans la Congrégation des Augustins de l'Assomption en matière d'abus sexuels, Dec. 2014*) have been advocating a threefold commitment for almost two decades:

► The first step is to inform the parents, as well as the collaborators in educational programs that can help them, to assure adequate protection for the children and vulnerable people to put a stop to these practices (*Normes applicables... n.47*).

► We also recommend an assurance for the religious a formation that is both human and religious that will help them understand the responsibilities of spiritual paternity and a respect for people in pastoral ministry (*ibidem*, n. 48-50).

► It was also asked of major Superiors to take control of their responsibilities of accompaniment and formation of religious and of our collaborators in mission (*ibid.*, n. 51-52).

All in the Assumption, therefore, whatever his function or rank, should feel it necessary to devote his efforts to ensure that, everywhere, our Congregation is a “safe home” for all the weak and all the little ones that our Lord entrusts to us.

Fr. Thierry KAMBALE KAHONGYA  
(Rome)



# An Assumptionist, a Doctor in African Theology in Rome

Shortly before Christmas, Fr. Alexis Kasereka Valyamugheni, brilliantly defended his thesis at the Gregorian University

Doctoral work is always a laborious task, and its presentation before a juried board and the public is an exceptional time. . . Last December 20th, in the Pontifical Gregorian University of Rome, Fr. Alexis Kasereka Valyamugheni, of the Province of Africa, brilliantly defended his thesis on fundamental theology. His research topic was entitled: "The credibility of the Christian message in the face of current challenges in the Great Lakes region".

The question that Fr. Alexis addresses in his reflection is: how should we speak of the Revelation of God in Jesus Christ in a climate of war, in conflict, and in violence? How should one authentically respond in faith? The answer to this question is the synthesis of a lecture of two African theologians, the Catholic Cameroonian Jean-Marc Éla and the Protestant Congolese Kā Mana. Their key words: liberate and reconstruct Africa, with justice, with peace, and with pardon as key factors in liberation and reconstruction.

Basically, apply to the Great Lakes of Africa, the liberation theology of Éla that gives voice to the cries of Abel (in the book of Genesis)---the cry of the poor, victims of a murderous economy, inviting them to disassoci-



ate themselves from the criminal spirit of neoliberalism. . . it is one way of applying the indignation of God and of acting like him in the face of violence. The theology of Kā Mana, proposes, for « getting out of neoliberal globalization” through “unified globalization”, an economy of “shared goodness” in the image of the abundant life of Jesus Christ.

Based on these two inspirational writers, Fr. Alexis proposes a perspective of inculturation for the liberation and reconstruction of Africa: it consists of deepening the rich theology of the Ubuntu concept as a crossroads paradigm of African wisdom. The jury, while praising the high quality of his

work, strongly encouraged him to continue his research, to inspire theological reflection in Africa.

The community of Due Pini was very happy to be present to accompany and support Fr. Alexis during his defense. We were equally happy to share this moment with Congolese friends, such as the Ambassador of the D.R. of Congo near the Holy See, as well as Assumptionist brothers who came from Florence and from France. The community wishes Fr. Alexis much happiness in his future mission, that will bring him to teach theology in East Africa.

Fr. Fabrice-Marie ADZAKLI  
(Rome)

## Doctors & masters. . .

In addition to Fr. Alexis in Rome, two other religious recently defended their doctoral theses:

- **Br. Blair Nuyda** (North American Province), received a doctorate in transformational leadership from Boston University (USA) with a thesis on the Church and the Arts, entitled: "Co-Mission: a process of reflection on the concept of a partnership between pastors and artists for the renewal of the Church".

- **Fr. Kakule Kalengehya Jean-Pierre** (Africa), teacher at UAC, received a

doctorate of agronomy at the Catholic University of Graben (Butembo, DR-Congo), with a thesis on "The Analysis of crop associations in the region of Butembo—the case of bush beans and corn."

Additionally, **Fr. Jean-Glory Mukwama Luwala** (Africa) received a Master's in Biblical Science from the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum of Jerusalem. His studies were on "The trial of Jesus. Matthew 27, 25, considering the Jewish interpretation of Scripture", which was recently published in France (Ed. L'Harmattan, 198 p., 22 €).

### Editor

Michel KUBLER, General Secretary



Assunzione@mclink.it

### Translator

Patricia Haggerty and Gilles Blouin, English;

Tomás González and Anastasio Calle, Spanish  
*... and the help of DeepL*

### Model and laid out

Loredana Giannetti

Composed in March 30, 2024  
This no 4 of AA-News is printed in 220 copies:  
160 in French  
30 in English  
30 in Spanish  
And 350 electronic shipments.

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

## 2 OFFICIAL

- Agenda
- Pope Francis visits the parish of San Pio V

## 3 EDITORIAL

- I seek the face of the Lord

## 4 OFFICIAL: CALLS, NOMINATIONS, AGREEMENTS

## 5 ECHOES FROM THE OGC

- Discerning and governing is a «profession»!

## 08 NEWS

- Is God silent in Goma?

## 10 LIFE IN THE PROVINCES

- Serving Christian unity in Madagascar
- Ecumenical and interreligious dialogue in Saigon

## 13 TRIBUTE

- Father Claude Maréchal, all facets of the Assumption
- Stay in service attire

## 16 LAY-RELIGIOUS ALLIANCE

- For the inclusion of all

## 17 POSTULATION

- Fr. d'Alzon and the women. Part 2: The right distance and full freedom

## 22 FOLLOW-UP TO THE 34TH GENERAL CHAPTER

- Combating abuse: a permanent requirement for everyone

## 23 DEFENSE

- An Assumptionist, a Doctor in African theology in Rome

## 24 OUR DECEASED BROTHERS

# Our Deceased Brothers



† Father **Léopold LAFORGE**, of the community of Bruxelles-Woluwe (European Province), died on February 13, 2024, at Ciney (Belgium). His funeral was celebrated on February 17th at Givry (Bertogne, Belgium). He was 100.

† Fr. **Mart LEMMENS**, of the community of Pays-Bas (European Province), died on March 8, 2024, in Boxel (Pays-Bas). His funeral was celebrated on March 15 in the Chapel of Wereldhuis, followed by burial in the Assumptionist Cemetery at Stapelen, at Boxel. He was 87.

† Fr. **Julio NAVARRO ROMAN**, of the community of Our Lady of Lourdes (Andean Province), died on March 13, 2024, in Santiago (Chile). His funeral was celebrated on March 14 in the sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes in Santiago, followed by burial in the crypt of the Basilica. He was 81.

† Fr. **Jules NGURU SYAHENGEMA**, of the community of Kasando (Province of Africa), died on March 14, 2024, in Goma (D.R. Congo). His funeral was celebrated on March 20 in the parish at Kitatumba, followed by burial in the cemetery of Mahamba, in Butembo. He was 57.

† Father **Silvio HERRERA HERRERA**, of the Emmanuel d'Alzon community in Bogota (Andean Province), died on March 20, 2024 in Bogota (Colombia). His funeral was celebrated on March 21 in the chapel of Collège D'Alzon in Bogota, followed by burial in the Jardines del Recuerdo cemetery. He was 88 years old.