

*Many gifts  
in one body*

*...so that the world may  
believe*

Acts of the General Chapter of the Augustinians of the Assumption  
Rome, May 1-22, 2005



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## *Preface*

This General Chapter sought to produce no texts. The participants at the pre-capitular Workshop on Vocation Ministry shared a similar sentiment: “It is no longer a time for impressive documents or recommendations without concrete follow-up, but a time to translate what has already been decided into concrete actions.” No more texts.

The Chapter did produce one text, called a “Congregation Project”, but as you can see in this publication, it is relatively brief as Chapter documents go. It is not only brief, but it is also not much more than a reminder of things that we already know. It is a reminder in a language that is simple and straightforward, a language that may be new for some of you. In the face of such a text, you may react like the young man in today’s Gospel (Mark 10:20): “*Teacher, all of these things I have observed from my youth.*” Jesus proposed nothing new to the young man, no new law or teaching. Instead, Jesus invited him to be transformed by the law at the deepest level: to surrender his very self to God’s will, to forego anything he might have considered as wealth, and to follow along Jesus’ way. The young man went away sad. Do not judge him too harshly, for it is difficult to set aside our power and our wealth. But it is not impossible, with God’s help (see Mark 10:27).

It is worth noting in the texts written at the Chapter that the word “*conversion*” recurs in many passages: in reflections on vocation ministry, on solidarity with the poor, on our relations with lay

people, etc. This leads me to say that this was not a Chapter of texts, but a Chapter of conversion. From the beginning to the end, in various ways, the Capitulants understood the need to be attentive to the Spirit and to follow His promptings. This is the message that we now want to convey to all of you.

This message takes the form of what we have called the “Congregation Project”. The entire Project could be summarized in one sentence: *“Many gifts in one body ...so that the world may believe.”* This phrase is inspired by Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians (chapter 12) and by John’s Gospel (chapter 17). It points to the importance of vibrant, fervent fraternal communities for us, communities that allow us to witness to God’s mercy at work in our midst and for the world. We place the gift of our diversity at the service of the community. We believe it is this witness to fraternal love that will have some impact on the world around us.

The “Project” then draws out the implications of this succinct formula for the Assumption at this time. First, it defines an Assumptionist in terms of three fundamental options: in terms of our solidarity with the poor, of our desire to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, and of our option to promote communion in our lives together, in the Church, and in the world. These fundamental options express themselves in five general apostolic axes, which in turn led the Capitulants to identify three more specific areas for special emphasis in the six years to come: our mission in Eastern Europe especially among the Orthodox, our new foundations in Asia, and vocation ministry and work with young people.

You may remember that this Chapter was meant to “re-express the charism of the Assumption”. You will not find in the Chapter Acts a single, “classical” definition of what it means to be an Assumptionist. Instead you will find one phrase (*“Many gifts in one*

*body ...so that the world may believe*”) that defines an Assumptionist for today. You will find a Congregation Project that turns that definition into guidelines for living and for ministering as an Assumptionist today. There is no one definition, valid for every time and place; but in creative fidelity to Emmanuel d’Alzon’s founding inspiration this is the definition that seemed most appropriate for us at this time in our history.

Finally, in this document, you will find principles for formation that will help us along the path of fidelity to our vocation, and you will find a definition of our religious family that emphasizes the importance of our sisters and lay friends for our communities. The desire of lay people to form an integral part of our religious family calls us to conversion. The principles and methods of formation that are proposed will help us along this path of conversion.

Yes, the texts have become one text, and a brief text at that. Jesus’ invitation to the young man is the one addressed to us now as I formally publish the Acts of the General Chapter of 2005: *“Sell what you have... and follow me.”*

Fr. Richard E. Lamoureux, a.a.  
Superior General

Promulgated on Monday, 23 May 2005  
8<sup>th</sup> Week of Ordinary Time



# *Congregation Project*



# Congregation Project

*Many gifts in one body*

*...so that the world may believe*

## *About the Chapter*

1. How can we live our diversity not as a threat but as a treasure to be shared in communion with one another? How can we return to the roots of the Gospel and our vocation to bring a word of life and hope to today's society in search of moorings, meaning and spirituality? The General Chapter of 2005 (May 1-22) reflected at length, prayerfully, searchingly and in shared discussions on these questions. The response of the Chapter is rooted in the intuition of our Founder, Emmanuel d'Alzon, an intuition approved by the Church and lived throughout the history of our Congregation. During this Chapter, we sought simply to refocus on the essentials so as to clarify the direction we wish to take in the next six years.
2. For the first time in our history, the forty-five members of the Chapter were joined for one week by fifteen lay people coming from different Provinces and several continents. This experience was a breakthrough in the collaboration between religious and lay people. They urged us to engage in a covenant of heart and spirit with them. During this week, we discovered our distinct and complementary vocations in view of the Kingdom of God. Both religious and lay people, we sensed a call to strengthen our collaboration for the mission by providing it with an institutional framework.

3. When the lay people left, we continued our work, conscious of the urgency of pressing calls as well as of our fragility. Through our conversation and reflection, we pointed out, sometimes timidly, that God expects the Assumption, however small it might be, to consider the challenges of our times and offer concrete responses to the calls of society. The following text does not pretend to offer anything new since it is in continuity with the preceding Chapters. It wants to repeat our fidelity in times of change. This text constitutes an introduction to the various proposals worked out in the Chapter. These proposals are gathered around a central project of communion, bearing witness to the faith, and solidarity with the poor. Inspired by this project, a number of axes have been defined: teaching/media, vocations/youth, mission/new foundations, justice and peace, ecumenism/inter-religious dialogue.
4. Through these texts, the Chapter wants to reach every member of the Congregation inviting him to receive them and make them his own in his personal life and in his community so as to be converted to the service of the Kingdom.

## *Fundamental Options*

5. *In the Chapter's attempt to answer the question: "Why does God want the Assumption to exist today?", three fundamental orientations emerged. They should provide each Assumptionist and each community with certain principles for action: communion, bearing witness to the faith, and solidarity with the poor.*
6. As Assumptionists, we want to be men of faith and apostles for our times. Faithful to the will of the Father, we want to stand in solidarity with the least among us so as to build a more humane world. Disciples of Christ, we want to announce a word of hope so that life will be stronger than death. Attentive to the Spirit, we recognize that we are called to live in loving communion so that the world will believe that Jesus is the one sent by God.
7. We wish to take this path of conversion and mission together with our sisters in the Assumption family and in an ever stronger covenantal relationship with the laity.
8. We want to work for a world of greater solidarity, both within and outside of the Congregation. Our life and our governance structures need to bear witness to an organization founded not on the search for power or profit but on the desire to serve and to work for the common good. The desire to stand in solidarity with the weakest among us requires that we gain knowledge of the new forms of poverty in order to understand how they work and to act on their root causes. It is important for us to draw close to the victims of poverty and alienation, so as to be committed with them, in collaboration with other organisms, to the creation of a more fraternal world, respectful of the dignity of each person.

9. The secularized world tends to be build itself up without God. We want to have the courage to engage in a truthful and loving dialogue with our contemporaries, daring to announce Jesus Christ without ignoring the complexity of our societies. We want to promote Christian communities that witness to the beauty and the joy of the Gospel. We want to be present where Christ is not announced or barely so, and we want to support initiatives that allow a Christian voice to be heard in the public forum.
  
10. United around Christ, in communities that are ever more international and multicultural, we want to encourage one another in love to live in communion in the Spirit. In our desire to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood, we want to share with one another our lives, our faith and our apostolic work. We also want to work for peace among nations, for dialogue among religions and for reconciliation among Churches.

## *The Apostolic Axes*

11. *Convinced of these fundamental options, the Chapter then identified five apostolic axes which, in a spirit of creative fidelity, should trigger actions and choices at every level in the Congregation. That is why they are generally accompanied by suggestions for their implementation.*

### **I. Ecumenism and Inter-religious Dialogue**

*“That they may be one....”*

12. As Assumptionists, we carry the concern for ecumenism in our genes. Even if it is difficult to promote Christian unity, the Assumption has been committed, since its beginnings, to this cause. It remains a priority to this day. Let us remember that Fr. d’Alzon, taken up first of all with the Protestants of the Cevennes and Nîmes, was called to turn toward the Orthodox world by Pope Pius IX.
13. Out of love for Christ and his Church, we want to work for the unity of Christians according to the very terms of the prayer of Jesus on the eve of his Passion: *“Father, that all might be one, as you and I are one, so that the world might believe that you sent me.”* Love for the Church and her unity are at the heart of our charism, our identity and our vocation. We are called to work for it wherever we find ourselves.
14. Being men of communion today also opens us to dialogue with other believers so as to bear witness to a God of peace and not of violence. This witness invites us to learn how to dialogue and how to foster it, in our communities first of all, and then with all believers. It invites us to deepen our knowledge of other religions, by studying, meeting, working in common, so that

*“from mutual understanding a better future for all of us will come forth.”* (Benedict XVI). This dialogue and this collaboration awaken our faith and call us to deepen it. They can purify our vision of God. Acting in this way, we will be peacemakers.

- Closely related to this axis is the Mission in Eastern Europe and foundations in Asia, which were retained by the Chapter as **Apostolic Priorities**, see # 46-75.

## **II. New foundations**

*“Go to the ends of the earth.”*

15. In 1835, at the very outset of his mission, Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon wanted *“to penetrate the world with a Christian idea.”* Later, his love for the Church urged him to encourage his religious to have *“a heart as wide as that ocean which is the Church.”* (ES, 665)
16. A son of Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon cannot help seeing far and wide. From its very origins, the Assumption, faithful to this call, went to Australia and the “Orient”. It wanted to respond to the great causes of the world and of the Church by implanting its charism, the gift of the Spirit to the whole Church, in other countries. Today, the pressing needs have not waned and our missionary ambition is still the same: *“Gather all men into the People of God.”* (*Rule of Life*, # 13).
17. Oftentimes the Spirit precedes us. Young men from countries where we are not located have come to join us. Their presence in our communities strengthens our missionary zeal and calls us to establish foundations in places we had not planned to go, as in Asia or in West Africa. Thanks to them, we are discovering

cultures to evangelize, cultures where the charism of the Assumption might develop and be enriched by sensitivities as yet unknown in the Congregation.

18. New foundations stretch our hearts and remind us, in ever new ways, that we want to be men of communion living in solidarity with the very poor and proclaiming Jesus Christ.
19. More than ever before, we are aware that the missionary call can only be answered through interprovincial collaboration and in conjunction with the entire Assumption family: religious and lay.
20. The mission is a gift of the Spirit. It makes a founder out of each religious.

### ***Proposals for implementation***

#### **Foundations in Asia**

21. The topic of foundations in Asia, retained by the General Chapter as an Apostolic Priority, is developed below in # 65-75.

#### **West Africa**

22. The Chapter also recognizes the relevance of the prophetic gesture decided at the Council of the Congregation in 2000 to found in West Africa and entrusts the implementation of this project to three Vice/Provinces: France, Africa and Madagascar.

23. In fact,

- a) Since the closing of the Assumptionist mission in the Ivory Coast in 1989, the Assumption has always wished to return to West Africa.
- b) The women's Congregations of the Assumption (Religious Sisters of the Assumption, Oblates, and Orantes) are well established in West Africa and, for many years, have desired to see our Congregation join them.
- c) At the Council of the Congregation in 2000, one of the prophetic gestures adopted was a new foundation in West Africa, especially focused on the apostolate of the media. A feasibility study has been carried out by the Provinces of France and Africa.
- d) The Religious Sisters of St. Augustine in Lome, Togo, are requesting our collaboration in the area of the press and the media.
- e) Some Bishops are inviting us (Bishop Ambrose Djoliba, Bishop of Sokode, Togo); some young people from Togo, Benin and Burkina Faso, knock regularly at our door to discover the Assumptionist charism.
- f) Various trips to West Africa have allowed us to discover a possible location in Sokode, Togo and to determine the apostolic orientations. This foundation would open the door to all of West Africa.

24. The Chapter is convinced...

- a) That this foundation responds to a real need and desire of the Church in West Africa.
- b) That it will only become a reality if the Provinces of Africa and France and the Vice-Province of Madagascar collaborate.
- c) That it will allow internationality to grow stronger in the Assumption.
- d) That inter-provincial solidarity could be demonstrated at the level of persons, finances and animation.

### **III. Youth and vocations**

*“Come, follow me.”*

25. Vocation ministry is needed in the Assumption to respond to a crisis situation which is weakening our Congregation. On the one hand, Western countries – and soon Latin America – suffer from a lack of religious and priestly vocations. On the other hand, the Province of Africa and the Vice-Province of Madagascar have difficulties with discerning and accompanying vocations.
26. We want to face this challenge lucidly and serenely, confident in the love of the Father for “our small Congregation”. It is not the time for words. We must respond concretely to this difficulty, despite the discouragement and the apathy that could affect us.
27. We believe and we have also seen that God continues to attract young men to the Assumption. The ideal suggested by our Rule of Life responds, in large measure, to who young people of today are and what they are seeking. The real challenge that is proposed to us, in the North as in the South, is to find a new apostolic energy that is imaginative and daring, capable of calling young people to follow Christ in religious and priestly life. The example of Fr. Emmanuel d’Alzon invites us to work with passion and disinterestedness at fostering vocations for the service of the Church.
28. If we wish to accept the challenge and respond to this call, it is imperative that each religious and each community accept a certain form of conversion. Young people need to be able to discover how we live and to make it their own. It is not a matter of distorting our religious life. It is rather a matter of living it more faithfully than we do now by assuring that our communities are open and welcoming, that they favor an

encounter with Christ by a simple way of life, by concern for fraternal dialogue, by beautiful liturgy... It is also important that we be truly present where young people are to be found, witnessing to a real commitment to the poorest among us and to a fraternal and joyful community life.

- The topic of Youth and Vocations, retained by the General Chapter as an **Apostolic Priority**, is developed below in # 79-99.

#### **IV. For a More Just World – Justice and Peace**

*“Whatever you did for one of these least ones of mine, you did it to me.”*

29. For several decades, strong Chapter texts have called us to work for justice and peace, to stand in solidarity with the alienated and the up-rooted. Our lay sisters and brothers expect more daring initiatives from us; they push us to do more. Answering the call of the poor is a matter of great urgency in both hemispheres. The preferential option for the poor needs to mobilize the social body that we are more than it does.
30. Man has intrinsic value. We share this conviction with all men and women of good will. With the sons of Abraham, we believe that every human creature is in the image of God. Exploit the weak and you insult God, you scorn the Covenant.
31. With all Christians, we recognize in Jesus the one who is close to the wounded man that everyone ignores, as well as to the rich man who shares his wealth. Jesus is the defender of the weak against the oppressor and the perfect expression of the tenderness of the Father for the marginalized. A foreigner to wealth and prestige, he does not even own himself since he

belongs entirely to God. This is the source of his complete freedom and his love for all.

32. Our spiritual and apostolic heritage is well suited to this solidarity with the poor, even to the point of being able to share their living conditions from time to time. St. Augustine welcomed the poor. He listened to them and defended them. But this attitude is born of a detachment that arises from the placing in common of all personal resources. There can be no unity of heart turned toward God without it. It is the fruit of a personal and community conversion.
33. Heir of a great fortune, Fr. d'Alzon always lived poorly and loved the poor. He multiplied his efforts on their behalf. In an effort to reconcile the exploited working class of his day with God, he brought all his weight to bear in favor of popular works. For him, man is scorned when God is rejected.
34. Rooted in our history and our *Rule of Life*, our struggle against all forms of misery is not an option. But to be effective, it must at the same time identify the causes of today's serious problems and engage in very concrete actions within the reach of communities and Provinces.

### ***Proposals for implementation***

#### **35. In the Provinces**

- a) Accentuate collaboration with lay people and the sisters of the Assumption family who are often closer to the poor than we are and who live more simply than we do and who have thought more about these questions.
- b) Maintain and intensify inter-provincial solidarity, without exaggerating one's own needs and without renouncing

gestures in favor of those who are poorer than we. Broaden this solidarity to those who are needier than ourselves.

- c) Establish a Justice and Peace Commission where it does not exist and have every Province or Region provide it with a precise program depending upon local realities and on social, political and economic necessities.
- d) Offer the possibility of involvement to mature men and women who share our spirit and who want to commit themselves for a time with us in this mission.

### **36. In the local communities**

- a) Re-examine each year, during the Local Chapter, the concrete forms of our solidarity with the poorest and marginalized and draw the consequences for our sharing of goods and the kind of life we lead.
- b) In study sessions, come to a better understanding of the various aspects of justice and peace in order to enlighten other people around us, identify the causes of current and future crisis situations and engage in concrete actions according to our means.

## **V. Media and Teaching**

*« I am the way, the truth and the life. »*

- 37. In order to return God to the place that He had been denied in public life, Fr. d'Alzon first emphasized education, where lay people and religious were already collaborating. His goal was to form solid men and convinced Christians, capable of regenerating society. At the end of his life, he chose the popular press with its ever growing influence, to place the God of Jesus Christ once again at the heart of social life and restore true brotherhood. This double commitment deeply marks our

history to this day. And our young Provinces are taking up the cause in their turn.

38. It is the same vision of man, inspired by the Gospel, that we are trying to promote in these two very different professional fields. For us, education means allowing young people to form themselves with the help of others and in reference to Jesus Christ so that they too might build a fraternal society. For us, communications means placing man at the heart of what is communicated and allowing the Christian voice to be heard in the public square in those societies where the media have become a powerful vector of mass culture. This implies that, in both cases, we work to pass on the faith as we patiently and humbly seek the truth. It also means that we promote a way of relating that builds new bridges between educator and student, editor and listener or reader in order to fashion together a more human world where those left for naught in the growing economy and the oppressed are not forgotten.

### ***Proposals for implementation***

39. Insist on dynamism, creative fidelity, and regular evaluations that foster qualitative growth in the media and in education so as to better serve their fundamental mission. Their influence depends upon this. This task is confided to those who are responsible for our institutions and to the Provincial or Regional Council.
40. Encourage lay and religious teachers, educators, and communicators to invest even more energy in making the language of faith comprehensible, a language that is becoming a “foreign language.” Study the question at its roots by engaging in research, study sessions and other gatherings.

41. Taking into account the impact of the media, work diligently at the new evangelization so necessary in the North as well as in the South. The communities in which there are professionals in this field will be especially attentive to this.
42. Carefully select those lay people capable of assuming strategic responsibilities in our institutions. Form them in the spirit of the Assumption and then accompany them. This responsibility belongs to each Province.
43. Working with the Religious Sisters of the Assumption and the Oblates of the Assumption, prepare a clear presentation of Assumption pedagogical principles. These principles will constitute a basic point of reference for our establishments of secondary and higher education. That the General Council see to the drafting of this document.
44. Every two years convoke the delegates of the “Comité Assomption” (France) and others from various Provinces to reflect on an international strategy for communications at the Assumption and the apostolic orientation of our work in this field. It is up to the Superior General to convoke this task force.

See also in Appendix 3 : *Convictions and Proposals of the Education/Media Workshop - Worcester, July 28th - August 2nd, 2004.*

## *Three Apostolic Priorities for 2005-2011*

45. *As it concluded its reflection, intent upon and thoroughly aware of forming a single body, the Chapter decided to pay special attention to three apostolic priorities to which the Congregation is committed. Their implementation will vary due to the diversity of persons, communities, Provinces and Vice-Provinces. The Chapter gave the Superior General particular responsibility for the implementation of the two first priorities. (cf. # 136).*

### **I. Mission in Eastern Europe**

46. The Mission in Eastern Europe (“Mission d’Orient”) is an essential component of the missionary and ecumenical thrust of the Church. Benedict XVI reaffirmed it as a priority for the Catholic Church. All of our communities there live in contact with the Orthodox Church and even of several Churches, especially in Jerusalem and in Istanbul.
47. Our communities serving the Catholic Church of the Oriental rite in Romania and Bulgaria offer us the opportunity to experience another approach to the mystery of God and to *“breathe with the two lungs of the Church,”* to use the expression of Pope John Paul II.
48. This mission is a heritage we have received. The “Mission d’Orient” gave the Congregation its first beatified members. They encourage us to make it bear fruit.
49. The “Mission d’Orient” is a fascinating adventure for today. It is rooted in major cultural and religious centers where the encounter between Christians of various Churches as well as with Jews and Muslims is played out.

50. We want to make this mission a priority for the entire Congregation. If we do not, we will lose an important component of our identity.

### ***Proposals for implementation***

#### **Organization**

51. The Chapter requests that the international composition of our communities in the Orient be reinforced.
52. In order to reinforce the “Mission d’Orient”, to make it more visible in the Congregation and to assure relations with our Oblate Sisters, the General Chapter encourages the Province of France to establish a structure such as a Region.

#### **Prayer**

53. The General Chapter requests that the prayer for Christian unity, be included in the intercessions of the day in all our communities. To assist the communities, the General Council will suggest a selection of prayers.
54. The Chapter would like an icon of Christ, the Virgin Mother of God, and our Blessed Martyrs, to be placed in evidence in our churches and chapels. For the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, our communities and our parishes will take to heart some meaningful initiatives by underlining, wherever possible, relation with the Eastern Church and its spirituality.

#### **Formation**

55. The General Chapter asks that the Provincials encourage young religious to specialize in the area of ecumenism and inter-

religious dialogue. They will render an account to the Council of the Congregation.

56. The General Chapter asks that formation in ecumenism be reinforced. The communities in the Orient will suggest programs to the Council of the Congregation enabling them to receive religious in formation for internships.
57. The General Chapter asks that the Eastern tradition in theology and spirituality be given due prominence in the formation of Assumptionists in the novitiate and in the other houses of formation. The Superior General will see to it that this receives adequate attention in the novitiate program.
58. The General Council is charged with producing a booklet on the “Mission d’Orient” (history, theology, liturgy).
59. Before the next General Chapter, the General Council is requested to organize two programs to promote internationality and the discovery of our Christian roots in Jerusalem and Istanbul.

### **Animation**

60. The General Chapter asks the General Council to pursue the meetings of RIAD (Inter-Assumption Encounter for Dialogue), according to the orientations defined by the Assumption family, in order to raise awareness, animate and form religious, communities and Provinces in ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue.
61. The General Chapter asks the Provincials to invite religious from the “Mission d’Orient” or religious or lay persons specialized in the Christian East to direct sessions or preach retreats on the tradition and spirituality of the East.

62. The General Chapter supports the web site that has recently been launched in Plovdiv, to foster in-depth knowledge of the Eastern Churches and traditions, especially the Orthodox, for the general public and to give information on the life of the communities in the East. The one responsible for the “Mission” will see to it that the site is maintained by naming a correspondent in each community of the Mission.

### **Evaluation**

63. The General Chapter asks that our institutions, especially those dedicated to education and the media, reflect on their contribution to the ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue.
64. The General Chapter asks that each Province, on a three-year basis, take an inventory of their concrete accomplishments in the area of ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue (including dialogue with traditional religions), explore the possibilities of this dialogue and envisage the ways at their disposal to expand it.

## **II. Foundations in Asia**

### **Observations**

65. For centuries millions of oppressed people in Asia have been held on the margins of society economically, culturally and politically.
66. Young Asians are knocking at our doors. Several have entered and persevered in their Assumptionist vocation. They assimilate well the Assumptionist charism. They are already attracting new vocations. Our European and American communities

(Athens, London, Moscow, Boston...) are in contact with Asian immigrants.

67. The Assumption has already been in Korea for fifteen years and is preparing to found in Vietnam and the Philippines. The different situations in these three countries need to be taken into account.

## **Convictions**

68. *“Our presence in Asia, a mission for the whole Congregation.”*
69. Two thirds of humanity lives in Asia. Proposing the faith in this continent is one of the great causes of the Church. The love of the Church, so dear to the Assumption, urges us to answer this call. The ambition of the Assumption is to introduce her charism in Asia and announce the Gospel in a land rich in varied cultures and religions but where Christ is still not well known. The apostolic field now open to the Assumption in Asia is immense.
70. Our charism does not belong to us; it belongs to the Church. The way young Asians have already received this charism proves that it can fulfil them as human beings and as disciples of Christ by living a common apostolic religious life. Our presence on the Asian continent can also enrich our charism by placing it in contact with certain cultural values (silence, contemplation, non-violence...). As men of communion who desire to build a more just and more fraternal world, we can also offer them certain values that we hold dear.
71. The charism of the Assumption to work for Christian unity naturally urges the Assumption to be open to inter-religious dialogue on a continent that is the birthplace of the greatest religions of the world.

72. The numerous vocations of young men coming from Asia opens a future for us on this continent. We believe that they will be able to assure the future of our presence there. The Chapter counts on them to be founders and missionaries.
73. The presence of young Asians in our older Provinces also enriches the life of the communities there.
74. Our Sisters are requesting our collaboration (certainly in Korea and the Philippines, but also in Vietnam....) and their longstanding presence can only be fruitful, especially for new foundations.
75. That is why we are convinced that the entire Congregation needs to be committed to developing our presence in Asia and consequently that a structure adapted to assure the continuation of our presence on this continent is necessary.

### ***Proposals for implementation***

76. The General Chapter encourages our opening to Asia and supports the first foundations in the Philippines and in Vietnam as well as the maintenance and reinforcement of our community in Korea.
77. For the first three years, the operational budget for these foundations in Asia will be assured by a solidarity fund fed by the Provinces for this exclusive purpose.
78. To coordinate the various foundations in Asia and assure their follow-through and their development, the General Chapter requests that the Council of the Congregation create a commission whose purpose will be to study concretely questions concerning these foundations, i.e. their international

and especially inter-Asian character, their location, the community project and mission, the preparation of persons, the composition of the community, the finances, the awareness of Provinces and communities. It seems very desirable that the first community in the Philippines be international and inter-Asian. Moreover, this commission is authorized to propose the names of possible candidates to the appropriate Provincials. After a three-year period, the Council of the Congregation will make an in-depth evaluation of this project and the functioning of the commission.

### **III. Youth And Vocations**

79. *The General Chapter took into account the work of the pre-capitular commission on vocations and expressed its wholehearted agreement with it. A Chapter Commission summarized this work with the following convictions and proposals.*

#### **Convictions**

80. To attract young people, we must love them and live our religious life in a simple and fulfilled manner so that our vocation can be discovered and welcomed by them. It is not a question of pretense but of living more faithfully. That necessarily implies a path of conversion.
81. The rarity of religious vocations and the problems we have in accompanying them constitutes a challenge to which we must respond urgently, not with good intentions but with deeds. We want to hear it as a call to conversion, to greater fidelity to the charism we have received. We want to face this trial in a lucid

and serene manner, confident in the love of the Father for “our little Congregation”.

82. God is still calling young people to the Assumption. This is an observation as well as a conviction. The ideal of life proposed by our Rule corresponds in large measure to who young people are and what they are seeking today. The real challenge in the North as well as in the South consists in having enough imagination and daring to call young people, in a new way, to follow Christ in the religious life and the priesthood.
83. The renewal to which we are being called implies that each religious and each community agree to a certain form of conversion because young people challenge our convictions and unsettle our way of life.
84. Conversion invites us to take three paths:

*At the level of the community:*

85. The community will be more committed to vocation ministry and will actively encourage the welcoming of young people by offering them an opportunity to discover the demands of religious life. This will require a climate of confidence and a spirit of openness. It implies the observance of a rhythm of life that will allow brothers to spend time with young people.
86. Proposing something new means that we must live simply and soberly in our houses and in our way of living (entertainment and clothing), resisting the society of consumerism and bearing witness in this way to the One who gathers us together.
87. The beauty of the liturgy allows us to lead guests to a deeper experience of prayer. It initiates and deepens their experience

of the encounter with Christ, especially in the Eucharist, heart of the community.

88. The community shall actively encourage community sharing and dialogue, in an atmosphere of respect and honesty, focusing on such central themes as the commitment to follow Christ, the experience of God, living the vows, human relations, apostolic projects, moments of joy and suffering. The community shall foster respect and trust so that brothers will not be afraid to be vulnerable to one another. With a daily and weekly program that foresees times for fraternal dialogue, the community will lead its members toward a greater communion that deepens the desire to be together.

*At the level of the Mission :*

89. We try to be truly present to the world of the young. We will put in place a vocation ministry by using to better advantage our works in the fields of education and social communication.
90. Our mission will make it clear that we are trying to live the Gospel in a radical way. It will respond to a need arising from the *great causes* of man and the commitment to the poorest of the poor.
91. It will have more of a community dimension than an individual one.
92. Collaboration with the Sisters of the Assumption family and with lay people is an important criterion.

*At the level of one's faith :*

93. It is a matter of living the faith in a way that is contagious and speaks to young people. Faith is a gift from God, which must be asked for in prayer.
94. We are called to bear witness to our faith in joy, confidence and freedom while remaining attentive to the signs of the time.

### ***Proposals for implementation***

95. Each local community will address in Chapter the means it will take during the year to invite, accompany and form all kinds of vocations. It will regularly re-examine its involvement in the area of vocations.
96. The provincial community will see to it that religious remain present for a sufficiently long period of time with young people in a program that might be educational, recreational, spiritual or cultural. In a complex and broken world, it is important that religious be present to young people in their formative stages. This implies effective involvement in the world of the young and a real availability of the formators.
97. Each Province will regularly re-examine its involvement in the area of vocations. What is being done or not done? What are the results? This kind of reflection will be done in the context of conversion. Using the different media, the Province will prepare inter-active material to present the Assumption to young people in their vocational search. The Province will foster concrete practices, such as the Triduum of Prayer for Vocations, which encourage prayer and foster a desire for vocations.
98. The Province will make it possible for religious to have the time to know young people and accompany them in their

discernment and will also make the effort, in collaboration with lay Assumptionists and the different branches of the Assumption Family, to make the Assumption more visible.

99. The Congregation will set up an international volunteer program for young people and adults involving the entire Assumption family and will intensify its efforts to create international communities, especially to strengthen the Provinces that have few vocations.

## *Two Paths of Conversion*

100. *A major accomplishment of the Chapter was the very significant participation of the lay people in our work. This Covenant, which is becoming ever stronger between them and us, will henceforth be a manner of living our charism and will require a daily conversion. To make this possible, everything that has to do with their formation, will constitute an essential dimension of the life and mission of the Assumption.*

### **I. Toward a religious-lay covenant**

101. *Emmanuel d'Alzon dreamt of an Assumption made of lay people and religious who would bring the Kingdom of God to the world of his time. (General Chapter 1993).*
102. Lay and religious Assumptionists wish to “make covenant” so that the charism of the Assumption can be lived fully. For both parties, this partnership requires a conversion. Lay people will have to express this charism in their own way.
103. There are several ways lay people are connected to the Assumption: salaried employees, collaborators, benefactors, lay people in contact with our communities who wish to share our charism. These last are asking for an institutional framework which would specify the content of the covenant of all the members of the Assumptionist family, as well as indicate the place of lay people within the Congregation and their relationship with religious.
104. Lay people want this framework to foster an ongoing process and growth at the local level while at the same time being fitting into an international organizational effort.

105. According to lay people, it is premature today to establish the specific modalities of this institutional frame work, if we wish to be sufficiently attentive to local realities and sensibilities.
106. Lay people are asking to be formed in the spirit of the Assumption.
107. Lay people wish to pursue and contribute to the growth of the mission of the Assumption. But the reluctance of some religious hinders progress toward a commitment with lay people.

*Consequently, to structure, to strengthen and to live this “covenant”, the General Chapter makes the following proposals:*

***To structure the “covenant”: searching for an institutional frame work***

**Recommendations**

108. The General Chapter recommends that each Province begin to reflect on establishing an institutional framework that respects local realities, but is attentive to organizational efforts at the international level.
109. The General Chapter recommends that the Congregation’s web site offer a space dedicated to the collaboration between lay people and religious.

**Ordinances**

110. The General Chapter asks the Superior General and the Provincial Superiors to assign, at their respective levels, a

religious who will follow and encourage relations between religious and lay people. Depending upon the local situation, the religious could do this work in conjunction with a lay person.

111. The General Chapter requests that the General Council establish an international lay-religious commission which would suggest options and strategies for all of the Provinces.

### ***To strengthen the covenant: a call to formation***

#### **Recommendations**

112. The General Chapter recommends that the Provinces establish a formation program specifically for lay people and appropriate for our Augustinian and Alzonian spirituality and charism. This program could be organized in the Provinces on the basis of a reflection developed in common at the international level.
113. The General Chapter recommends that those Provinces, where education in the broadest sense is part of their mission, make an effort to form, in the spirit of the Assumption, those lay people involved in this field. This formation program will also be proposed to those responsible for our institutions (nursing homes, media, pilgrimages, etc.).

#### ***Ordinance***

114. The General Chapter requests that Provinces set up a program to sensitize religious for partnership with lay people.

## ***To live the covenant: for a shared mission***

### **Recommendations**

115. The General Chapter recommends that Provinces integrate lay people in reflecting on and implementing new projects. Some missions might be entrusted to them and assumed jointly.
116. The General Chapter recommends that each Province reflect on ways of encouraging relationships between local communities and committed lay people that are both more active and more apostolic.
117. The General Chapter recommends that Provinces make an appeal to volunteers (young and old) to participate in one or another of our missions.
118. In their concern to provide adequate material means to develop this collaboration, the General Chapter recommends that the Provinces foresee the necessary human, material, and financial resources.

## **II. Formation for life and mission**

119. *For us, formation is more than the presentation of the major aspects of the charism. It consists in entering into a creative process so as to reinterpret it faithfully while taking into account the circumstances of a multicultural world that changes at a dizzying pace. (cf. Ratio Institutionis, par. 2)*

## **Ordinances**

120. The General Chapter approves the *Ratio Institutionis* in its entirety. This text is addressed to the Directors of Formation, to candidates and religious in formation and, at the same time, to religious in general, in the measure that this text re-expresses our charism.
121. Given the responsibility of the Superior General in the domain of formation, the General Chapter decides:
  - a) to require, everywhere in the Congregation, his approval for the appointment of the superior of a house of formation comprising more than ten religious in post-novitiate formation;
  - b) that he approve the appointment of the Provincial Director of Formation, named by the Provincial in Council (*Rule of Life* # 87a and *Ratio* # 25).

## **Recommendations**

122. The General Chapter asks the General Council to assist every Provincial to establish a program of permanent formation for the next six years, in the spirit suggested in the *Ratio*, par. 182. This program could have a local, provincial, continental or intercontinental dimension by means of sessions or special times of probation.
123. In view of fostering international formation, the General Chapter recommends that each Provincial, in contact with other Provincials, organize prolonged visits in Assumptionist communities located in other countries, as it is stipulated in par. 115 of the *Ratio*.

124. The General Chapter recommends that the General Council organize international sessions of formation for formators to help them implement the new *Ratio Institutionis*.
125. The General Chapter advises the Directors of Formation of the following new items in the *Ratio*: the diaconate (par. 159-162), meetings of newly ordained priests (par. 158), internships outside the country in view of formation to internationality (par. 115), and permanent formation (par. 171-182).



*Means*  
*at the service of the apostolic*  
*community*



# Means

## at the service of the apostolic community

### *I. Structures to serve life and unity*

#### **Ordinances**

##### *Discernment criteria for becoming a Province*

126. Twenty religious is the required number for the existence of a Province. In the calculation of this number, all native religious and those from other Provinces actually working in the concerned territory will be counted. The number is not an absolute criterion. A small Province could be dynamic. But all the functions foreseen by our *Rule of Life* should not fall upon a handful of religious.
127. Another criterion is the ability of the Province to assume the tasks necessary for the life of the Province and the Congregation, in the areas of leadership, formation and finances.
128. It must also be considered whether the necessary resources are available for a certain financial autonomy, whether there are at least three communities, and whether there is a sufficient number of apostolic commitments. It is advisable that communities be close enough together.
129. The communities and the religious in question, with the aid of these criteria, will examine lucidly their situation so as to be in conformity with # 80 of our *Rule of Life*.
130. The communities of a suppressed Province are attached to another Province after consultation with the religious

involved. The Provincial may, with the consent of the Council of the Province, (*Rule of Life*, #83) group these communities into a Region.

### ***The erection of the Province of Northern Europe***

131. The General Chapter decides to suppress the three Provinces of Netherlands, North Belgium and South Belgium and to erect the Province of Northern Europe, made up of the communities of the three former Provinces. This decision is effective September 15, 2005.

### ***Norms to become and remain a Region***

132. The Region must have a sufficient autonomy:
  - a) it must have a sufficient number of communities and religious to facilitate community life and an apostolic project, i.e. be able to incorporate the charism of the Assumption in the cultural, social and ecclesial reality of the country;
  - b) it must have the ability to provide itself with structures for leadership and government;
  - c) it must have a certain financial autonomy.
133. The Provincial on whom the Region depends must define clearly the powers delegated to the Regional. The statutes of the Region must indicate at least the ordinary powers of the Regional, the necessary structure for the life of the Region, the ties with the Province (participation of the Regional in the Provincial Chapter and the Council of the Province, the Provincial's canonical visitation, reports by the Regional to the Council of the Province on the life and the mission of the Region and on its finances, the commitment on the part of the Region to follow the orientations and projects of the Province).

### ***Composition of the General Chapter and the Council of the Congregation***

134. The General Chapter decides that, at the Council of Congregation and at the General Chapter, the Province of Northern Europe and the Province of Africa will each have one *ex officio* member, who is not a major superior, but will be the first assistant to the Provincial or his delegate. Until the next General Chapter and given inevitable changes, the Superior General with the agreement of the Council of the Congregation could add to or remove from the Council of the Congregation and the General Chapter, one or several *ex officio* members who are not major superiors.

### ***Establishing Commissions to assist general government***

135. The General Chapter decides not to renew the Executive Committee set up by the Council of the Congregation. However, in order to assure the life and the mission of the entire Congregation, the Chapter decides that the Council of the Congregation, as specific needs may dictate, may establish a number of commissions to help the general government with a precise objective. The same Council of the Congregation will determine the composition and the powers of said commissions. In its report, the Commission may, in a climate of respect and discretion, suggest names of religious and the means of financing to attain the expected results.

### ***Power of appointment granted to the Superior General***

136. The General Chapter gives the Superior General, *ad experimentum*, until the next General Chapter, the right to appoint a few religious, given the following conditions:

- a) only within the scope of the two priorities defined by the General Chapter, i.e. the Mission in Eastern Europe and foundations in Asia;
- b) after an in-depth consultation with the religious in question, his Provincial, Vice-Provincial or Regional;
- c) for a number limited to three nominations for each of these priorities;
- d) and assignment to communities that respond to the essential requirements of an apostolic Assumptionist community.
- e) If the religious is named to a Province other than his own, the usual rules for such cases will apply.

137. These powers will be evaluated at the next General Chapter and at the Council of the Congregation of 2008.

## **Recommendation**

### ***Interprovincial and intercontinental collaboration***

138. The General Chapter encourages all the Provinces to pursue efforts at organization and collaboration at the interprovincial and continental levels.

## ***2. Our financial resources and their management***

139. Our resources come primarily from our benefactors (often people less well off than ourselves), from revenues from our investments (the fruit of the work and efforts of our predecessors), and from our own work.
140. This implies that we must manage these resources rigorously, in complete coherence with our vow of poverty.

### **A reminder**

141. The Chapter recalls that the Provincial Treasurer attends meetings of the Provincial Council, whether he is an assistant or not (*Rule of Life*, #101).

## **Formation in management and solidarity**

### ***Convictions***

142. Responsible management and transparency in our accounts allow us to have a better idea of the available resources and how to use them more effectively. Being aware of past results clarifies future decisions. Clear numbers make it possible to move beyond vague intentions.
143. Information needs to circulate in both directions: each religious needs to render account; this is also the case for the one who exercises a responsibility in this domain.
144. To manage even small sums requires training. This is how we come to evaluate expenses and investments and to elaborate a budget. Hence the importance of involving young religious in

formation in the preparation of a budget for their house and in the process of the approval of the accounts.

### ***Recommendation***

145. Consequently, the Chapter recommends that each Province:
- a) prepare one or another religious to assume the task of treasurer by making them acquire a certain degree of competency in accounting and management;
  - b) be concerned about economic formation at the local level. The preparation of budgets and the review of accounts constitute excellent pedagogical tools;
  - c) allow the Provincial Treasurer the time needed to expand his knowledge of accounting and management;
  - d) ask the Treasurer who is “leaving” to spend time introducing his successor and guiding him through the dossiers of the Province for a few weeks or months as needs might dictate;
  - e) apply to Treasurers the same norm that applies to Superiors with reference to the renewal of mandates (cf. *Rule of Life*, # 62);
  - f) ask the Provincial Treasurer to delegate certain tasks to knowledgeable lay persons and surround himself with competent consultants.

### ***Ordinance***

146. Each Province will foresee in its formation process an initiation to economic management. At the end of the period of formation, each religious should have received this initiation.

## **Self-financing**

147. Self-financing is a desirable objective for each Province. It is up to each Province to use the means adapted to its situation to obtain the necessary resources.
148. Specialized organisms exist to finance certain projects, certain initiatives. Their contribution could help our works considerably.

## ***Ordinance***

149. To assist in the self-financing of Provinces, the General Chapter entrusts to the General Treasurer the responsibility of finding financial resources other than our own. To do this, he will create a team of experts, religious or lay. Their mission will be to study the possibility of re-launching SOLIDE, determine the precise conditions for its viability and/or join existing organisms for development within the European Community. They will also investigate sources of financing proper to the Anglo-Saxon world. Each year, the General Treasurer will report on this mission to the Council of the Congregation.

## **Solidarity Fund**

### ***Decisions***

150. The Solidarity Fund becomes effective as of January 1, 2006. It replaces the “Caisse de solidarité” which thus becomes obsolete.
151. Each year, the General Treasurer reports on the state of the Solidarity Fund to the Council of the Congregation.

## ***Ordinance***

152. The General Chapter asks the General Council to establish a finance committee composed of the General Treasurer, the Provincial Treasurers and some outside experts. This committee is charged with studying and analyzing the projects presented by the Provinces for support by the Solidarity Fund, to propose for each request a recommendation to the Council of the Congregation, and then, after the decision of the Council, to implement the decision. This Committee also has the mission to evaluate and follow the implementation of the projects.

## ***Recommendation***

153. For the management of the Solidarity Fund, the General Chapter invites the General Treasurer to see among other things to the diversity of the investments, the protection of the capital and the continued growth of the capital by those Provinces that are able.

## **Other ordinances**

### **Group of consultors**

154. For the management of the funds that are his responsibility, the General Treasurer has a group of consultors that help him in this charge.

### **Ceiling limits (*Rule of Life*, #97, 1 and #123, i)**

155. For all financial transactions, such as real estate or other property, alienation, loans, the Provincial Superior must ask the permission of the Superior General when the sum is equal

to or higher than three-fourths of the ceiling amount fixed by the Episcopal Conference of the country.

### **Assessments**

156. The assessments from the Provinces for the General Fund are fixed at \$260 US (category 1) and at \$85 US (category 2). It is up to the Council of the Congregation to adjust these assessments, if needed, so that they correspond to at least 20% of the annual budget of the General operations. The adjustments will be applied to the rates according to the proportions currently in place. (Categories 1 and 2).\*

### **Travel expenses**

157. For the meeting of the Council of the Congregation, the religious who attend will pay for their travel up to the sum of \$450 US. The rest will be reimbursed by the General Treasury.

*\* Category 2: The temporary professed members in the entire Congregation and the perpetually professed in Africa, Madagascar, Chile-Argentina, Colombia, Brazil, Equator and Mexico, as well as the future foundations in Vietnam and the Philippines.*

### ***3. Modifications of the Capitular Rules***

158. The General Chapter modifies # 175, # 193 and # 204 of the Capitular Rules as follows:
159. Article 175: The local superior will not accept commitments that would oblige him to be absent frequently or for lengthy periods.
160. Article 193: The major superiors will take the necessary measures to prepare competent formators. It is the responsibility of each Provincial with the approval of the Council of the Province (*Rule of Life*, # 97f, # 97h, # 193) to name the members of a formation commission. Among the members of this commission and with the consent of his ordinary Council, the Provincial also names the Director of Formation in the Province (*Rule of Life*, # 87, and # 95b). With this commission, in conformity with the *Ratio Institutionis*, the Provincial will establish a global plan for formation, will determine its modalities, will see to the implementation of the programs and will help those responsible at the various stages. This plan for formation will be submitted to the approval of the Superior General. (*Rule of Life*, # 135).
161. Article 204: Communities contribute to the Provincial Treasury according to the modalities established by the Provincial Chapter. The Provinces contribute to the General Treasury by assessments established by the General Chapter. The Provinces, to the best of their ability, also contribute to the Solidarity Fund.

#### ***4. Powers delegated to the Superior General for the final edition of the texts of the General Chapter and their interpretation***

162. The texts adopted by the General Chapter become effective upon promulgation by the Superior General (*Rule of Life*, #117).
163. The General Chapter delegates the following powers to the Superior General, with the consent of his Council:
  - a.) in case of doubt or discussion as to the meaning of texts adopted by the Chapter, the power to interpret them;
  - b.) the power to edit the texts in their form and expression, respecting the thought and the ideas, in order to improve their presentation for the communities and for publication.



*Message  
of the General Chapter*



# Message

## *To Assumptionist Bishops, confreres, lay Assumptionists and Religious Sisters of the family*

Dear friends, brothers and sisters,

“I declare the 31<sup>st</sup> General Chapter of the Assumptionists open!” The Superior General, Richard Lamoureux, pronounced this traditional formula on May 1, 2005, in Rome in the House of the Brothers of Christian Schools, in the presence of the 45 members of the Chapter and, for the first time, in the presence of 15 lay persons come from the four corners of the world. Together, for an entire week, we discovered that our vocations are distinct and complementary. Together, we listened to the Holy Spirit in order to answer the calls coming from the world and the Church. Together, we heard the appeal to go further, to make “covenant”, all for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

The diversity of our origins (27 countries represented), our ages (from 32 to 76) and the places where we live and fulfil our apostolic commitments illustrates wonderfully the theme of our Chapter: “Many gifts, one body...so that the world might believe”. With the lay people, we tried to answer this question: “Why does God want the Assumption to exist?” Yes indeed, why? Only God can answer this question. Yet, in the course of our exchanges, we observed that despite our weaknesses and small numbers, we remain men and women aware of the challenges of our times and ready to offer concrete answers to the calls of our contemporaries.

When our lay Assumptionist friends left, we had a one day retreat. Sister Cristina Maria, Superior General of the Religious Sisters of the Assumption, helped us to advance on the spiritual path of this Chapter. She guided us into the heart of the Trinity where God is at once the one who hears (Son), the one who gives (Father) and the

one who shares (Spirit). We resumed our work around an all-encompassing project centered on communion, proposing the Faith and solidarity with the poor. We defined this project in five apostolic axes: education and the media, mission and new foundations, justice and peace, vocation ministry, ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue. We approved a new *Ratio Institutionis*, our program for international formation. Nothing new here, but there is a renewed way of living our Assumptionist commitment in vibrant and fraternal communities, open both to others and to the mission.

During this Chapter, a new international and continental awareness was reinforced. It was already at work in North America and in the ties between the Provinces of France and Spain. This new awareness opened the way to the erection of the new Province of Northern Europe, uniting the former Provinces of North Belgium, South Belgium and Holland. Our own structures of government needed to be adapted to these new realities in order to better serve the collaboration among Provinces in a world in constant evolution. Our desire is for a greater communion between North and South, between East and West, as well as between the older Provinces and the younger ones. Clearly, this requires a conversion of persons and communities as well as of the entire Institute. We took the first steps. We accepted the risk for a future filled with promise. In these days of work and discernment, we often thought of you back home where you live and work. We hope that our enthusiasm will be contagious. We count on all of you to carry the projects and the ambitions that we have formulated for our religious families for the next six years.

During these three weeks, we celebrated two masses in the Byzantine Rite, an “African” mass and one mass at the Vatican on the tomb of Peter. Our Sunday Liturgy carried us from the Ascension to Pentecost and from Pentecost to the Trinity, with which we closed the Chapter. Three priorities illustrate how the Spirit is urging all our Provinces together to discover new arenas for our mission: Asia and the project for new foundations in the Philippines and in

Vietnam, the “Mission d’Orient” and vocation ministry. With these three priorities, vast horizons arise before the entire Congregation. The needs are immense but they remain within the scope of the ambitions of the heirs of Fr. d’Alzon.

To fulfil these ambitious projects, the Chapter re-elected Father Richard Lamoureux, Superior General and his Vicar General, Fr. Julio Navarro (Chile). The Chapter also elected two other Assistants: Fathers André Brombart (Northern Europe) and Emmanuel Kahindo (Africa) as well as two General Officers: Fr. Lucas Chuffart (France), Secretary General and Father Jean-Daniel Gullung (France), General Treasurer.

*“The Church is alive. The Church is young.”* At the conclusion of this long Chapter, we make these words which Benedict XVI pronounced on April 24 in the first days of his Pontificate our own.

ROME, May 22, 2005

The members of the 31st Assumptionist General Chapter



# *Appendices*



## Appendix 1 : **Proposals from invited lay people at the General Chapter**

### **CREATING A COVENANT**

First of all, we wish to thank you wholeheartedly for your warm reception, your attentiveness and your brotherhood. This week has been an occasion for us to taste once more the very special flavor of the spirit of the Assumption. Before formulating our proposals, we think that we need to ask a question (inspired by the *Instrumentum Laboris*): **But why do lay people and the Assumptionists want to create a covenant.?**

In relation with this question we have three recommendations. We are quite aware, however, that our reflection needs further study, *Festina lente...*, so that it can be adopted while respecting the concrete situations in which we live. Nevertheless, we are pleased that lay people and religious so easily and naturally agreed on so many things, but also on two significant developments in our vocabulary. Henceforth, we can speak of “covenant” and of “lay and religious Assumptionists”.

#### **1.) Search for an institutional framework**

The lay people request an institutional framework which would make the content of the covenant between all the members of the Assumptionist family more precise as well as stipulate the place of lay people in the heart of the Congregation and their relations with religious. This framework should favor a process and a development at the local level while articulating an international coordination. We thought that it was certainly premature to want to establish right away the particular modalities of this institutional framework, in the measure that we need to be attentive to local realities and feelings.

#### **Where we might begin our reflections**

More concretely we propose the following possibilities:

- a) The General Chapter could recommend that each Province begin a reflection on the establishment of an institutional framework within a Congregation-wide perspective while respecting the local realities.

- b) The General Chapter could appoint a religious who would be responsible for guiding and directing the work between religious and lay persons – it would also be useful to have a lay person appointed to this position.
- c) The General Chapter could establish a commission of lay people and religious at the international level which would propose options and strategies for all the Provinces.
- d) The web site for the Congregation could have a link dedicated to the collaboration between lay people and religious.

## **2) A call for formation:**

### **Lay people launch a call for the systematic development of a formation program:**

- a) First, a specific program adapted to the Augustinian and d'Alzonian spirituality, which could be organized in each Province based on a reflection defined in common at the international level.
- b) Also, education in the broadest sense (including colleges and educational establishments) to which the lay people request that the Congregation pay special attention.

## **3) For a more active community life:**

In conclusion, lay people wish that the General Chapter would recommend that each Province reflect on ways in which local communities could develop a more active and apostolic connection with the lay people that are close to them.

Finally we want to give adequate material means for the development of this collaboration. It would be useful to reflect on how human, material and financial resources will be used (while keeping in mind solidarity among the Provinces).

Presentation by Pierre Rion,  
To the General Assembly  
On May 6, 2005

## Appendix 2 :

### Address of the Superior General to laity

#### « At the End of One Week, on the Way to the Future »

Lay and religious, we have already come to the end of our week together, the end of the first week of this General Chapter. And as Yahweh said at the end of his week of work, we see that it was good.

It was good in part because it has **not only** been a week of **work**.

It has been a time of *pilgrimage* for many of you, who followed “in the footsteps of Father d’Alzon” here in Rome.

It has been a time of intense *prayer*, at our solemn opening of the Chapter, at our daily common prayer, in small faith communities, in personal prayer.

It has been a time of *celebration*; we will not quickly forget the time together on Wednesday evening.

And, yes, of course, it has been a time of hard *work*.

The work has been **fruitful**...

...in terms of the objective that this Chapter has set for itself: to define the *raison d’être* of the Assumption in view of a new missionary élan

- a portrait of the Assumptionist, whether lay or religious
- some honest and open consideration of that to which we are being called, given the needs of the world and of the Church, and the situation in which we find ourselves as Assumptionists
- a first attempt to define the major apostolic axes that the Congregation should pursue in the years ahead

...it is only the first week of our work and much is left to be done in terms of fleshing out and clarifying, but I’m glad that we have been able to lay these foundations by joining together “our two oxen” (according to the expression that we learned from our Brazilian brothers and sisters : “*parceria*”) to do the job. I would ask you, as you leave us here at the Chapter, that you continue to pray that the openness and simplicity with which we have listened to the Spirit this week will continue into the second and third

weeks, when we will be taking decisions to implement the insights gained during our week of work with you.

### **What we have learned *or* been reminded of**

We have learned...

- a great deal about the diversity of the Assumption, of its Vice/Provinces, of its lay people and the different kinds of attachment they have to the Assumption
- the unity and the great similarity that exist among Assumption lay people and religious
- the desire (among lay and religious) for a deeper, Assumptionist spiritual identity, with a way of living that out on a daily basis
- a similar sensitivity to the different forms of suffering in our worlds that cry out for our contribution, however modest
- the deep desire to share the mission and some concrete projects.

### **THE FUTURE**

It is clear to me that leadership by the religious in the Congregation (at all levels) must from now on take into account the concerns, the questions, the desires, and the projects of the laity. I do not know if this will require structural changes in the way the Congregation is governed and animated, but it is clear that leadership agendas from now on must find ways to take into account the concerns of the entire Assumptionist family, lay and religious.

It will be up to the next General leadership team to pursue all of this, but for what they're worth, these are some of the thoughts that I would want to convey to them in your name:

I think that work will be needed in **two areas**...

*...in the area of follow-up:* we need to foresee follow-up for the good intentions and good ideas of this week. We invested a great deal of effort into the organization of this week together, and all have given generously of their time and their best thinking to this week's work. We need to assure that in the weeks ahead this investment is put to work and developed.

*...in the area of international collaboration and communion:* we need to help each other from one Province to another, from one country and

continent to another country and continent. The diversity of your experience cannot remain hidden within the frontiers of your respective vice/Provinces; it needs to be shared. This is especially important in the case of vice/Provinces that have fewer resources in this area and could benefit from the help and experience of others.

### **Some concrete means**

*Some means* will help us pursue work in these two areas: a leadership structure, however modest or simple that might be, periodic gatherings (every six years is not enough), a means of communication (print, web??), common project(s).

I call upon the religious to provide encouragement and fraternal support, the contribution of our infrastructure, our network, our experience, our contacts, and formation, where needed and desired.

### **CONCLUSION**

The vocabulary is in the process of changing.

I know there is some difference of emphasis among my religious confreres regarding relations with lay people, and I know there are a variety of desires among lay people close to the Assumption...

But I have one strong conviction that I believe has very clear consequences. Someone said it yesterday (in an indirect reference to the Chapter of 1999) : the charism of the Assumption is God's gift to the Church (and not simply to a group of religious and even less to a group of priests). It is not the private property of the Assumptionist religious. What does belong to them is the responsibility to care for and communicate this charism, to be sure that the People of God have access to it and benefit from it.

I believe one of the consequences of that conviction is, as one or another person said yesterday, our vocabulary (and more profoundly our way of thinking) needs to change.

- Assumptionists are lay people and men in the vowed life – and even more: the entire Assumption family (all of our sisters, as well);

- “collaboration” does not say it well enough; even “friends of the Assumption” is not good enough, because you ARE the Assumption, with us
- ALLIANCE / Covenant, that is the word we need; together, we are inspired by Emmanuel d’Alzon, nourished by knowledge of him and his spirit, sustained by community, challenged by and responsive to the needs of God’s people in today’s world. That is the Assumption today.

Finally, let me say a word of thanks at the end of this first week of Chapter.

- to Fr. Julio Navarro and those who have helped him, among others Frs. Jean-Paul Périer-Muzet, Camilo Thibault and Claude Grenache, for they have given generously in the organization and support provided to the Assumptionist lay people during this week;
- to Rafael Martinez for having greatly contributed in this effort from our first conversations in Mexico, in April of 2004;
- and finally a word of thanks to each one of the lay Assumptionists present
  - for taking the time to be here, first of all
  - and most of all...
    - for your witness
    - for your light
    - for your love of the Assumption
    - for your love of Assumptionists
    - for your love of Jesus Christ and his reign.

Appendix 3 :  
**Convictions and Proposals of the Education/Media  
Workshop**, Worcester, July 28<sup>th</sup> - August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2004

***PREAMBLE***

At the Assumption, teaching and the media are at the service of an educational project. It is the same vision of humankind that we hope to communicate in these two very different professional fields. This project and this vision constitute the apostolic dimension of our different works in these domains.

**Our Convictions**

**Introduction**

Education and communication are more than ever necessary in a world searching for meaning, making every effort to establish the kind of dialogue it needs in order to deal with its suffering and nourish its hope.

The lack of reference points for many of our contemporaries, the process of globalization (which provides both more knowledge and new conflicts at the same time), relations between the North, with its resources and experience, and the South, with its youth and longing for autonomy—are so many realities and indications that humanity and our world are engaged in a deep, probing search.

The Assumption wants to be present at the heart of this humanity, seeking to be liberated but remaining wounded, and sometimes believing it has the means necessary for its own salvation. This age that we call our own needs not only knowledge and values, but also a word that can save.

***Our vocation*** invites us and encourages us to invest in this mission of salvation.

The involvement of the Assumption in the world of education and the media dates from the beginnings of the Congregation. For our founders it was entirely bound up with our vocation: the coming of the reign of God by the service to unity and to truth. And still today the Assumption invites young

people to share in this mission as religious or as lay people, committed to evangelizing and witness to Christ the Savior in today's world.

***Our vocation*** is worked out through our commitment as religious living in apostolic community. The demands of our professional and religious lives mutually enrich each other and so unify our life as religious and enrich the entire community. Through those who, among us, are more directly involved in this work, it is the whole Congregation that carries out the work of education and communication. In this way, the Congregation together with those who identify with its charism carries on the inspiration of its founders and continues to incarnate it in a changing world.

***Our vocation*** is founded on a solid theological foundation: communicating in the broad sense of the term (by means of education and the media) is a dimension of the Word's action in announcing the good news of salvation. It is a word that became incarnate and continues its history in our own. Communicating presupposes mediation: it is an action that makes use of the body, that is historically-bound... We can thus make no pretension at being totally transparent. It is a word uttered from one human being to another, by which it is impossible to say everything about life and its mystery, nor about the people involved in this relationship, nor about the One who is at the heart of this relationship, "more interior to us than we are to ourselves."

***Our vocation***, through education and the media, is not there to serve our own word, but the one who is the Word. Because it participates in the action of the Word, communicating is at the same a most noble, and a most humble pursuit.

## **Education**

### ***A tradition***

From the beginning, the Congregation turned towards young people out of the conviction that education was one of the most noble ways to help the human community to build itself up. Teaching, regardless of the discipline, is pastoral work. Our mission in the field of education is carried out in very different institutions through work in disciplines that are not necessarily ecclesiastical or catechetical.

### ***Both transmission and integral formation***

Education creates stronger ties between generations and relaxes the bonds of egoism. It is a work of transmission, which is of the order of a gift. This process enriches the truth by urging the one who receives it to carry it further. The educational venture is an apprenticeship in generosity. “You have freely received, now give freely.”

But education is not simply the transmission of data. It involves the educator and the student in a common project, in which each plays his own role in a “work of creation”. The teacher transmits, but also causes the student to acquire and to reflect in a context of personal relationships and of a social life in the institutions in which this takes place. Consequently, education is also the integral formation of the person. Study, research, extra-curricular activities are all part of a coherent whole that has as its goal the total development of the student.

### ***The humble path of truth***

The educational venture makes it clear that truth has a price and that it is not an illusion. It invites us to a humble and patient search for truth, through the whole spectrum of human knowledge. This humanizing path tolerates no ideology, no ready-made answers, no relativism. The mission of the Assumption in the field of education finds its unity and its foundation in service to the truth.

### ***A spiritual experience***

Education also implies a certain spiritual experience. “Everything related to teaching belongs to the action of the Word.” (Jean Daniélou) Every educator, whether teacher, chaplain, or staff member, is called by baptism to see himself as participating in this action of the Word of God, truth and life, Word made flesh, and to be clear about the implications of this in terms of demands and responsibilities.

## **Media**

### ***A tradition***

The Assumptionist apostolate in the media has evolved over the years, pursuing various pastoral, educational, cultural and social goals. It has opened up to all types of social communication in a number of the countries where the Congregation is located. The reasons for investing in the field of media now has a new motive: they have become a powerful vehicle for culture of the masses. They are the premier “arcopagus of modern times” to

which the Gospel should be proclaimed (see John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio*, #37). At the same time, they return the echo of a world where the Spirit is already at work and where we must discern the signs of the times (Matthew 16:3).

### ***Evangelization and communication***

There is an intimate link between the proclamation of *the* Good News of salvation and the media transmission of current events and messages. But news is not in itself evangelizing, and communication does not necessarily create communion. The media make it possible to communicate to a large number of people a message that gives meaning to life. This presupposes an effort at inculturation: understanding how the means of communication work and their systems of values, and then elaborating new languages to communicate the faith. Our competence in the field invites us to contribute to this kind of encounter between the Gospel and culture.

### ***A Christianity open to the world***

We help the Church and the world of communication to know each other better, for in this world in constant growth God is not always well known. We can contribute to an overcoming of old mutual fears and show that each can profit by growing closer together in confidence. The faces of the Church that we project are embodied, for the most part, in the content of the publications for which we are responsible. But they are also embodied in the way in which we produce them, in close collaboration with lay people. Our media are free and responsible, a Christianity open to the world, without fear of dialogue.

## **Our Proposals**

### ***Lay-religious collaboration***

The Congregation share with lay people its mission in these two areas, of education and the media. Guided by the spirit of the Congregation, together they assure the apostolic objectives of the mission. For this collaboration to be effective, two important things need to be kept in mind.

### ***The choice of leaders***

Discernment in the hiring of people to lead our work in these areas is strategic for the future, for it is clear that the example comes from the top and it orients those who are led by the people in these positions.

A high level of competence, a balanced and responsible personality, a political sense, a capacity for vision and the animation of teams, the art of diplomacy but also the capacity to make decisions, etc. are so many traits of the leader (whether it be in educational institutions or media ventures) that are indispensable for managing operations, but it is also important to insure that these people know and are in sympathy with the spirit that is proper to the Congregation.

*The accompaniment of those in positions of responsibility*

It is important to take seriously the initiation of people into the spirit of the Assumption, by means of regular meetings, that deal with technical and organization questions, but also meetings that have a more spiritual character: teaching and knowing about Fr. d'Alzon, retreats, sessions, etc.

***Proposal with regard to communications***

The Comité Assumption of the Province of France meets regularly to reflect on the apostolic work that is Bayard. We propose that once each year the Superior General invite the Comité Assumption and a certain number of lay people and religious from different Provinces to reflect on the Congregation's international strategy for communications, at Bayard but also beyond Bayard, and also on the apostolic orientation of our work in the field of communications. During the year, this exchange could continue by means of an international bulletin (printed or virtual).

***Proposals with regard to education***

- An international Assumptionist “presence” on the Board of Trustees at Assumption College.
- A more systematic collaboration with the Oblates of the Assumption and the Religious of the Assumption in their academic institutions.
- An international meeting every two years to animate the Assumptionists and their collaborators in this mission.
- A study at the level of the Congregation of the pedagogical principles at the Assumption.

***Questions to be put to the Provinces et to those who work in education and the media***

How do we concretize our concern for young people in the context of these two missions?

How do we encourage Assumptionist media that are independent of Bayard?

How can we go further in our inter-Assumption collaboration?

How do we integrate into these missions our concern for the impoverished and the excluded?

How might we formulate in a succinct manner the point of view that is particularly characteristic of the Assumption?

*Analytical Index  
of the Official Texts  
and an  
Index of Geographical Names*



## *Analytical Index of the Official Texts*

*In this index you will find a series of key words classified in alphabetical order.*

*The numbers refer to individual paragraphs.*

*Those in **bold** indicate the most important passages on the subject.*

*Words can be found in the singular or in the plural. Proper names are in italics.*

*At the end, there is another index that includes geographic references in the document.*

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