

**Lettre of Indiction of the General Chapter of 2005****To Assumptionist Religious in all of the Vice/Provinces**

Dear brothers,

In keeping with our Constitutions, I am notifying all of you that the upcoming General Chapter will be held in Rome, at the General House of the Christian Brothers, via Aurelia, from the evening of 1 May until the evening of 22 May 2005. I would ask vice/Provincials who have not already done so to convoke officially the vice/Provincial Chapters that need to precede the General Chapter. Among their responsibilities, these vice/Provincial Chapters should prepare the upcoming General Chapter and elect the delegate(s), who with the ex officio members will represent the Province or Vice-Province.

**Composition of the Chapter**

The base number for the election of delegates will be 40, as decided by the Council of Congregation. Every Province or Vice-Province that as of 30 December 2003 had 40 religious or fewer therefore has right to one delegate. If the Province has 41 to 80 religious, then it should elect 2 delegates and so on; every fraction of 40 entitles a Vice/Province to an additional delegate. The Chapter will consequently include 27 elected members.

The following have right to:

- 1 delegate: Brazil, Spain*
- 2 delegates: Chile-Argentina, Madagascar, Netherlands, North America, North Belgium, South Belgium*
- 5 delegates: Africa*
- 8 delegates: France*

These elected members will be in the majority, and to them will be added 21 ex officio members (the Superior General and his four Assistants in office, the former Superior General, the vice/Provincials and the two first

Provincial Assistants of the Province of France). The Chapter of 2005 will consequently include 45 capitulants.

### The Central Theme

My sixth circular letter “Many gifts, one body” (15 May 2003) has already announced the central theme for the next General Chapter. Allow me to quote from that letter:

“Many gifts, one body”. That is how I would state a theme that draws attention to the **rich diversity** of our small religious family, while emphasizing our awareness of belonging to a single **deeply united fraternity**. The theme is the fruit of our reflection over the years on the rich personal and cultural variety within the Assumption and the need to promote those gifts, whether they be the particular apostolic and spiritual charisms of each individual religious and of our lay friends or the various cultural manifestations of the Assumption spirit in many different countries in the world. We treasure both the fact of being present in twenty-seven countries in the world (our international character), yet cultivate a particular way of being present in each of these cultures (inculturation). That meditation, at least since the Council of Congregation of the year 2000, has at the same time focused on the need to deepen our sense of belonging to one world-wide religious family. “Many gifts, one body.”

The Council (of Congregation 2003) thought that the Chapter of 2005 could effectively foster that kind of unity by re-expressing the charism (as asked by the last General Chapter) not simply in a text (though that will be a part of the Chapter’s work), but in other ways as well. *First*, by attempting to articulate a “projet” for the Congregation. The French word captures well what we think is important for us at this time in our history: a statement of our Assumptionist mission for today, with the principal apostolic activities and the needed resources that we think will help us realize that mission... *Second*, by inviting a small number of lay people to join us at the General Chapter for part of our work: to share with us their perspective on the charism and the mission of the Assumption. *Third*, by adjusting the governmental structures of the Congregation so that we can be as united and as responsive as possible as we confront the challenging missionary calls of our day. *Fourth*, by providing ourselves with the formation tools that will be most helpful

to us as religious and to our lay friends as well. *Finally*, even if it seems a minor point, by trying to identify an image (a symbol, a logo) that quickly and simply communicates to us and to others who we are and what we want to be for the world.

**Many gifts in one body** – the theme is in continuity with the major axes proposed for discussion at the Chapter of 1999<sup>1</sup>, although there is even greater urgency now to address these concerns seriously.

- We want to be a religious family that is alert to the missionary calls of the day and is available and flexible enough to respond as a united body to these calls.
- We want to be a Congregation that takes cultural diversity seriously, but that thinks and acts like one unified body.
- We want to be a religious family that is eager to collaborate with others, religious and lay, in order to bring about God's Reign.
- We want to be a community that cares for its brothers, being present to those among us who are ill or aging and working seriously to prepare well our younger members for the consecrated life and the mission.

### **Preparation... in reflection and in prayer**

The Chapter has full authority not only to take the decisions it wants, but to identify the questions it wants to include on its agenda. In that regard, I invite the entire Congregation to prepare for this event in prayer, in sacrifice, and in reflection. We must open our hearts and our minds to what the Spirit is asking of us, and not simply engage in a routine way in yet another General Chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> See the Letter of Convocation from the Superior General, June, 1998, when Fr. Claude Maréchal identified four major axes of reflection: universal fraternity in an international religious family; our identity as source of inspiration and dynamism; the consequences of aging; the adaptation of structures given changes over the past twenty years.

The way is best prepared by the work that you will do in your local communities and then in the vice/Provincial Chapters that will follow. This involvement at the personal and community level constitutes a major part of the grace that a time of Chapter makes possible. Think of this time as an opportunity to listen in a fresh way to God's Word, to confront with hope the realities that are ours today. These are not always easy realities to face, but it is in this time and this place that God wants to manifest His presence today, through us, not in a past time or way that we might consider to have been more "favorable". Think of this time as an opportunity to imagine new ways of proclaiming that Word, ways that are modest necessarily because of our means, but that will be effective to the extent that it is God inviting us to pursue them.

It is my hope that the preparation that takes place in communities and in vice/Provincial Chapters be free, unhindered, open, inspired. Take time also to think about the aspects of our life and mission that the Council of Congregation 2004 has asked that you consider:

- ✓ The "projet" of the Vice/Province
- ✓ Collaboration among Vice/Provinces and within the Congregation in general:
  - projects to be foreseen with other Vice/Province or Regions, especially those with fewer resources
  - the sensitizing of the vice/province to "Congregation missions", such as the ecumenical mission among the Orthodox
  - the adaptation of your vice/Provincial structures, keeping the continent in mind
  - the strengthening of the General House community
- ✓ Formation:
  - the new draft of the Ratio Institutionis
  - formation to internationality in the Vice/Province
- ✓ Vocation ministry
- ✓ The responses to the various surveys on ecumenism, the parish, and justice and peace.

May our General Chapter be the opportunity for asking the questions that are truly important for the life of our religious family. I invite you to a discernment that will provide the light, the stimulus, and the encouragement that we need to “put out into the deep” (Luke 5:4)<sup>2</sup>, to encounter the Lord and their brothers and sisters in this time that we are given to live.

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

30 May 2004  
Feast of Pentecost

N.B. According to our Rule of Life, #14, and our Capitular Rules, #177, every religious is entitled to send requests, suggestions and proposals to the General Chapter. These should be sent before 1 April 2005, to the Preparatory Commission, Via San Pio V, 55, 00165 Roma (Italy).

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<sup>2</sup> “Novo millennio ineunte”, Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II, 6 January 2001, par. 1.