

Rapport de la Province d'Amérique du Nord



Statistics of the Province

Religious:

	Religious Priests	Religious Perp. Prof.	Religious Temp. Prof.	Total	Novices	Postulants
on 01.01.05	46	8	4	58	0	5
on 01.01.99	54	10	5	69	1	0

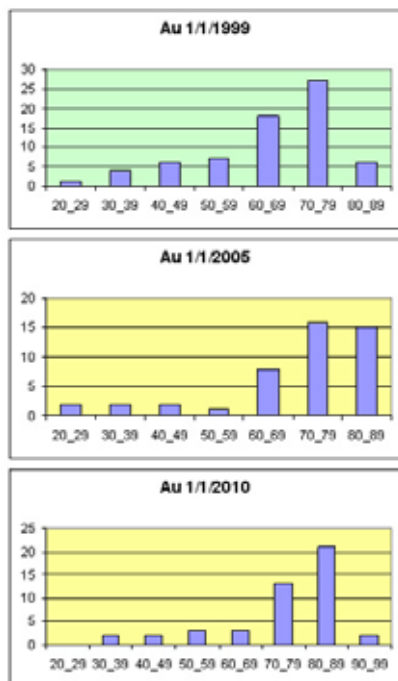
Communities:

		Local Communities		Regional Communities		Attached	Isolated(*)
		Communities	Religious	Communities	Religious		
Country	Canada	2	13	0	0	2	
Country	États-Unis	4	27	0	0	8	1
Country	Mexique	2	9	0	0	0	1
Total							
	01.01.05	8	49	0	0	10	2
	01.01.99	7	57	0	0	9	3

(*) Isolated: religious who live alone, unattached to any community or the Provincial.

- Since 1999:
- 1 Houses have been closed (Warwick, RI)
 - 2 Were opened (Warwick et la Communauté d'Alzon au Canada)
 - 0 Communities merged

A pyramid of ages (between 1999 and 2004, with a projection up to 2010)



Evolution of the Province since 1999***Provincial's Report***

Undoubtedly, the restructuring of the province into three separate regions has characterized the past six years. This re-organization acknowledged a reality which had already existed for some time, namely, that each area of the province was functioning with a certain autonomy not only because of the great distances involved but more importantly because each country features a significantly different culture, experience of Church, socio-political-economic reality, not to mention language. The establishment of regions in the United States and Mexico was intended, as well, to encourage religious in these two countries to assume greater responsibility for their common future and to develop energetic local leadership. In our short experience, the restructuring has proven to be a success. As we develop greater regional identity and autonomy, our greatest challenge consists in maintaining the unity of the province, a major responsibility of the provincial at this time.

If Mexico in particular received new life as a result of this re-organization, two other key events in recent years have given new hope to the regions of Canada and the United States. In Quebec, after the general chapter of 1999 and the re-nomination of Fr. Marcel in Rome and of Fr. Gilles Blouin to Jerusalem, the provinces of France and of Africa contributed to the foundation of a new and vibrant community at the Montmartre canadien. In the United States, the unexpected arrival of candidates from the Philippines has completely re-energized, not to say challenged, communities of this region. Not only has the prospect of a new foundation in the Philippines broadened the horizons of an aging population but the presence of young people has meant the transformation of three of the four communities into formation houses and has attracted the first signs of interest in religious life among young Americans in many years.

This report would be seriously deficient without a word about Bayard's decision to expand dramatically into the market of Canada and the United States, where, as a result of various acquisitions, it has become the major Catholic publisher. This development has opened up enormous opportunities for us in the areas of ministry, lay collaboration, vocation recruiting, and fund-raising. We have not yet fully profited from these rich opportunities.

Three important concluding remarks:

1. In spite of diminishing numbers, the province has tried to maintain its traditional ties with East Africa in terms of personnel and finances. In addition to the presence of Frs. Luc Martel and Richard Brunelle, assistance has come most remarkably in the person of two octogenarians, turned missionaries, Frs. Oliver Blanchette and Alexis Babineau.
2. The Region of Mexico has developed very close ties with lay collaborators to the point of incorporating them vitally into vocation ministry and various apostolic

projects. The other two regions, although not as successful, have made significant strides in promoting greater lay collaboration.

3. The province has become increasingly international over the last six years; in fact, every community in the province has an international flavor, with four communities out of eight featuring religious or candidates from four different countries including France, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Philippines, Vietnam, Nicaragua, Belgium, Madagascar, Romania, England, and Tanzania.

Provincial Chapter

This was the first provincial chapter since the creation of the three regions, which took final shape in the summer of 2003. The Council of the Province decided that this chapter would include three separate sessions because of the restructuring: one session to deal with provincial matters (June 9-11, 2004; Quebec), one to deal with matters of the general chapter (January 5-8, 2005; Worcester), and a final one to implement the decisions of the general chapter (January 2006, perhaps in Mexico).

At the end of each session, chapter members expressed high satisfaction for many reasons. First, they felt that this was the first time that the province met when delegates from the three countries enjoyed equal status and when issues focusing on matters of the USA did not predominate. Second, delegates felt that there was a genuine effort to understand not only the individual reality of each region but also to seek means that would assure the unity of the province. They were unexpectedly, but pleasantly, surprised at the number of matters of common concern which allowed for substantial sharing and planning. Third, they appreciated the preparation that went into various reports and the overall scheduling of the sessions.

Although the first session focused on a presentation of the reality of each region/country and the second on the 'projet de congrégation,' both sessions aimed at the articulation of an initial provincial project. One of the highlights of the second session was the successful completion of this work, which identified six major apostolic objectives/priorities (including renewed local communities, the new evangelization, outreach to youth, the Asia project, and the promotion of the Assumption family). Other major topics of the two sessions included: the role of the provincial in the revised provincial structures, continental collaboration, the restructuring of the congregation, the AA future in Asia (especially the Filipino Project), and questions dealing with vocation and formation ministry.

Of major significance, as mentioned, was the work on the provincial project which will dominate the attention of the entire province over the next few years. Although a definitive project will not be determined until the third session next January, each region has already begun to reflect on the six major priorities and to identify specific means to implement them, both on a provincial and regional basis.

I would cite three other major decisions:

1. the elaboration of specific means to maintain the unity of the province;
2. the recommendation to the general chapter that a congregation-wide body be given authority to oversee our presence in Asia, especially in the areas of personnel and finances;
3. the recommendation, also to the general chapter, that a body in the congregation be vested with authority to deal with certain defined areas affecting the entire congregation.

▣ Région du Canada

The five most significant events of the last six years

- A referendum on the sovereignty of Quebec which came close to victory.
- The scandal of shares.
- This was linked to the referendum, but broke out in 2004: the scandal of the so-called “shares.” To give greater visibility to the concept of federalism, Ottawa created a fund of shares to support in the province of Quebec cultural activities which should bear the federal stamp.
- It turned out that the disbursement of monies passed through the hands of advertising agencies which funneled into their own coffers almost half of the funds provided, that is 100 million dollars of the 250 million allocated to the program.
- The Auditor General unearthed the fraud in 2001, and then even more in 2004.
- Civil unions between persons of the same sex is on its way to being legally recognized as a “marriage.” The House of Commons is due to enact a law once the Supreme Court has found no inconsistencies.
- Commercial disputes with the USA regarding timber, exporting beef and water rights.
- Non-alignment of Canada with the USA on the War in Iraq, and recently discussion over an anti-missile shield, the militarization of space.
- The pedophile scandal in Quebec. A network of men of a certain age carried on for hire the services of under-age prostitutes. Certain well-known men were arrested, among them a radio journalist.
- Liberalization of the economy in Quebec. Reduction in subsidies. Strong reaction of labor unions.
- Merging of cities. Two referenda: one on merging, the other on splitting up.
- Religious instruction taken out of schools or in the process of being taken out.

The Church**Signs of hope**

- Appointment of a new archbishop concerned with the young.
- Youth rallies sparked by the JMJ or Taizé.
- The laity, without a ministry in the Church, but very concerned over its future.
- Groups of different allegiances who are trying new evangelization (evangelization cell, alpha course, etc. . . .)
- Holding a Congress regarding parish reorganizations.

Shadows

- Aging faithful, less and less numerous.
- Restructuring parish bodies; is that the wave of the future?
- The catechization of children is not yet organized.
- Real estate complexes larger than necessary and very expensive to maintain.

Assumptionist reality

- An embryonic reality. One community disappearing, another being internationalized.
- An “open” future; a promising one inasmuch as we manage to maintain a dynamic community life, with each member seeking to make it exist by sharing in a constant, thoughtful and deep fashion the message of Jesus Christ with the women and men of Quebec. Give evidence of inventiveness, of permanent creativity together. The Spirit is given to those who take a step in faith.
- Enriching exchanges already begun between the three regions of the Province.
- Canonical visitations. During the present configuration of the Montmartre, there has been only one. The next one could help to evaluate the last three years.
- To my mind, the pitfalls pointed out have been avoided. In short, neither boasting on the part of those arriving, nor sterile criticism from the older ones.
- The financial situation. Without being extravagant, it is faring well. What was put by as well as what we gained (pastoral care, mass stipends, gifts,) from day to day take care of essential needs and allow sharing with the less endowed. However, everyone needs to be on guard in the management of what we have and the control of our expenses.

Father Christian Blanc, A.A.
Regional Superior

☐ Region of the United States**Five most important events of the last six years in the USA**

- September 11, 2001.
- Subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.
- Re-election of George Bush at the conclusion of an especially divisive campaign
- Economic disquiet related to a huge national debt, a weak dollar and uncertain future of Social Security.
- Legal establishment of the rights of marriage for homosexuals in Massachusetts with backlash on November ballot referendums in a significant number of other states.

Church in the USA**Three difficulties:**

1. Continued fallout from sex abuse crisis; widespread distrust.
2. Apparent irrelevance of the faith to young people.
3. Liberal/Conservative polarization of the Church.

Four signs of hope

1. a more chastened and humble Church in the wake of sex abuse crisis.
2. more forceful witness to the Gospel of life.
3. youth movements are alive in many places.
4. some modest signs of gains in vocations to priesthood and religious life.

The Assumptionists in the US: Life of individuals and communities:

- ongoing efforts to sustain apostolic engagements in the face of diminished numbers;
- with the continuing growth of our Asian project, three out of four communities are now involved in formation;
- a new project in Brighton, inviting graduate students and young professionals to share our life;
- special occasions:celebration of 100 years of Worcester foundation;the visit of the Council of the Congregation this past April-May; celebration marking 100 years in Moscow and honoring past chaplains;
- conferral of d'Alzon medals on two lay collaborators; Jubilee celebrations for Norman and Aidan at St. Anne's; first profession in many years at St. Anne's this past August
- ongoing efforts to work together with our lay friends and colleagues in advancing our mission
- completion of a mission statement for the region;

- one American candidate will begin living at St. Anne's in January; several others have expressed interest;
- challenging prospect of strengthening mission efforts at the College in the wake of by-law changes;
- deaths of Bernard, Wilfrid, Omer, Anselm, and Richard Richards this past year, with particular ramifications for the OER community;
- fragility in our formation program, especially in the straining of our resources, both personal and financial;
- a vocational effort that is still too feeble; absence of Peter further affects this;
- living out our new structures has been the principal response to canonical visitation;
- finances strained by expenses of formation at a time of diminished salaries.

Fr. Dennis Gallagher, a.a
Regional Superior

☐ *Région du Mexique*

Five outstanding events of the last six years in Mexico

- A change in regime: President Fox — Bread of National Action (PAN). Hope for change and deception over meager results.
- Change in the political model: We passed from presidentialism (concentration of power in the Executive) to a fragmentation of power. Neither the principal political parties, nor the three powers of the State agree. Drug traffic and generalized violence. Civic reaction : Grand March for peace.
- The last visit of the Pope.
- Migration. The savings of immigrants, second source of revenue of the Country. The native problem: Zapatism and protests of indigenous groups.
- Reappearance of populism: impossibility of governing. Personal quarrels between politicians which become questions of national interest.
- Controversies between President Fox and Lopez Obrador, mayor of the City of Mexico.

Church Reality**Challenges**

- Crisis of identity and of the authority model in the Church, especially in matters of sexual morality and of life.
- Acceleration in the process of secularization. Modernism.
- Many Catholics are changing religion. Sectarianism and new religious movements. The Catholic Church still retains the greater portion of the population, but the other confessions are growing. Generalized crisis of vocations.

Signs of Hope

- International Eucharistic Congress.
- Canonization of Saint Juan Diego. Recovery of natives into the Church, even though mixed with politico-ecclesial motives.
- The faith-root of the people shows up in their participation in events such as the Pope's visit, the Eucharistic Congress, and in general in popular religiosity.
- Reawakening of the responsibility of the laity in the Church. Resurgence of religious feeling.

Assumptionist Reality

- Approval of new Provincial structure, Regionalization.
- Celebration of the first Regional Chapter with the participation of lay people.
- Arrival of African brothers.
- Return of Father Francisco Huerta to Mexico.
- Ordination of four Mexicans.
- Releasing of Father Carlos Rodriguez Cardenas.
- Six priests in two communities.
- Assumptionist laity.
- PROVOCA (Group of lay associates, whose acronym comes from the first letters of Promotion of Assumption Vocations: Missions, pastoral care of the young, Alzonian encounters.
- Opening of CAIH (Assumptionist Center for Human Integration) known today as CIH (Center for Human Integration) to avoid hierarchical censure.
- Financial crisis at Casa Manuel.
- Extension of Pastoral care in the Eastern Section. Assembly of lay people.
- Existence of the Regional Council.
- Canonical Visitation.
- Council of the Congregation at Cuernavaca in 2004.
- More representative participation at the Provincial Chapter.
- Participation of Mexicans in the Congregation's international commissions.
- Opening up to Central American vocations.

- Emperatriz parish maintained itself functionally up to today.
- Frequent meetings of the two communities in a regular pattern which combines outings, retreats, recollection, evaluation, planning and taking decisions. This has created an atmosphere of fraternity between the two communities.
- Death of several priests who worked in Mexico: Fathers Leonard Larocque, Francisco Dominguez, Jean-Paul Trottier, Bernard Guillet.
- Opening and closing of Dufault House, the house of formation for those who have completed novitiate.
- Departure of some brethren who passed through the novitiate: Eduardo, Alberto, Javier.
- Incapability of the Province to send more personnel.

Challenges:

- Community life. Question our capacity or way of being Brothers. Sometimes, we stay on the surface and do not give concrete expression to it, we don't know how to be brothers. How to be Brothers in our communities limited by our human poverty?
- Organize a regional-provincial project of vocations together. What type of religious do we form or do we want to form? How should we continue to form assumptionist lay people?
- How to share our charism coresponsably? How to render our thinking effective and concrete? Consider two plans: a Methodological and a Spiritual (personal conversion). Form Assumptionist religious to face up to these challenges. Make our plans more concrete and carry out our decisions. Knowledge of Father d'Alzon. What are we doing to get to know, to love and to live with him in our communities?
- Which charism are we going to share?
- We talk much about theory and don't get down into the reality of our world and of our relationship with God.
- Prayer. We do not consider it as fundamental for our religious life. It is only through prayer that we can arrive at true conversion.
- We need to live in a community where we can experience authentic brotherhood, rooted in our charism, our spirituality, our founder. . . in prayer rather than in thought.
- Coherence. How can I ask of the other members of the community something I do not do myself?

Father Miguel Díaz Ayllon, A.A.
Regional Superior