



Plenary General Council

Rome November 30 to December 9, 2013

Number 5

The Page Marker

If the New Year was a book, this fifth PGC would be the page marker. 2014 invites us to be at the rendezvous of the events that will stand out. We are first of all invited to fraternity. The first message of Pope Francis at the 47th World Day of Peace: "fraternity, foundation and path to peace" was present to our debate when we spoke of the struggle to be had for Justice and Peace. We will have the occasion to deepen this dimension of our religious life since the next letter of Father Benoît Grière to the Congregation will talk about it and will prepare us for Year of Consecrated Life in 2015. Next April 24, John XXII and John Paul II will be canonized when a new page in the Assumptionist history will open: the session of the first Chapter of Europe, while in June for the first time, the 6th PGC will be held outside of Rome, at Saint-Lambert-des-Bois near Paris. In the meanwhile, Father General will have made a Canonical Visitation in Spain and we will have deepened the palce of the Eastern European Mission in the Byzantine Rite and in a greater apostolic proximity with the Oblates, on the eve of the 150th anniversary of their foundation. There again the PGC joins Pope Francis who, for the 50th anniversary of the meeting of Paul VI and Athenagoras will journey to Jerusalem withy Patriarch Bartholomew. Asia, also present in the meeting, will receive the visit of the General for the Asiatic Coordination from the 12th to the 14th of March in Manila (the Pope projects a visit to the Philippines soon). There again the Assumption accepts the challenge of the Church in Asia in its triple dialogue with the culture, the poverty and the preoccupations of the continent. Beyond the rendezvous already known, may our page marker help you to not miss the other rendezvous of the Spirit, those that will surprise us and will disturb us in our assurances and our certainties.

BLL

"The Assumption is in full mutation".

The Assumption is changing quickly. The passage to the Province of Europe, the creation of the Province of Madagascar, as well as the reflection on the re-foundation in Colombia, without forgetting the foundations taking place in Tanzania, Uganda and elsewhere, all that makes us say that there is life in our "little family". Very clearly we can be legitimately marked by the fragilities and the difficulties. We cannot be "ostrich-like" and act as if the problems did not exist. We must be realistic and lucid. But lucidity is not an obstacle to hope...

I believe with all my heart that the first revolution to accomplish in the Assumption is a spiritual revolution. We must always more find anew the bases of our religious consecration. (We are) convinced of the holiness of Father d'Alzon. But we also must have the ambition to become saints.

The Assumption is in full mutation... We are only at the beginning of our restructuring and that continentalization is not the end of our steps to a unified and apostolic body.

When I make canonical visitations, I like to say that I come to encourage, vitalize and correct. The word "correct" does not frighten me for it originates in the Letter of Saint Paul. We all need to correct a trajectory to better follow the path of life of the Gospel.

We have studied the mobilizing works and we have decided to address a message to those responsible to each one. It was a very good initiative that had not been programmed. I believe that we are making interesting propositions for the animation of the Congregation. More than ever the body must show itself in solidarity to support the development of the works... We know that it is the Province of Africa that for the moment is able to support this effort, but each Province must be attentive to foster more hardy and generous vocations... We must not stop working.

The first nominations illustrate this fertility of the Province of Africa. We believe that Asia will be a continent where the Assumption will soon be able to develop. We must continue to make the efforts to support our foundations... We have officially opened two new foundations in Tanzania. We are progressively inserting ourselves in East Africa 25 years after our arrival in Nairobi in Kenya.

▶ **T**he financial files were not the least important in our work. I can tell you of my satisfaction for the spirit that prevailed in the study of the requests of solidarity... We have so many needs! The budget of the General House was accepted and the perspective of a great renovation site was opened. Thanks to the Provinces for their generosity. The General Curia wished to contribute a good animation of the body and your financial support is for a goodly part the condition sine qua non of that ambition...

We had discussions that I appreciated on spiritual companionship and the exercise of authority in the light of the example of Pope Francis. We must reflect together on transversal questions to acquire a common culture on important subjects. We must, I think, renew that.

We also reflected on the evolution of the PGC with the creation of the Province of Europe... A thank you... to Niceto, Benoît, and Guy, the three Provincials who are leaving the PGC. We will be happy to welcome you in Rome for this house remains your home. In February next, we will know the name of the first Provincial of Europe... The Province of Europe is a reality that will foster the interest of the whole body. There is a prime stake in its organization. Our next PGC will take place in the Province of Europe at Saint-Lambert-des-Bois, a country cadre that will be good for reflection and discussions... May the Lord help us to accomplish our mission in peace and joy!! ■

Benoît Grière

The messages to the mobilizing works

On its agenda the PGC had the evaluation of four of the seven mobilizing works: ISEAB, Bayard, the Bush Schools in Madagascar and the Saint Peter and Saint Andrew Center in Bucharest. At the ISEAB, the cornerstone of the future campus has been laid, the students want to participate in the financing of their new institute and Fr. Kibanda has returned after obtaining his doctorate. Bayard has celebrated its 140th anniversary but want to always remain in the avant-garde by accentuating its international development and facing the digital explosion. Its ties to the Assumption are narrow, but the future has to be foreseen. In Bucharest, the Saint Peter and Saint Andrew Center has three preoccupations: the dialogue with

culture, the welcoming of students and a rich conference program. There are today 31 Bush Schools in Madagascar and the college building has been built on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the arrival of the Assumption on the island. But beyond the evaluation of these four works, the PGC wanted to address a message of encouragement to all the works and also to those whose evaluation was on the agenda of the previous meeting of the PGC: the Adveniat Hostel, the "Accompagner" association and Assumption College in Worcester. To all, support and encouragement and a greater collaboration with the Congregation were expressed. Dynamism and requirements were the key words in these messages.

Honors for those leaving

The PGC was duty-bound to honor significantly the three European Provincials who ended their membership in the PGC. During a festive evening dedicated specially to them, each one was thanked. The Province of France exists since 1978, that of Spain since 1969 and that of North Europe since 2005.



Benoît Gschwind,
Provincial of France:
"It is not always easy to explain in a Provincial Council how such

and such a decision made in the PGC matured. The Province of France is a big Province with 37 communities on three continents, I believe I have found a way of working with my council, but the minutes of the PGC, difficult to exploit on certain points, are not always clear enough..."



Niceto Calle,
Provincial of Spain:
"It is good to be in the PGC in the measure that we get

into the process of exercising the responsibility of the whole Congregation more profoundly and more globally. It is something that we learn and we participate with the sentiment or doing something important. The representative of Europe will have to consider the numerous elements and the diverse realities that compose the Province of Europe."



Guy Leroy, Provincial of North Europe: "I live my last PGC.

This council and its manner of exercising the government is a decision of the General Chapter of 2011 that has above all as its aim the good of the Congregation. I am pleased to have participated in it."

Pope Francis? But again...



Seeing far and wide. 2013 will have been marked by the election of Pope Francis, the first Jesuit and Latin-American Pope who gives new directions to the Church, chosen by the American magazine Time as the Man of the Year. In his first interview to the Jesuit magazines and in the exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, he expresses his idea of the Christian and of the Church. What are its consequences for our Congregation? How does his pontificate affect our lives as disciple, as religious, as Provincial? How does it affect our decision making? How, as Assumptionists are we called to work on the borders?

This Pope has launched a debate that our PGC could not avoid. The members of the PGC agree that this personage is first of all providential. He is a brother who considers the other as a brother and recognizes the inestimable value of every person because he hides the presence of God.

He is someone who brings us to the borders, concretely, to the world of immigration, the one who sinks on the shores of Lampedusa, or is the object of all sorts of discriminations throughout the world. Pope Francis takes on the role of the wounded healer, the one who wields authority in our proximity. He wants to be Francis, at the school of the Poverello of Assisi by inviting us to return to a way of simplicity in our religious life and in reminding us that we are there by grace to allow ourselves to be seized by the One who tells us the mercy of God.

The Pope is a practical concrete man who takes on life daily and is not content to watch from the balcony. Let us retain from him especially the importance he gives to the attitudes, to the symbols and the gestures, in reminding us that religious life is first of all a sign of the Kingdom. He engages us to care to be signs in our Churches. It is there without doubt a place that we are invited to occupy: to be signs of the Kingdom, to be signs of joy and of the newness of the Gospel for the world. ■

Contagious attraction and fervor

Many places are experiencing a dearth of vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life. This is often due to a lack of contagious apostolic fervor in communities, which results in a cooling of enthusiasm and attractiveness. Whenever there is life, fervor, and a desire to bring Christ to others, genuine vocations will arise. Even in parishes where priests are not particularly committed or joyful, the fraternal life and fervor of the community can awaken in the young a desire to consecrate themselves completely to God and to the preaching of the Gospel. This is particularly true if such a living community prays insistently for vocations and courageously proposes to its young people the path of special consecration. On the other hand, despite the scarcity of vocations, today we are increasingly aware of the need for a better process of selecting candidates to the priesthood. Seminaries cannot accept candidates on the basis of any motivation whatsoever, especially if those motivations have to do with affective insecurity or the pursuit of power, human glory, or economic well-being.

(Extract from the Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium, no. 1207).

The first apostolic nominations

Father Benoît Grière with the assent of his Plenary General Council gave the first apostolic nominations of:

- Bro. Kakule Komanda, Gaston (Province of Africa)
- Bro. Katembo Vuseghesa, Floribert (Province of Africa)
- Bro. Ddiadia Mayoko, Fabien (Province of Africa)
- Bro. Kaku;e Paka, Moïse (Province of Africa)
- Bro. Kambale Katsyoto, André (Province of Africa)
- Bro. Mbusa Katusi, Joseph (Province of Africa)
- Bro. Paluku Wikongo, Patrick (Province of Africa)
- Bro. Andrei Cezar (Province of France)
- Bro. Tran Duc Long Pierre (Province of France)
- Bro. Yarra Sirman Ludvic (Province of Madagascar)

Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation

The PGC of December 2013 was marked by the invitation of Sister Franca Sessa (LSA) former missionary in Brazil from 1963 to 2006 and returned to Rome at that date at the invitation of her Congregation to coordinate the International Secretariat Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation. The General Chapter had recommended to the Plenary General Council to look into the participation of the Congregation in the International Commission for “Justice and Peace of the Assumption family” (Acts of the 2011 Chapter, no. 58 {2). This meeting had thus a special meaning with a view of committing more deeply the

Congregation. Sister Franca traced for the Council the origins and the *raison d'être* of the Secretariat. That path was initiated in 1971 on the occasion of the Synod of Bishops on justice in the world. The path followed then was “to adopt an attitude of humility faced with an ever deepening divide between the poverties met with and the solutions to be proposed.” As Sister Franca testifies the creation of the Secretariat was to respond to the primary intuitions of the Congregation and integrate in a concrete pastoral work the social doctrine of the Church. If the Secretariat saw the light of day in 1993, it was the Chapter of 1999 that gave it its international dimension and decided to make it an NGO



At the root of our vocation, we are called to witness the love of God for the poor, the workers and the families. It is a question of remaking the social fabric, beginning with the families, experience changing social relations, and rebuilding a people of God through the fraternities where the members become apostles in their milieu and through their work.

before the United Nations to have a greater visibility facing the deciders. Two years later it joined the NGO of the Order of St. Augustine to be more efficient before the UN especially in the Department of Public Information (DPI) and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). In 2006, the Religious of the Assumption associated themselves to the Secretariat. The Mission of the Secretariat is to coordinate, to be the motor of the mission by stimulating the Congregation to listen to the challenges of today's world. It is a question of better understanding the social phenomena and to foster their coherence with our religious, biblical and theological approach, and, on the ground, to seek solutions that allow us

to develop solidarity and the promotion of the human being. It is a question of underlining the outstanding aspects of our mission with its successes and its failures. In each territory, there is a reporting Sister whose role is to promote moments of re-reading, to be attentive to the orientations of the Congregation. We see how the local and the global are interdependent. From now on the places for intervention are numerous, especially in Africa. Everywhere it is a question of working in networks in order to work better together. This discussion allowed us to see how important it is in the Assumption to mutualize the

means. How can we develop local implantations while better understanding their global repercussions? Globalization sometimes prevents us from seeing a reality in which evil and injustice are hidden and that victimize certain populations. We will retain this phrase that Sister Franca heard as a refrain during her participation in the “Rio+20” the United Nations conference of 2012 on enduring development that was held in Brazil: “If you do not have a strong spirituality, you will not have the capacity to find new answers for our planet.” To have the capacity to change the realities, you must be people of the Spirit. ■