

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**

- (1) 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.

- (2) ***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.

¹ Cette proposition a été préparée lors d'une rencontre internationale " Atelier Éducation/Médias " à Assumption College, Worcester, MA (USA), le 28 juillet au 2 août 2004. Ont participé à l'atelier les suivants : S. Marie Paulette ALAUX, OA ; Fr. Jean-Michel BROCHEC, AA ; P. Arnold CASTRO, AA ; S. Nuala COTTER, RA ; P. Nelson EGAÑA, AA ; P. John FRANCK, AA ; P. Dennis GALLAGHER, AA ; P. Sylvain GASSER, AA ; P. Tomas GONZALEZ, AA ; P. Dominique GREINER, AA ; P. Benoît GRIÈRE, AA ; P. Silvio HERRERA, AA ; M. Tomasz JASTER ; P. Omer KAMATE KASYAKULU, AA ; M. Joop KOOPMAN ; P. Michel KUBLER, AA ; M. Ghislain LAFONT ; P. Richard LAMOUREUX, AA ; Dr. Marc LEPAIN ; M. Pascal RUFFENACH ; Fr. Jean-Marie Vianney PALUKU THALIWATHEKA, AA ; M. Benoît STREPENNE ; S. Clare Teresa TJADER, RA.

- (3) ***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.
- (4) ***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."
- (5) ***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

- (6) ***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.
- (7) ***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.
- (8) ***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.
- (9) ***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

(10) *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 “areopagus 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).

(11) *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.

(12) *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

3.1 Lay-religious collaboration

(13) 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.

(14) *3.1.1. 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.

(15) *3.1.2 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.

3.2 Proposal with regard to communications

- (16)** The Comité Assomption 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 Assomption 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).

3.3 Proposals with regard to education

- (17)** 3.3.1 An international Assumptionist "presence" on the Board of Trustees at Assumption College.
- (18)** 3.3.2 A more systematic collaboration with the Oblates of the Assumption and the Religious of the Assumption in their academic institutions.
- (19)** 3.3.3 An international meeting every two years to animate the Assumptionists and their collaborators in this mission.
- (20)** 3.3.4 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

- (21)** How do we concretize our concern for young people in the context of these two missions?
- (22)** How do we encourage Assumptionist media that are independent of Bayard?
- (23)** How can we go further in our inter-Assumption collaboration?
- (24)** How do we integrate into these missions our concern for the impoverished and the excluded?
- (25)** How might we formulate in a succinct manner the point of view that is particularly characteristic of the Assumption?

APPENDICES: Further development of themes alluded to in the “Convictions”

APPENDIX 1 – « Teaching, at the heart of the Assumptionist charism »

Teaching is at the heart of the Assumptionist charism, and constitutes an important part of its patrimony. We are firmly convinced that teaching is an urgency as much in poor countries as in the rich, and it is worthwhile for Assumptionist Provinces to continue to assume responsibility for educational institutions.

For us, to teach is to educate, to help people grow, by the transmission of knowledge, by the communication of culture, by human relations and by the life and the activities of a school.

Our **vision** of the human person is founded on the Gospel and is rooted in our faith in Jesus Christ, in the face of God and of the human person that he reveals to us.

Our **way of educating** is marked by the Assumptionist seal. We want:

- To help young people be inserted into today's world, not in a passive way but on the contrary as active agents in its transformation;
- To form men and women of conviction, fully of their own time, discerning and seeking the truth in dialogue with others;
- To form students to the social/communal dimension of life;
- To foster in our institutions human relations that are cordial, simple, frank;
- To promote a faith that is centered on the essentials (“to be totally catholic”, as Fr. d’Alzon put it), a faith that is universal, truly catholic

Understood in this way, teaching is at the service of formation and is an apostolic activity. For us it is a question of helping the young people at our institutions to become women and men according to God's plan and to know the Father's love for them and for all human beings.

APPENDIX 2 – « The educational institution »

Education, whereby society introduces young people to the community and transmits its tradition, is a **major responsibility of all peoples**.

By education, the Assumption collaborates in the work of the Church in and for society.

Educational institutions are a privileged means of contributing to the coming of the Kingdom:

- **They collaborate with the family** in the task of socialization, forming men and women of communion, taking their civic responsibility seriously;
- **They provide continuity** over time, making it possible to teach in a more complete and unified way and allowing the time necessary for a progressive assimilation of content;
- **They assure that the student is accompanied**, which is important because learning and maturing are processes that take time.

The **presence of the Assumption** guarantees continuity and coherence in an institution.

Admitting **the limits and the constraints** imposed by school systems and the freedom of individuals, the educational institution remains nonetheless a privileged way of forming and evangelizing.

APPENDIX 3 – « The educational community »

In the splintered society of the 21st century, the Christian school, because it is an educational community, educates in a society for society. The experience provides students with values and a formation for the humanization of culture and the construction of the city according to God's design.

In the act of teaching, it is not simply a question of communicating between just two people. It is an act that involves the whole educational community. This community is made up of students and teachers, of all the personnel in the school, as well as the parents. It creates a strong family spirit at a time when natural families are often splintered and disintegrating. In this way, the institution provides a whole coherent society (an ambiance) that sustains and forms according to the same spirit.

Everyone participates in the elaboration of the educational project and has a certain responsibility for its realization and evaluation. No member can pull back from this. In this way, the education offered is reinforced from all sides and in all domains.

Education takes place in a context of respect and mutual collaboration between religious and lay people, each bringing not only his competence but also the wealth of his own particular vocation, whether lay or Assumptionist. All take part in the educational work according to their specific role.

This community is not born spontaneously; it is created and recreated constantly by means of meetings, continued education, friendships, celebrations (liturgy), etc.

In an Assumptionist institution, the Congregation is obliged to provide to the lay people the means for appropriating the Assumption charism, so that they in turn can assume responsibility for the charism in the educational community.

APPENDIX 4 – « The type of education at the Assumption : an integral education »

The head – Our schools allow young people to acquire the knowledge and competence that will be useful to them in today's world. They form people of conviction, able to assume their responsibilities and argue their positions. They form them to rigor, to discernment, to good judgment, to a critical sense. They foster creativity and education to freedom.

The heart – Our schools seek to foster respect for people and for goods. We find in them a family spirit that encourages close relations, conviviality, friendship, a certain quality in human relations, hospitality, openness to others, attentiveness to the poor, an ongoing concern for forgiveness. Error is seen as an opportunity for progress. Our schools encourage a respect for differences, kindness, frankness, cordiality and simplicity—a type of education dear to Fr. d'Alzon and still relevant today; dialogue is a permanent preoccupation.

The arms – Attentive to Fr. d'Alzon's wish, our schools form young people open to the Gospel, able and ready to play an active role in society.

Faithful to a vision that takes the entire person into account, a human being that is dynamic and in relation with others, we pursue four goals: to foster growth in freedom, in responsibility, in solidarity with others, in an understanding of the meaning of life.

Note: « The unity of the educational project »

From his arrival in the institution until his departure, the student is part of a coherent whole and is offered a variety of academic, para-scholastic and extracurricular activities that are carefully interrelated. All aim at realizing the ultimate goal of forming the whole person. Academic, para-scholastic and extracurricular are not separate entities, but a coherent whole at the service of the same goal.

APPENDIX 5 – « The apostolic mission of the Assumption in media »

Promoting a catholic identity at the heart of a pluralist society

A conviction : through its media apostolate, and more particularly through the work of Bayard, the Assumption contributes to the existence of a Catholic identity at the heart of society. By means of various means of communication that it sponsors through the world (the press, radio, multimedia), Bayard invites Catholics to enter into a fruitful dialogue with all those who make up society. In a world (especially in the West) that seeks solid spiritual and religious points of reference, the Catholic identity of the Congregation is an opportunity to enter into dialogue with the greatest number of people by means of all the various media.

The Assumption contributes to the unity of the Church. The Assumption provides the opportunity for Catholics to identify themselves as such in a community of faith that expresses itself in diversity. The media work of the Congregation seeks to be a Church voice in society and a voice within the Church that opens up to diversity.

In a world where media groups are becoming more and more powerful by means of alliances, mergers, and buy-outs, and given the possibilities that the Assumption has, the Congregation

needs to choose the initiatives and opportunities that are available to her. She needs to define her priorities for today especially with regard to the sectors that are most central to her mission of inculturation and evangelization.

These priorities constitute the missionary field of the Assumption. It is most important that the spirit of the Assumption nourish the teams of lay people who work in the communications apostolate and be at the heart of the dialogue between the editorial venture and the targeted public. This spirit cannot be promoted without the active presence of religious men and women.

Bayard, a national enterprise opening up to the world

Observation : Bayard continues to grow throughout the world, on the five continents, and especially in Europe and in North America. This growth, necessary from the point of view of development, is an opportunity for Bayard, for the Assumption and for the Church. The Assumption now needs to find the means to accompany this world-wide expansion.

The priorities for the international development of Bayard are set in the light of the major orientations of the Congregation, through dialogue with the enterprise. Aware that Bayard is becoming less and less a French reality and more and more a multinational enterprise, the Congregation should consider herself responsible for this work wherever it develops in the world.

The diversity of Assumptionist initiatives in the media world goes beyond the purview of Bayard alone. The apostolic mission of the Assumption in the media is not to be limited to Bayard. Nonetheless, it could be very useful to call upon the expertise of Bayard.

The Assumption, throughout the world, should be in a position to accompany the brothers, the communities, and the lay people who are proclaiming the Kingdom of God by means of work in the area of communications.