

RATIO INSTITUTIONIS

***Formation***

***For life and for mission***



In 1987, my predecessor, Fr. Claude Maréchal, promulgated the first edition of the Ratio Institutionis, approved at that year's General Chapter. Now, eighteen years later, I am pleased to publish this revised edition, approved at the General Chapter held this year in Rome from 1-22 May. This revised edition is the fruit of work begun at an international session for formators, held in Nairobi in 2002. An international committee worked on new drafts at three different meetings and submitted them for suggestions and improvements to Provincials and formators in every Province. A final proposed document was reviewed and amended by the members of the Council of Congregation in 2004.

The original edition of the Ratio was already rich in content and in pedagogical suggestions. As Father Claude suggested, that text was an invitation to personal growth not only for young religious, but for all of us. Some communities and Provinces took this invitation seriously, using the Ratio as a source-book for retreats, workshops, community discussions and local renewal efforts.

If anything, this second edition has even more potential in terms of personal and community renewal; I also think it could inspire formation tools for lay people associated with our communities. This new Ratio includes a number of important innovations. A new section on "life-long formation" (VI) clearly says that formation is a concern for a religious at every stage of his life. The importance of educating formators is developed in a new chapter (VII), entitled "Becoming a formator". Without underestimating the importance of "on-the-job training", this new Ratio insists that the young religious and ordained minister will grow apostolically only if he is mentored carefully during those times of pastoral formation (see, for example, discussions of this topic in section V on "Formation for the Ordained Ministries"). Finally, the new text reflects a deeper awareness of the international character of our religious family and suggests ways to introduce the young religious to this dimension of our common life.

The General Chapter of 2005 focused on the Assumption charism from different points of view: how this charism is expressed in a Congregation-wide "Project", how lay people can be introduced to this charism and be nourished by it, and finally in the Ratio how religious can be formed in this charism. If you want a definition of what it means to be an Assumptionist today, I invite you to read the first five pages of this remarkable document (#1-23). If you want to know how to live more faithfully in this spirit, then immerse yourself in the formation process that is described in the rest of the booklet. Father d'Alzon said we were "perpetually novices". We may not like the formula, but it says at least two beautiful things: there is always something to learn, and there is always reason to hope.

The General Chapter of 2005, with its theme "many gifts in one body ...so that the world may believe", is an invitation to hope, to communion, to mission. I am happy to promulgate officially this new edition of the Ratio Institutionis, an integral part of this Chapter's work and yet another grace to illumine our path. May this opportunity, this kairos, be the blessing for each of us that I believe it to be.

Richard E. Lamoureux, a.a., Superior General  
Rome, 23 May 2005

## ABBREVIATIONS

- CT: Premières Constitutions des Augustins de l'Assomption (1855-1865). Rome: 1966.*
- LCC: Code of Canon Law. 1983.*
- ES: Écrits Spirituels du Serviteur de Dieu Emmanuel d'Alzon. Rome: 1956.*
- RL: Rule of Life of the Congregation of the Augustinians of the Assumption. 1983.*
- VC: John-Paul II. Vita Consecrata: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father John-Paul II. 1996.*

## FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF FORMATION

1. The *Ratio Institutionis*, our Assumptionist plan for formation, has a triple purpose:
  - It is intended to be at the service of men who have heard God's call, to respond with awareness and in freedom to that call, to shape their lives accordingly, and to commit themselves progressively within the Congregation with the whole of their personality.
  - It is intended to be at the service of those brothers who have received the mission to be formators, to give them direction for their task.
  - It is intended to be at the service of the whole Congregation's calling. When it receives new members, it commits itself to convey to them the wealth of a religious life lived in conformity to its characteristic spirit and to afford them the means to pursue its special mission within the Church and in the world.

### 1. THE GOALS OF FORMATION

2. Progressively forming a candidate or a brother in formation by the spirit of the Assumption means bringing him to live more and more intensely the triple experience of intimacy with God, of self-renunciation, and of disinterested passion for the Reign of God, within apostolic community life. It is intended to help him discover that his deepest identity, personal and relational, human and spiritual, is his self-realization in God.

To form a candidate or a brother in formation means not only introducing him to the broad outlines of the Assumptionist charism; it means, rather, helping him to conceive within himself a creative dynamism by which to reinterpret the charism faithfully. It is a pedagogy that leads him to appreciate its essence and to want to deploy its potential within today's diversity of cultures.

3. God's call is addressed to men who are very different one from another, having their personal histories and their diverse gifts and aptitudes. Formation should allow each one to develop his gifts for service to the Church and to the Kingdom.

Out of faithfulness to its doctrinal, social and ecumenical tradition, the Congregation provides each candidate or brother in formation, whether he intends to pursue an ordained ministry or not, with a sound human and religious formation that is adapted and proportionate to his abilities.

4. Assumptionist formation seeks to form men who in this world will be sons of Father d'Alzon, men of faith, brothers living in apostolic community, and apostles for the coming of the Kingdom.

## **Men of Faith**

### *Convictions*

5. Committing oneself to Assumptionist religious life calls for a certain number of basic qualities in order to be able to deal with the exigencies of apostolic religious life: a sufficiently balanced character, an aptitude for life in community, and those human virtues especially emphasized by Father d'Alzon: uprightness, frankness, human warmth, simplicity, initiative, boldness, generosity and disinterestedness.
6. The project of definitively committing the whole of one's person to follow Jesus Christ, poor, chaste and obedient, offering one's life for the world, with all the rifts as well as new solidarities that entails, cannot be pursued without a personal knowledge and love of him who is the very heart of Assumptionist life. Christ and his love are the object of our vocation and mission. In him God and man coalesce – divinity and humanity.
7. Formation helps the candidate or the brother in formation to establish and deepen his personal relationship with God. It spurs him on in the

regular practice of personal and communal prayer. It calls him to acknowledge God's gift in his life and in that of his contemporaries. Accordingly, he will grow in faith, hope and charity. In the footsteps of Christ, impelled by the Spirit and inspired by Mary's example, he will be able to learn how to risk his life on the paths of the Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

### ***The Means***

8. Formation should put the candidate or the brother in formation in contact with the sources of our spirituality, above all with the Word of God and with the great spiritual masters, especially Saint Augustine and Father d'Alzon.
9. It should help him to discern and to contemplate God's action and invitation in his life and in the life of the Church and of the world.
10. It should afford him an apprenticeship in faithfulness and steadfastness in the struggle of prayer.
11. It should have him discover, through the experience and practice of the vows, a path of life that allows him to give himself completely to God and to others.

## **Brothers Living in Apostolic Community**

### ***Convictions***

12. Called by Christ, an Assumptionist chooses to live in community according to the Rule of Saint Augustine and the spirit of the Assumption. Our community is apostolic and our apostolate is communal. The community is apostolic in as much as it witnesses to the coming of God's Reign. It gives proof of and reveals our love for God and others.
13. The community sustains the apostolic mission and the personal prayer life of each brother. In its common prayer it welcomes and

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<sup>1</sup> RL 24.

celebrates God's action in the lives of men.<sup>2</sup> A brother's whole life and action should witness to the coming of the Kingdom.

### *The Means*

14. One of the first concerns of formation is apprenticeship in the common life, which requires continued conversion and self-transcendence if the precious joy of that life is to be discovered.
15. We should foster simplicity, honesty in relationships, quality sharing of one's life, active participation in the community's common prayer, initiative, co-responsibility and solidarity.
16. In the course of the local community's life, the candidate or the brother in formation will come gradually to share himself with his provincial community, with our international community, and also with the other congregations of the Assumption family.
17. By integrating himself into the Congregation, he enters into a history and a tradition. His reading and the sessions and retreats he follows will enable him to come to know and assimilate the life and spirit of the Founder, the history of the Assumption and the international situations of the Congregation today.

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<sup>2</sup> RL 22.

## **Apostles for the Coming of the Kingdom**

### *Convictions*

18. The soul of our charism is the actualization of God's Reign, that great plan he has for all humanity and which he revealed in Jesus Christ. Whether one is called to ordained ministries or not, "The spirit of the founder impels us to embrace the great causes of God and of man, to go wherever God is threatened in man and man threatened as image of God."<sup>3</sup> this is how we are to share in the life and the mission of the Church. "Faithful to the will of Fr. d'Alzon, our communities are at the service of truth, of unity and of charity. Thus they herald the Kingdom."<sup>4</sup>
19. The apostolate at the Assumption is fundamentally communal. And so long as it is not, we will not really be ourselves. It is quite obvious, then, that one cannot form himself into an apostle in the Assumption without integrating himself within the community, throughout all the stages of formation.

### *The Means*

20. However much study and interiorization take up most of one's time during the course of formation, they must also be related to one's preparation for Assumptionist apostolate.
21. As a man of his time, the candidate or brother in formation should learn to appreciate the values of different human conditions, especially those of the poor. He should open his eyes and his heart to the needs and the pleadings of the Church and of the world. His heart should be set on a desire to proclaim Jesus Christ and to take his place in building up a world that is more just and more fraternal.
22. There are definite attitudes to be cultivated: openness to otherness, initiative in solidarity and co-responsibility, collaboration with lay

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<sup>3</sup> RL 4.

<sup>4</sup> RL 5.

persons and, more specially, a sensitivity to service and love of the Church.

23. We should accommodate the apostolic projects of the brothers in formation, evaluating them by the apostolic project and orientations of the Province and of the Congregation. This should provide them with valuable incentive to prepare themselves seriously and competently for their future ministry.

## 2. CONDITIONS FOR FORMATION

24. From this perspective, formation depends on certain conditions, some of which are:

### *- Mutual Respect*

On the part of the Congregation: respect for the candidate or brother in formation who has been called by God, respect for him as a person whom it welcomes and helps toward fulfillment in his decision to follow Christ.

On the part of the candidate or brother in formation: respect for the spirit and mission of the Congregation into which he has decided to integrate himself completely.

### *- Collaboration*

The candidate or the brother in formation is the one who is primarily responsible for his formation. It cannot be fruitful if it is received passively. It requires active collaboration and dialogue, that is honest and trustful between the one in formation and his formator.

### *- Progress*

The discernment of God's call, apprenticeship in religious life, admission into the Congregation, diaconal and presbyteral ordination, all represent decisive steps in the course of a person's life. Freely undertaking each of these stages requires time to evolve

and mature humanly and spiritually. This process varies according to each person, and should be taken into consideration in determining the span of the different stages.

- *Adaptability*

Conforming to the orientations of Canon Law and to the spirit of the Assumption means that the modalities of formation will have to be adapted to the cultures and to the concrete situations of a country, and to the needs of the Church and of the Congregation.

### **3. THOSE PRINCIPALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR FORMATION<sup>5</sup>**

#### **The Commission and the Formation Director**

**25.** The Formation Commission is constituted of the formators who have been named by the Provincial Superior with the consent of the Council of the Province<sup>6</sup>, and by the Provincial Superior himself or his delegate.

The one who shall be responsible for formation in the Province is named, from among the members of the Formation Commission, by the Provincial Superior with the consent of the Provincial Council.<sup>7</sup> His chief responsibilities are:

- Helping the various communities and those responsible for formation in them, visiting them, taking to heart their struggles and promoting sessions among them as well as other collaborative means.
- Calling and animating the Formation Commission's meetings.
- Keeping a close eye on the progress of candidates and brothers, on the different stages of their intellectual and pastoral formation.
- Reflecting on those questions fundamental to formation and suggesting initiatives and new projects.

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<sup>5</sup> *RL* 97f, 97h, 152, 193-195, 200.

<sup>6</sup> *RL* 97f, 97h, 193.

<sup>7</sup> *RL* 87, 95 b.

- Helping the Province's formators to fulfill their missions as well as possible.

## **The Formation Community**

26. Sharing in the community's life plays a major role in formation at the Assumption. All the communities of the Province are jointly responsible for the formation of the candidates and brothers in formation. Nevertheless, it is most appropriate that those responsible for formation take special care in selecting the community that will accompany a candidate or brother in formation. They should be especially heedful that the community be able to provide the following:
- A fraternal life in which the candidate or brother in formation will feel accepted as he is and which will encourage him to share actively in the common life.
  - A regular prayer life.
  - A program of scheduled meetings when the community members talk about and reflect on their lives, their faith and their apostolic activities.
  - An openness to the realities of the Church and of the world.
  - The possibility of sharing in the community's apostolic project.
  - A real closeness to and collaboration with lay persons, who can help the candidate or brother in formation to recognize the specificity of his own vocation.

## **The Novice Master**

27. Given the important responsibility the Novice Master has, he should be named well enough in advance to assure him the time to prepare himself for his mission. It is crucial that he have an appropriate formation. He should complete his formation by participating in sessions specific to Novice Masters or by spending some time in other novitiates.

28. The Novice Master is named for a mandate of three years, renewable. His nomination must be accepted by the Superior General.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Formator**

29. All the brothers of the Province are together responsible for formation. A religious life that is authentically lived out is formative in itself. Nevertheless, the Provincial Superior shall designate a formator whom he will charge with personally following the candidate or brother in formation before and after his novitiate.
30. This formator has a double role:
- He has a special relationship with the candidate or brother in formation. Through regular meetings, he provides him the opportunity to express his ambitions, his discoveries, his difficulties and whatever questions he may have concerning religious, communal or apostolic life. He tries to enlighten him at decisive times as well as all along the way of his religious life.
  - He represents the candidate or brother in formation before the Province. At evaluation meetings, he helps those responsible in the choices and decisions they have to make concerning him.

### **The Spiritual Guide**

31. The candidate or brother in formation has to choose an experienced spiritual guide who will help him in the spiritual life, to discern God's will at important and decisive moments and to discover what prayer and the interior life are about. He should choose his spiritual guide, in so far as possible, from among the members of the religious family of the Assumption.

The choice of a spiritual guide is left to the freedom of each one. However, the candidate or brother in formation should discuss his choice with his formator.

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<sup>8</sup> RL 140.

## **The Religious Responsible for Life-Long Formation**

32. Named by the provincial authorities, this brother should oversee the implementation of the Province's overall plan for Life-Long Formation.<sup>9</sup>

### **4. FORMATION AS GRADUAL**

#### **The Pre-Novitiate**

33. Pre-novitiate offers the candidate to Assumptionist religious life a special time of formation that prepares him for the novitiate. This stage focuses on discerning the motives and attitudes that form the basis of his desire for religious life.
34. During the course of this period, the candidate should deepen the self-knowledge that he had already acquired, with the help of his guide, during the time that preceded his admission to the pre-novitiate. During this time of pre-novitiate, he should also ascertain the solidity of his desire to follow Christ.
35. It is important to see whether he can live in community and find there the privileged place where he can fulfill himself as a human person and as a Christian.
36. His apostolate should corroborate his desire to serve God and men and women in the Church.
37. At the end of this stage, the candidate ought to be able, freely and responsibly, to formulate his request for admission to the novitiate. The community that received him as well as his designated formator will give their considered opinions concerning his aptitudes for living the life of an Assumptionist.

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<sup>9</sup> RL 160.

## **The Novitiate**

38. The novitiate is that privileged time when the novice, by being attentive to the Spirit, has the opportunity to deepen, to discern and to confirm his calling to religious life at the Assumption.
39. This time ought to afford the novice, through the accompaniment of his Novice Master, a more profound experience of God, the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ, and the desire to follow him who was poor, chaste and obedient out of love for God's Reign. It ought to open him up to a more communal sense of his gift of self to Christ through his service to his brothers.
40. Through a better understanding of the reality of the Church and of the actual world, the novice is initiated into apostolic life and the proclamation of the Kingdom.

## **The Post-Novitiate**

41. The stage following his novitiate is a time for the brother to put down roots and to marshal what he has acquired. It should lead him toward full integration within the life and mission of the Congregation, through his definitive commitment. This is a time of apprenticeship in faithfulness, steadfastness and forbearance.
42. This is also the stage when a brother examines more deeply the spirit and vocation of the apostolic community. His formation should also prepare him for his future mission, which one day he may exercise within an ordained ministry.

## **Formation for the Ordained Ministries**

43. A deacon and a new priest are just as much ministers as their elders. Their formation, however, is not yet complete. Accompanied by an older minister, they need to allow themselves to be molded by their new mission, confided to them by Christ and the Church. Accordingly, a specific time and place for this should be provided for.

44. It is essential that they learn to become pastors – by an effective apprenticeship affording them the acquisition of pastoral attitudes – and to integrate this ecclesial ministry into their religious life. Thus their faith, their prayer and their apostolic sense can penetrate one another. And then day by day they will become apostles according to the heart of Christ and the spirit of the Assumption.

### **Life-Long Formation**

45. Neither perpetual profession nor ordination marks the end of formation. The different experiences in his life as well as his pastoral practice will reveal new horizons for a brother. It is essential that he continue to form himself, as Father d'Alzon urged us.<sup>10</sup>
46. Life-Long Formation is not a luxury but a necessity for faithfulness to the mission a brother has accepted. Thus will he, little by little, become himself a formator for the generations that will follow him.

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<sup>10</sup> *ES 208-209; Circular Letters - 1874-1875*, pp. 18-20: “Study is indispensable for the religious who does not work with his hands. It is the means by which he earns a living at the sweat of his brow. [...] let it be understood that if ever the religious stop studying, it will be the sign that the Congregation has outlived its usefulness and has been cursed by God. [...] But it is not sufficient to study; we must study for a goal. For us, everything must be related to God, to Jesus Christ and to his Church.”

## I – PRE-NOVITIATE

47. Pre-novitiate affords the candidate to Assumptionist religious life a period of formation designed for preparation to novitiate. This time is to be focused on the discernment of the motivations and dispositions that shaped his desire for religious life. It is really important that the candidate be able to live this time in an atmosphere of freedom and loyalty and in an attitude of faith.
48. The time of pre-novitiate presupposes:
- On the part of the candidate, a keen desire to join the Congregation;
  - On the part of the Congregation, a positive discernment of the aptitudes the candidate has for living as an Assumptionist.
49. Account must be taken of the individual personalities of the candidates, their level of human and Christian maturity, the rhythm their development has taken, as well as the diversity of their geographic, cultural and social backgrounds. Accordingly, each province will have to work out for itself a flexible organization to cover the stages, the content, the duration and the applied means to achieve those objectives listed in the *Rule of Life*.<sup>11</sup>
50. Based on their experience, all the Provinces and Regions have come to distinguish two stages before the start of novitiate: pre-postulancy and postulancy.

### 1. PRE-POSTULANCY

51. Taking into consideration the necessary flexibility that should be assured during this period as well as the appropriate variety that may be acknowledged to meet different situations and persons, we can nevertheless determine the goals proper to pre-postulancy and the means to realize them.

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<sup>11</sup> RL 137.

## **The Goals**

- 52.** Pre-postulancy is mainly a time of welcoming, of mutual acquaintanceship and of discernment, all of which imply:
- For the candidate, a time to discover the human and evangelical values required for entry into Assumptionist religious life, to acquire simultaneously a sufficient self-awareness to enable him to respond to God's call in a thoughtful manner and, upon completion, to know whether to ask for postulancy;
  - For the Congregation, a time to accumulate a sufficient knowledge of the personality of the candidate to be able to determine the solidity of his vocation and of his capacity to live in community.

## **The Means**

The means that favor the attainment of these objectives are:

### *An experience of the common life*

- 53.** A period of living in community during this stage is useful, if not indispensable, for affording the means specific to vocation discernment and mutual acquaintanceship: for instance, praying together, sharing in the daily tasks, and participating in the apostolic life and hospitality of the community.

### *Accompaniment by a formator*

- 54.** A brother living with the candidate should be designated to accompany him during this experience. He should see especially to:
- Working out a program of formation with the candidate that will help him attain the goals of this stage.
  - Encouraging meetings between himself and the candidate to get to know him and to help him along the way to know himself and his own personality. Listening attentively to his whole personal story

can prove quite useful and can serve as springboard to challenge him with certain essential questions.

- Getting to know the socio-cultural background of the candidate. Actually, understanding his personality can be facilitated by being acquainted with his family, the locale where he grew up, his relationships and the experiences that have left their mark on him.
- Helping the candidate accept his personal story to discern his vocation better.

### ***The candidate's active participation***

**55.** For his part the candidate should see to:

- Integrating himself within the community receiving him.
- Establishing a trusting relationship with both his formator and spiritual guide by means of regular and frequent meetings with them.
- Becoming aware that he is the primary agent of his own formation and appropriating to himself, thereby, the formation program worked out with his formator.

### ***The formation program***

**56.** The formation program should include well-planned activities that can be evaluated periodically (for example, assigned reading, courses, workshops, sessions, helpful tasks) and that will afford the candidate an initiation to:

- Personal prayer
- Assumptionist community living,
- Better self-understanding.

### **The Length of Pre-Postulancy**

**57.** Although it is impossible to determine the duration necessary for this stage, it is important nonetheless, for the candidate as well as for the brother responsible for his accompaniment, to have a target date by when the human and Christian formation of the candidate should be well under way.

Likewise, it is wise to be flexible enough to allow for delays in coming to a decision.

## **2. POSTULANCY**

- 58.** Entering postulancy is taking an official step. It comprises no juridical commitment, neither on the part of the Congregation nor on the part of the candidate, but it nevertheless assumes a mutual reception freely consented to. This entails:
- For the candidate, submission of a letter to the Provincial Superior that makes explicit both his understanding of the step he wishes to take by entering postulancy as well as his motives for doing so. This request must be accompanied by a report prepared by the brother who accompanied the candidate during his pre-postulancy.
  - For the Congregation, the Provincial Superior's evaluation of the request and his acceptance of the candidate for a period of postulancy.<sup>12</sup>
- 59.** Postulancy has to be lived in an Assumptionist community. This community could be established specifically for the reception of postulants. It is desirable that the postulant continue his studies or his work during this stage.

### **The Goals**

- 60.** Postulancy is a time for helping the candidate:
- To deepen his faith in Jesus Christ;
  - To continue discerning his vocation;
  - To clarify his motives so that he may reach the threshold of freely and responsibly asking for admission to the novitiate.

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<sup>12</sup> *RL* 136.

## The Means

The means that favor the fulfillment of these objectives are:

### *Living in an apostolic community*

61. Living in community is the means most conducive to formation during postulancy. It is important that a postulant have the experience of a lengthy stay with an Assumptionist community. He should be able to participate in community life as fully as possible. This being said, the community may find it useful to hold special meetings that would not include the postulants.

### *Accompaniment by the formator*

62. The formator should be especially concerned for:
  - Establishing an atmosphere of trust conducive to discernment and to the postulant's growth at the heart of the community;
  - Helping the postulant to discern the signs of God's calling, to clarify and to deepen his motives and his desire for joining the Congregation, to discover the demands his vocation makes of him, and to respond to them concretely in the course of his life;
  - Encouraging the postulant to formulate his own appropriate mission statement which will also serve as a point of reference for evaluating his progress;
  - Ascertaining for the Congregation the candidate's actual capacity for committing himself to Assumptionist religious life. The formator needs to follow him in his development and to discern for himself if he should support, delay, or dissuade the candidate in the steps he is taking toward entry into the Congregation.

To this end the formator should have regular and frequent personal contact with the postulant.

### ***Spiritual accompaniment***

63. The postulant should be free to choose his spiritual guide and his confessor, discussing the matter with his formator. It is preferable that the spiritual guide belong to the religious family of the Assumption.

### ***The formation program***

64. The postulancy program is based essentially on:
- Being initiated to a life of prayer and to the sacramental life;
  - Reading and meditating the Word of God;
  - Being introduced to the history and spirituality of the Assumption;
  - Discovering the local reality of the Assumptionists;
  - Discovering through experience the life of the Church and her mission;
  - Reviewing the apostolic engagement one has received from his community;
  - Getting to know oneself and one's aptitude for interpersonal relationships.

### **The Length of Postulancy**

65. The duration of postulancy is determined according to the formation program of the Province. Nevertheless, it could vary according to the individual candidate.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> RL 136.

## II – NOVITIATE<sup>14</sup>

### The Goals

66. “The novitiate is a time of transformation and the novice should have only one desire: to transform himself into Jesus Christ.”<sup>15</sup> The purpose of novitiate is to introduce the candidate gradually to Assumptionist religious life, helping him to develop his evangelical project and to measure it by that of the Assumption.<sup>16</sup> At the end of this stage, the novice ought to be able to commit himself generously through the vows, heartily and unreservedly, to live by the requirements of Assumptionist community life.
67. Hence, novitiate is a privileged time for prayer, study, meetings and exchanges to help the novice:
- Intensify his love for Christ and increase his availability for following him radically, in keeping with the project of Assumptionist religious life. This could require of him exterior and interior separations and renunciations that can be rather painful.
  - Practice the evangelical counsels according to Saint Augustine’s *Rule* and the Assumption’s *Rule of Life*.
  - Take ownership of Father d’Alzon’s spirit and his passion for the Kingdom as well as of the life, charism and apostolic project of the Congregation.

### The Means

#### *The Novitiate Community*

68. The community affords the novices an experience of prayer, of fraternal life, of the vows and of apostolic life. In fact, the novices and the Novice Master share fully in the life and mission of their

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<sup>14</sup> *RL* 139-146, 196-198.

<sup>15</sup> *ES*, pp. 263-264; *Circular Letters - 1874-1875*, p. 77.

<sup>16</sup> *RL* 142.

community. The community, in turn, helps the Novice Master fulfill his mission.

### ***The Novice Master's Guidance***

- 69.** “To put it simply, his model should be Jesus Christ living in the midst of his apostles and forming them to the evangelical life.”<sup>17</sup>

Guiding the novices is the exclusive duty of the Novice Master, who exercises his responsibility under the authority of the Major Superiors.<sup>18</sup>

In accord with the Provincial Formation Commission, he determines the novitiate program, has it approved by the Superior General, and carries it through.

He helps the novices discern and fulfill the will of the Father. Accordingly, he meets regularly with each, in a frequency suitable to the individual need of each novice. He will thus be able to attest to their human and spiritual growth.

At the service of the Assumption's spirit, the Novice Master interprets and elucidates this spiritual and apostolic tradition that has been acknowledged by the Church. He concentrates his effort on knowing the tradition well and on assuring its continued openness to the Spirit's invitations today. He helps the novice find his place within this spiritual tradition and acquire a sense of responsibility for the future of his religious family.

The Novice Master helps the novice to take upon himself the renunciations called for by the evangelical counsels and encourages him to cultivate those attitudes that follow from them.

### ***Spiritual accompaniment***

- 70.** The Novice Master is the novice's principal spiritual guide. In case of necessity, however, the latter may choose a different spiritual

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<sup>17</sup> *ES*, p. 260; *Circular Letters - 1874-1875*, p. 73.

<sup>18</sup> *CCL* 650, § 2.

guide, with the consent of his Novice Master. The novice will have to choose a confessor other than his Novice Master.

## **Fundamental Dimensions**

71. The novitiate program should be devised to realize the objectives for novitiate and to take advantage of the Province's resources and the international and multicultural dimensions of the novitiate community. It should take into account the following fundamental dimensions:

### ***A man of faith***

72. "Jesus Christ is at the center of our life. We commit ourselves to following Him in faith, hope and charity. Like Him, witness of the Father's love and bound in solidarity with his fellow-men, the Assumptionist seeks to be a man of faith and a man of his time."<sup>19</sup> Above all novitiate is a time for experiencing the God of Jesus Christ. The novice comes to discover Christ living in the Word of God, in the story of his own life, in his relationships with his brothers and in his apostolic experiences. Thus does he become aware of Christ's love for him and his brothers.
73. His experience of God should be centered in Christ, studied, contemplated, loved and imitated. Furthermore, his apprenticeship, following in the steps of Christ, should take root in those characteristics proper to the Assumption:
- The practice of the theological virtues.<sup>20</sup>
  - The study of doctrine grounded in its sources: the Bible, the Patristic tradition and the Church's Magisterium.
  - Life structured on the framework of the Liturgy. The novice will find Christ when he enters into the Prayer of the Church through his active participation in the community's liturgical prayer. Thus will he have the opportunity to live fully from the sacraments of the Eucharist and of Reconciliation.

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<sup>19</sup> *RL* 2.

<sup>20</sup> *CT*, pp. 38-42; *Foundational Documents*, pp. 15-18: "The religious virtues we shall practice are: 1. Faith [...]. 2. Hope [...]. 3. Charity [...]."

74. Personal prayer, remaining always the requisite road to this experience of God, requires a gradual and continuous formation, based on doctrine, as Father d'Alzon always reminded us.<sup>21</sup> It provides the novice with his initiatory struggle – a stiff one at that. His Novice Master and his spiritual guide should help him to establish discipline and steadiness in his prayer life.
75. Listening to the Word of God and meditating will lead the novice to a loving adoration of Christ, the ground of his life. Loving the Christ given him to know more deeply, he will also love those whom Christ has loved the most, his Mother and the Church.

*A brother living in apostolic community*

76. “Yes, there is nothing better or more delightful than a religious community where everybody loves one another.”<sup>22</sup> One of the chief aims of novitiate is to provide a practical and theoretical introduction to the common life. The usual and necessary place for such an initiation is a real and vibrant community.
77. A postulant comes to novitiate, often with great hopes for the common life, generated in part from a dream world. A novice will have to pare his expectations while deepening them from his experience of the Assumption’s tradition of communal living.
78. This tradition takes its inspiration from the thought and experience of Saint Augustine. An education to the common life has then to integrate his spirit and Father d’Alzon’s specific contribution into an

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<sup>21</sup> *ES*, p. 241; *Circular Letters - 1874-1875*, p. 53: “The study of Jesus Christ is something good in itself, but admits of a certain dryness. On the other hand, meditation without formal study gets lost in a welter of false mysticism. Together, study and prayer provide fruitful results.. Sadly enough, experience shows that, if Christ is so poorly formed in the hearts of children, it is because their formation has been entrusted to teachers who do not pray, or who do not study, or who all too often neither pray nor study”  
*ES*, p. 321; *Meditations*, p. 12: “But there are two dangers to avoid when we study God the Son made Man. The first is laziness. We think we have learned enough about him, so now all we have to do is love him. [ . . . ] Then there are those who, not taking the trouble to study Our Lord seriously, become victims to every kind of vague and senseless fantasy. No wonder there are so many false devotions, based on false notions and false statements. And they constitute a serious impediment to our religious perfection.”

<sup>22</sup> *ES*, p.571; *Meditations*, p. 193.

organic whole. The novice will have to discover and commit himself within the following:

- A human community of brothers with diverse personalities, coming from different perspectives and cultures, from whom he will experience both the wealth and the challenges of internationality.
- A common life built from simplicity, humility, joy, shared responsibilities, and relationships characterized by frankness, warmth, mutual respect and family spirit.
- A community gathered by confidence in Jesus Christ, who alone constitutes and rebuilds it day by day. Thus does he invite us in turn to establish it by the commandment of mutual love, by hospitality and service to one another, and by brotherly correction.
- An apostolic community focused on mission. While novitiate is not yet the time for full-time engagement in an apostolate beyond the common life, it must nevertheless initiate the novice to the apostolic dimensions of our life and invite him to let himself be evangelized by those to whom he is being sent.
- A community opened to the whole Assumption family, by prayer, by visits to other communities, by participation in Assumptionist gatherings, by keeping up on the information provided by our bulletins and web sites.

### ***Following Christ who was poor, chaste and obedient***

79. Committing oneself to religious life means living evangelical faith, hope and charity from the example of Christ, who was poor, chaste and obedient. Practicing the evangelical counsels, the underpinnings of the three vows, roots religious profession in our humanity to the extent that doing so involves the mastery of one's emotions, one's use of goods, and one's exercise of power. Practicing them is spiritually radical, because it sets out to show that, even here below, God can fulfill a man's life.

### *Religious Poverty*

- 80.** Following in the footsteps of Christ who chose to be poor, a novice should deepen his spirit of sharing, learn to renounce personal goods, and place his hope in God alone, his only true good. Thus will he be happy in community and available for the service of his brothers. Living simply, working and studying are characteristic of the Assumptionist practice of evangelical poverty. “Evangelical poverty will be the external proof of our practice of hope.”<sup>23</sup>

### *Chastity*

- 81.** “Everyone should thus try to have for one another a love full of tenderness, esteem, respect, and gravity.”<sup>24</sup> Following in the footsteps of Christ who lived chastely among his own, a novice should come to experience that chastity is the road to freedom for the brotherly life and for the apostolate. Chastity reveals how radical God’s call can be. It is to be lived out lovingly, in reference to Father d’Alzon’s first chapter of his *Directory* where he proposes the “Three Loves” for us to cultivate: love for Jesus Christ, for Mary and for the Church.

### *Religious obedience*

- 82.** Religious obedience is “the daughter of faith,” “the recognition of the rights of God,” and “the expression of our love for him.”<sup>25</sup> Following in the footsteps of Christ who made himself to be the obedient servant, a novice should become aware that the one sent stands at the beck and call of the one who sends him. Religious obedience will become real for him through his relationship with the Novice Master and with the brothers living with him in community. Obedience lived in faith and love makes for relationships shaped by frankness, by freedom, and by humble and truehearted gratitude for the role each has in the quest to find God’s will.

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<sup>23</sup> *CT*, p. 39; *Foundational Documents*, p.16.

<sup>24</sup> *CT*, p. 70; *Foundational Documents*, p. 51.

<sup>25</sup> The translator has not been able to find these expressions in the following texts cited but notes that they do summarize the content of those texts: *CT*, p. 38 = *Foundational Documents*, pp. 15-16; *ES*, p. 53 = *Directory*, p. 35; *ES*, 152-154 = *Foundational Documents*, pp. 101-103; *ES*, pp. 543-544 = *Meditations*, p. 173.

### ***An apostle for the coming of the Kingdom***

- 83.** “Before all else, we shall be apostles.”<sup>26</sup> The Assumption’s spirit is “one of zeal and of apostolate.”<sup>27</sup> Love for Christ opens onto the mission. A novice’s experience in the novitiate should stoke up to a “sacred flame” his love for the Church and his zeal for the Kingdom, as Father d’Alzon had so desired.<sup>28</sup>
- 84.** Father d’Alzon, impassioned for God’s cause, remains for us the best teacher on the subject. If his apostolic activities are no longer ours, his spiritedness, his zeal and his love continue, nevertheless, to radiate and be contagious. The same goes for his passion in the battle for God, for the Church and for human beings who, without Christ, stay wounded and mutilated.<sup>29</sup> Hence the importance for the novice to allow himself to be gradually exposed to the radiation of Father d’Alzon’s charism and to come to know the origins and fundamental stances of his apostolic soul.
- 85.** Already during his novitiate, a brother should be nurturing his apostolic soul. He must bear in mind, however, that his novitiate experience should concentrate on helping him to become aware of the stakes involved in the exercise of an apostolate and to effect the conversion requisite for the mission he will be undertaking especially after his novitiate.
- 86.** Being able to talk about his apostolic experiences, his weekly apostolate and his periods of training will provide a novice with a greater sensitivity to the real life and mission of the Church.

### ***An heir to the Assumption’s traditions***

- 87.** “Your elders have given you the example; ... follow in their footsteps [and] ... outrun them.”<sup>30</sup> The community that receives the novices is the usual everyday path that leads them into the life and history of

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<sup>26</sup> *ES*, p. 157; *Foundational Documents*, p. 105.

<sup>27</sup> *ES*, p. 647.

<sup>28</sup> *ES*, p. 250; *Circular Letters - 1874-1875*, p. 63.

<sup>29</sup> *RL* 4.

<sup>30</sup> *ES*, p. 190; *Foundational Documents*, p. 137.

the Assumption. It is there where they will learn to live the “Assumption way” and appropriate to themselves our manner of being with God, living in community and working in the mission.

88. A thorough knowledge of Father d’Alzon is indispensable. He alone is the Founder. He should be a novice’s daily companion. His life, his writings, his work and his spirit should become familiar to him, so that he may be able to discern whether he should be his son and brother.
89. Father d’Alzon should be seen objectively as a man of his time, in order to avoid the easy anachronisms and unnecessary hurdles that are set up when words and ideas are misinterpreted and situations are misunderstood. This approach will then facilitate being able to distinguish between what persists through time and what in time becomes irrelevant.
90. “By studying the dominant ideas which governed our beginnings, you will advance in the perfection to which you are called; . . .”<sup>31</sup> If his integration into Assumptionist history is going to be personal, deliberate and enlightened, a novice has to study and know that history, from the time of the first community at Nîmes up to our time.
91. In the interest of honesty and truth, he has to study the whole of the Assumption’s history and situate it within the Augustinian tradition going back to the early centuries of the Church. He will need to have his perspective widened on today’s Assumption, on its international complexity and variety, so as not to become confined within the limits of one region.
92. Novices should not be reinventing the Assumption, but they should be casting it with a contemporary face and allowing it to renew itself. The novitiate is thus to be a place of mutual exchange between the Assumption and the novices.

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<sup>31</sup> *ES*, p. 17; *Directory*, p. ix.

### III – POST-NOVITIATE<sup>32</sup>

93. The stage following novitiate must prepare a brother, through the common life fully shared, for his definitive commitment before God and within the Congregation. This stage should allow the professed brother to complete his knowledge of Father d’Alzon, of Saint Augustine and of the Assumption. It is a period of gradual assimilation into the life of the Province, of the Congregation and of the broader Assumption family.
94. Upon his official entry into the Assumption, the brother continues to find a guide for himself in Father d’Alzon. He chooses a Gospel path, the *Rule of Life*. He incorporates himself within a religious family that has a past, a spirit, a vocation acknowledged by the Church, and an important mission in the world. He commits himself with his whole life and his whole person within the family that he is learning to love.

#### The Goals

95. Post-novitiate, basically, should be a time for the brother:
- To integrate his life. In sharing the communal and apostolic life of the Assumption, it is his whole person, his potential, and his plans that the brother is devoting to the Lord.
  - To interiorize and deepen both his trust in Jesus Christ, expressed through the commitment of vows and lived out in community, as well as his affective and relational life.
  - To assimilate and appropriate the charism and the mission of the Congregation.

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<sup>32</sup>RL 147-158, 199-200

## The Means

96. These goals require of the brother:
- Furthering his work at interiorizing his relationship with God.
  - Living the experience of perseverance and fidelity and of the complete gift of himself to his Lord within Assumptionist religious life.
  - Deepening his familiarity with the charism of the Congregation and the way in which it is lived out, by reading, by studying the foundational texts and the official documents of the Congregation, and by taking part in the various meetings planned for young religious.
  - Meeting regularly with his formator and his spiritual guide.

Each year the temporarily professed brother shall establish, with the help of his formator, a program of readings and of written assignments that represent his synthesis, his reflection, or his research, in order to further his knowledge of Father d'Alzon and of the spirituality and history of the Assumption.

97. These goals require of the Congregation:
- Affording the professed brother those conditions that promote his spiritual and human growth. It should strive especially to assure him:
    - A solid and vibrant community where he will be able to live his religious life fully, in an atmosphere of faith and prayer, of trust and freedom.
    - A formator, designated by the Provincial Superior, who will accompany him in all the areas of his formation.
    - A formation that is human, spiritual, doctrinal as well as pastoral, adapted to him, and dynamic, so that he may acquire a personal competence corresponding to his aptitudes and to the needs of the Congregation.
  - Discussing with him, during this period of temporary vows, the issue of his future mission and of specialized studies for him. These studies are a matter not of his rights but of his mission. They should focus on the understanding sought by faith, an understanding that henceforth becomes one of the deciding criteria for the choice of his specialization.

98. Each time he comes to renew his vows, the professed brother shall submit his self-evaluation to his formator and to his community. At this time he shall also work out his life-project for the following year.
99. When his time for requesting final vows arrives, by reviewing all his evaluations, since his first profession, he will be enabled to make a mature decision and to tackle those issues that remain to be worked on.

## **Fundamental Dimensions**

### *A man of faith*

100. The life of the professed brother has got to be centered on Christ and fed on faith and prayer. Following Christ implies a daily encounter with him. There can be no other ground for his commitment than Christ and his Gospel. One cannot hope to find any means of getting back to his true self except through prayer.
101. The experience of God does not happen once and for all. It has to go on deepening its roots daily; otherwise it will have been superficial. During the time of post-novitiate, the professed brother needs to interiorize all that he has acquired before, by developing his appreciation for recollection and for creativity.

It is important that the professed brother take up the following for himself:

- A discipline and personal rhythm of prayer, of reflection on God's Word, and on the reception of forgiveness. There can be no experience of God without times of self-giving encounter with him.
- Apostolic prayer that gathers the far-reaching intentions of the Church and of the world and that is concerned with sharing in the prayer of God's People, namely by participating in the prayer of the local Church. Thus will he take his prayer beyond his own needs and preferences, to join it to those of a larger Christian community.
- The continuation of his spiritual companioning. By disclosing his conscience to a spiritual guide, he will be able to link his prayer and his apostolic life and to view his own experience of God in ever new light.

- 102.** To a much greater extent than during his novitiate, the life of the recently professed brother is going to be affected by concerns from every side and threatened by too many things. Prayer can unify all these moments and preoccupations that now weave the web of his life. To effect this integration, he should make his the Prayer of the Church. Even when it cannot be assured by his community, he should assume it as a matter of personal responsibility. He should sift his whole life through his prayer and his prayer through his life. He should make it a point to review his studies, his apostolic experiences and his relationships in the light of the Gospels. For all that he is and all that he does should become his very experience of Jesus Christ, studied, contemplated, loved, imitated.<sup>33</sup>
- 103.** The post-novitiate years will bring their comforting joys and successes to the professed brother, but they will also bring him face to face with conflicts and inescapable trials. These are the conditions for his growth in God. It will be important for him to be thankful for what the Lord is working in his life and to keep constantly in mind the reasons why he perseveres in prayer. The call to identify himself with Jesus Christ implies a personal relationship with him. And the exigencies of the mission imply that one can give only what one has received.
- 104.** By his daily faithfulness, in the silence of his prayer, and through his listening to the Lord, the young professed religious will find the wherewithal to make a definitive commitment. By the quality of his experience of God, he will become little by little “a man of faith and a man of his time,” “witness of the Father’s love and bound in solidarity with fellow-men.”<sup>34</sup>

### *A brother living in apostolic community*

- 105.** Formation to the communal life is progressive, slow and difficult. It needs to be pursued throughout one’s life. It requires a daily conversion of each one to overcome tensions and clashes. Actively sharing in the life of the community is an essential element in the formation of a young professed brother. His community needs to be:

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<sup>33</sup> ES 28-31; *Directory*, pp. 22-25.

<sup>34</sup> RL 2.

- A place where co-responsibility reigns. A professed brother is called to participate actively and fully in the establishment of the community's prayer life, in its meetings, in its sessions, in the chores, and in the economic dimensions of its life.
- A place of prayer and of sharing. A community, one constituted of brothers in formation or one that receives young professed brothers, will have to give special attention to the following:
  - Guaranteeing a daily rhythm of prayer that is centered on the Eucharist and being attentive to offer the professed brothers monthly recollections and a yearly retreat.
  - Affording times for conversation. Weekly meetings should be privileged times for exchange and reflection on the life of the community, on its faith and apostolic undertakings.
  - Underlining the importance of the local chapter. Accordingly, it would be important that at least once in the course of a year the community evaluate its local chapter.
- Providing a place for freedom, for straightforwardness and for human warmth. The community needs to be able to witness to a simple and brotherly life.

***Following Christ who was poor, chaste and obedient***

- 106.** Post-novitiate is a time for furthering one's human and spiritual growth and for preparing the professed brother for a definitive commitment. This commitment consists of the following aspects:
- Deciding to follow Christ radically implies that the professed brother deepen his roots in faith, hope and love and that throughout the years of his temporary profession he strengthen the resolve of his first commitment.
  - Engaging himself with the brothers he was given when he entered the Assumption and with whom he wanted to share its spirit and way of life. His profession engages him fully in the religious life-project proposed by the Assumption and approved by the Church as an actual way of living the Gospel. The latter implies that he stand in solidarity with all that makes up the life and history of a religious family.
  - Experiencing what faithfulness entails. Commitment within religious life must be able to withstand the test of time, the impact

of daily realities and all the vicissitudes of life's circumstances. During the time of post-novitiate, the professed brother will need to demonstrate his ability to withstand time's challenges and to measure up to them by his fidelity and perseverance. This requires personal discipline fashioned from renunciation, balance, self-mastery, simplicity, transparency, generosity and service. This discipline, exercised also in agreeing to the scrutiny of one's life by one's brothers, will be practiced especially in living out the vows.

### *Religious Poverty*

**107.** We need to insist on the following:

- Simple living. This excludes looking for comforts and implies learning to be free with respect to material goods.
- A life of work. The brother needs to earn his living, knowing that one has to work to live. He will need to be strict about his use of time and to assume his responsibility in the daily economic maintenance of his community.
- Openness to others. He will need to be attentive to social injustices, interested in those communities engaged in the most disadvantaged areas, and living from a real solidarity with the poor. This could mean actually living in their midst for a period of time. Furthermore, we should be concerned to become acquainted, through study, with the socio-economic realities of the world as well as with the social teaching of the Church.

### *Chastity*

**108.** "To love and to be loved," this is humanity's calling. The capacity to love and to stay focused on what is essential needs to be learned. It implies:

- Detachment and discipline in relationships, in going out, in relaxing, in the use of the media, and so forth. This asceticism should be lived out, not in frustration, but in willing embrace.
- A capacity for relationships. It should express itself by real integration into one's community, in brotherly affection, with a ready ear and openness to others and through the gift of oneself to

the mission. One's capacity for human relationships proves itself in being able to assume and integrate one's own sexuality and in discovering oneself truly through those relationships.

- A capacity for embracing solitude. A professed brother must through experience come to know whether he can be truly peaceful with the decision he made and whether he can serenely and joyfully follow the example of Christ.

### *Religious Obedience*

- 109.** By his vow of obedience, the professed brother disposes himself to listen to (*ob + audire*) the Spirit and to his brothers to whom he has bound himself. He should work at developing the following especially:

- Inner freedom, the ability to take initiatives and the capacity to listen. Obedience allows neither obsequiousness nor resistance to all authority as a matter of course.
- Solidarity. It is the ability to accept the decision of another, to abide by decisions taken, and to submit to others the decisions that need to be taken.
- Accounting for one's actions before his superior and his brothers.
- Availability for the mission and for the broad orientations suggested by the Church and the Congregation. This is borne out by one's availability for the Province's apostolic project.
- The capacity to assume responsibilities fully, to collaborate with others and to share with them.

### *An apostle for the coming of the Kingdom*

- 110.** Post-novitiate is the time when the professed brother should share in the Province's project, in its apostolic orientations, and in those of the Congregation in all of its diversity. It is the time when, with the help of those responsible for his formation, he gradually defines the areas of his mission.
- 111.** The mission requires that a professed brother's formation be adapted to him throughout the course of his post-novitiate. His formation

should help him, thereby, to know his real capabilities for the apostolate. It should consist of the following:

- Coming to understand the world's realities and the great causes of God and of humanity.
- Integrating his personal project and that of the Congregation, which should always remain receptive to his own aspirations.
- Making space for his apostolic concerns within his studies, his prayer, the use of his time, and during the community's conversations.

As important as it is to have a substantial apostolic engagement during this period, it is equally important to develop apostolic attitudes and to have them acknowledged through opportunities for accompaniment.

- 112.** Our mission calls us, for instance, to be attuned to the mind of the Church, to take initiatives and to work as a team, especially with lay persons, to talk about our apostolic experiences in community, to be available and adaptable, to dialogue about our personal preferences and to compare them with the apostolic orientations of the Congregation and of the Church.<sup>35</sup>
- 113.** Our mission also requires effective apostolic engagement, actual participation in the apostolic life of the community, apostolic experiences and training programs, all decided upon in agreement with the religious responsible for formation.

A professed brother sharing in the apostolic mission of the community ought to be able to find that his brothers live from:

- A communal prayer that includes the life and the broad concerns of the Church.
- Community conversation about their apostolic activities, evaluated by the light of the Gospel and of the *Rule of Life*.
- A life well-balanced on the basis of well thought-out priorities and choices.

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<sup>35</sup> RL 20.

Through different apostolic engagements and training programs, to be experienced eventually in another community or in another country, the professed brother should be able to learn for himself what the apostolic priorities of the Assumption are, especially in terms of serving the most destitute and the needs of the younger Churches.

- 114.** Our mission requires mutual adjustment. It is not uncommon for a newly professed brother to feel himself pulled in one direction by his own desires and in another by the Province's apostolic project, especially if that project is not very diversified. The tension may be beneficial:
- It will lead the young brother toward greater availability and real solidarity with the institution such as it is.
  - It will energize the Province to work out an apostolic project that is clear, diversified, flexible, and amenable to initiative and creativity.
- 115.** In order to become a man of his time, connected to different worlds and cultures, a candidate or a brother in formation should have the opportunity of a lengthy stay in an Assumptionist community outside of his own country.

## IV – DOCTRINAL FORMATION

**116.** “All our undertakings will be quickened by a doctrinal . . . spirit.”<sup>36</sup>  
Doctrinal formation concerns all the brothers, whether they be preparing themselves for the ordained ministries or not. It occurs at all the stages of an Assumptionist’s formation. For it, however, the post-novitiate period is especially opportune.

### **The Goals**

**117.** The reasons for the Assumption’s insistence on this kind of formation should be understood and embraced by all:

- to acquire a deeper understanding of the faith, to become strong in God, to further our love of Jesus Christ and of those to whom we have been sent. A faith that stays on the surface of things and that really does not appropriate the Christian mystery to itself remains fragile and uncommitted.
- to know the heart of the Christian tradition and to deploy its wealth in encountering the cultures and questions of the day, to express in new terms the depth of its substance, and to continue in our day the endeavor of Augustine in his day: revealing Christ as light for heart and mind.
- to demonstrate, from one of Father d’Alzon’s convictions, how the Good News does pertain to the reality of our contemporary pluralistic societies and to make it accessible to the greatest number of people.

**118.** Doctrinal formation should be adapted to the individual brother, allowing him to realize the full extent of his possibilities and complying with the exigencies of the mission that the Assumption will have confided to him. Special care should be given to the following:

- An assiduous formation in this area will be required of all the brothers, so that their Christian formation will constitute the peak of their human formation.

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<sup>36</sup> *RL* 16.

- A solid formation, complete and conforming to the requirements of the Church's *Ratio studiorum*, will be necessary for all future priests.
- Those who have a taste as well as the capacity for higher studies shall be allowed a specialized formation fitted to their aptitudes and to the needs of the Assumption.

## **The Means**

### *Accompaniment*

- 119.** Sustaining and accompanying the professed brother along the way of his formation is necessary for the following:
- to discern with him his preferences and aptitudes and to suggest the doctrinal formation best adapted to who he is as well as to the needs of the Church and of the Assumption;
  - to assure the follow-up on his studies, to encourage him and to check the work already done, in a spirit of dialogue and mutual help;
  - to help him make those inevitable choices along the course of his formation;
  - to take stock of his work annually, comparing it with the requirements of his study program.

### *Personal requirements*

- 120.** In his studies the professed brother will:
- demonstrate a strict use of his time and learn to maintain his calendar in order to avoid either squandering his time or overloading it with extraneous occupations;
  - find a balance between his studies and his life of faith, between his studies and his apostolic life.

### *The proper atmosphere for studies*

- 121.** It is important that:

- the professed brother have the time to study and that he live in a community whose lifestyle and rhythm favor studies;
- he be acknowledged and encouraged in his endeavor by all his brothers;
- the stakes be clear to all and often repeated: doctrinal formation assures the future of the professed brother as well as of the Assumption;
- the professed brother be initiated to ways of doing things that will then afford him the continuation of his formation all along the course of his life.

### *A study program*

**122.** Formators should be especially concerned about the following:

- ascertaining that the choice of teaching institutions conforms to the Church's norms;
- making sure that a given program, by its content and its methodology, suits a brother's aptitudes and his apostolic orientation;
- noting possible gaps in some of his courses of study, dealing especially with the Assumption's priorities in areas such as the thought of Saint Augustine, ecumenism, the history of the nineteenth century, the media; and also finding ways to fill them;
- dealing with certain doctrinal aspects that are more specifically Assumptionist, in various study sessions and workshops organized for that purpose;
- affording a brother the time it takes for his studies, recognizing that doctrinal formation gains nothing from hastening its pace. Formators should see to it that each professed brother be allotted a sufficient and appropriate period of time for his studies and help him to avoid piling professional work onto his commitment to studies. It will also be important for a brother to meet his deadlines to avoid unjustified extensions.

**123.** It would be useful to keep a record book of studies undertaken to assure the coherence of a brother's formation program, especially if he has to change the locale of his formation.

## V – FORMATION FOR THE ORDAINED MINISTRIES

124. The diaconate and the first years of priesthood (or of the permanent diaconate) are the deciding periods of apostolic formation. These years warrant the careful attention of those responsible for formation. They are the time of practical initiation to the ordained ministries and of apprenticeship that determines the breadth of a brother's pastoral attitudes.
125. This being said, it is important to underscore the importance of the vocation of a lay brother at the Assumption. He should receive a doctrinal and professional formation adapted to his personal gifts and to the apostolic project of the Province.

It is likewise important that he be accompanied in his pastoral initiation. The Provincial Superior shall delegate a brother to help him establish an apostolic program and review his pastoral work and to see him through whatever difficulties he may face.

### The Goals

126. His diaconate and the first years of his priestly ministry are the times when a brother really learns to acquire the soul of a servant and the heart of a shepherd, in imitation of Jesus and in the manner of the Assumption's charism.

#### *Ordained to serve the Gospel*

127. Receiving and announcing God's Word are essential aspects of a newly ordained brother's mission.
128. He should accommodate himself to the areas where he is sent to fulfill his mission and he has to appropriate those cultures that are different from his own.

- 129.** The brother who is a deacon or a newly ordained priest has got to further his intellectual, spiritual and pastoral formation. He should manage to afford himself scheduled time for personal reflection and work, beyond the time required for homily preparation.

***Ordained for service to the Church***

- 130.** The brother who is a deacon or a newly ordained priest should nurture his missionary spirit. He is not sent only to a people constituted of the gathered Christian community, even in those areas where religious practice is very pronounced. His pastoral concern cannot restrict itself only to those Christians who go to church.
- 131.** He has to appropriate the pastoral focus of those who have sent him on mission, the Church, the diocese, the Congregation. He has to collaborate with those responsible for the pastoral ministries of the local Church, while taking initiatives in announcing the Gospel and strengthening the Church. Thus will he show his care and love for the Church.
- 132.** The mission should afford him the discovery of his apostolic aptitudes. Nevertheless, he should remain open to every ministry, attractive to him or not, always maintaining a desire to widen his competence and to initiate the untried.

***Ordained for the coming of the Kingdom***

- 133.** His openness to the signs of the Kingdom should show itself in his ministry, by his availability to all men and women of good will and by his heart and soul opened to inter-cultural, ecumenical and interfaith dialogue.
- 134.** He should demonstrate apostolic zeal, love for work, and concern for formation, competence and adaptation.<sup>37</sup> All his apostolic activities should be inspired by a doctrinal, social and ecumenical spirit.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> RL 20.

<sup>38</sup> RL 16.

## **Fundamental dimensions**

### *A man of faith*

135. The brother who is a deacon or a newly ordained priest should be asking himself how his life merges into his prayer and how his prayer affects his life and that of his community.<sup>39</sup> He will need to broaden his capacity to read events by faith, to hear God's call therein, both to him and to others, to reread the lives of persons and of groups and to identify there the work of the Spirit as well as the signs of sin.
136. He will need to integrate the sacraments of the Eucharist and of Reconciliation into his own spiritual life and that of the assembly.
137. He should push himself constantly to acknowledge and accept his qualities as well as his limitations, in order to grow into greater human, spiritual and apostolic maturity.
138. The fiber of his faith will also show itself by the way he accepts setbacks and unfruitful apostolic ventures. These will occasion the exercise of perseverance, beginning anew despite difficulties and re-examining himself.

### *A brother living in apostolic community*

139. He should willingly confide his ministry to the scrutiny of his brothers in order to think it through, to purify it, to enrich it, and to resist the temptation to the individualism and the possessiveness of the lone apostle who is too easily satisfied with himself or who runs from one urgency to the next. He should make it a point always to organize his apostolic life with the input of his community and to discuss it with them, in an atmosphere of dialogue, mutual enquiry and shared prayer.
140. He should welcome, with humility and availability, the mission confided to him by his community and his superiors.

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<sup>39</sup> RL 50.

### *An apostle for the coming of the Kingdom*

141. The brother who is a deacon or a newly ordained priest should cultivate those apostolic attitudes dear to the Assumption: boldness, inventiveness and disinterested generosity. It is crucial that he cultivate disinterestedness in his apostolic initiatives, to attract attention not to himself but to Jesus Christ, to be able to go from an attractive apostolate to one less attractive but more productive, and to back off willingly, surrendering his place to others, even when they shine less than he does.
142. As a man of his time and as an Assumptionist, a deacon or a newly ordained priest ought to be able to show himself heedful of today's world, of its changes, of its greatest needs, of the faithful's concerns, of the tragedies that affect them.
143. Called to be a man of relationships, he needs to know how to establish bonds with persons and groups of a culture, an age-group, and a gender different from his own. He should respect the humblest and welcome the wounded, the tried and the diminished. In the midst of differences and inevitable tensions, he is called to be a man of communion, of forgiveness and of peace, in word and in deed.
144. He should be eager to engage in teamwork with priests, sisters and lay persons.
145. He should never forget: "The proclamation of Jesus Christ is inseparable from the promotion of the whole person in justice, love and unity."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> RL 16.

## **The Means**

### *The deacon or the newly ordained priest himself*

146. The call to ordained ministries is to be received by the Assumptionist brother as God's gift and as an invitation to the service of the Church and of the Kingdom.
147. An Assumptionist brother called to the diaconate or to the presbyterate should accept to be reshaped by this new mission that the Church confides to him as her minister. He should integrate this ecclesial ministry into his religious life so that together they may comprise two facets of a single vocation that will radically distinguish his faith, his prayer and his apostolic soul.
148. He must be heedful and he must be accompanied as necessary elements of his formation.
149. The brother who is a deacon or a newly ordained priest is to live his ministry at the heart of an apostolic community that is at the service of the Church and of the Kingdom. He is to be inspired by the charism of the Assumption, letting it impregnate all of his life and pastoral work.
150. His pastoral commitment should take into account his previous formation, general and professional.

### *An apostolic community*

151. The local community that receives a brother doing his diaconal service should accompany him wholeheartedly. To guarantee this support, it should schedule three meetings in addition to its usual ones: one to receive the deacon and settle all the questions pertaining to him, a second halfway through his training to evaluate it and suggest possible improvements, a third at the end to produce the report that will accompany his request for priesthood.
152. Comparable accompaniment should also be foreseen for the first years of priestly ministry.

- 153.** Fostering a community and an apostolic climate during these defining years is crucial to the pastoral future of a brother. To that end, it would be good:
- to encourage scheduled, systematic study and reflection on the ministry of a brother priest;
  - to nurture the rereading of his life in the light of the Scriptures;
  - to favor meaningful discussion among the brothers on their apostolates and thereby to help build truly apostolic communities;
  - to invite the community to a prayer life that would feed from its apostolate and to an apostolate enriched and sustained by personal and communal prayer.

In the measure of the possible, a newly ordained brother should be able to benefit from a certain stability during the first years of his apostolate.

- 154.** Living in this spirit and in fulfillment of these community requirements, a brother who is a deacon or a newly ordained priest can integrate himself within the Church and become a zealous servant of the Kingdom.

### *Accompaniment*

- 155.** Throughout his diaconal ministry, a deacon should be accompanied by one of the brothers in his community, designated by the Provincial Superior.

The community that receives a deacon and the brother designated to accompany him should be helped in their mission by the Province's Formation Director. He should be visiting them, "taking to heart their struggles and promoting sessions among them as well as other collaborative means."<sup>41</sup>

- 156.** Accompaniment should not be relegated only to the more technical aspects of diaconal ministry. It is to be hoped that it would encourage the deacon to examine the way he lives, his spontaneous and studied attitudes and his relationships. It should prompt him untiringly to balance his religious life and his ministry and to be a loyal partner of the local Church.

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<sup>41</sup> See # 25.

157. A newly ordained priest should also be accompanied at the place of his initiation to priestly ministry by an older brother, designated by the Provincial Superior, who will help him to evaluate his pastoral work and to overcome his difficulties.
158. In the course of their first years of ministry, Provincial or continental sessions for the newly ordained brothers should be organized, under the direction of an experienced pastor and good teacher, for them to discuss their experiences and uncertainties and to accommodate theory to practice.

### ***The program for a deacon***

159. The program for his diaconal ministry should be worked out by the candidate and the brother who will accompany him. This program will need to be approved by the Provincial Superior and forwarded to the Superior General.
160. Neither the evaluation of his diaconal ministry nor his request for priestly ordination shall be formulated until the brother will have completed the canonical six months of diaconate.
161. The program will need to specify the place, the duration of the diaconal experience and the name of the brother to accompany the future deacon. It must clearly state what is expected of the candidate: the goal to reach, the means foreseen, the attitudes to develop, the apostolic responsibilities confided to the deacon and the evaluations to be made in the course of his diaconate experience.
162. Taking into account local practices, the Provincial Superior will ask the bishop of the region where the brother deacon will exercise his ministry to endorse officially the mission planned for him.

### ***The program for a newly ordained priest***

163. In consultation with his community and the brother accompanying him, a newly ordained priest should establish his program of apostolic activities for the first years of his ministry.

- 164.** This program has to be approved by the Provincial Superior. It needs to state clearly what apostolic responsibilities he will undertake as well as what sorts of evaluations will be made during those first years of his priestly ministry.
- 165.** The Provincial Superior shall obtain the endorsement of the bishop of the region where the priest will exercise his ministry.

## **Congregation and Church requirements**

### *For ordination to the diaconate*

#### *Admission*

- 166.** The Superior General is the one responsible for admitting a brother to the diaconate.<sup>42</sup> To clarify his judgment the Provincial Superior must send him the file accumulated for that purpose.<sup>43</sup> In addition to submitting his recommendation and that of his council, the Provincial Superior will also supply the report he had requested of the local community and of the Formation Director for the Province. The latter should have gathered the recommendation also of the Formation Commission.
- 167.** Ordination to the diaconate shall take place after a brother has completed his course of studies in preparation for the ordained ministries and after his final profession. Those are two different and important commitments in the life of a brother. It should be foreseen, then, that a sufficient span of time separates his ordination to the diaconate from his final profession, to allow him to live fully and distinctly each of these commitments.

#### *Canonical requirements*

- 168.** The candidate needs:

- to have reached his twenty-third birthday (*CCL* 1031 § 1);

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<sup>42</sup> *RL* 123 e.

<sup>43</sup> *RL* 159.

- to have made his final profession (*CCL* 1037);
- to have received the ministries of lector and acolyte. A six-month span between the ministry of acolyte and ordination to the diaconate is required (*CCL* 1035 § 1-2);
- to have submitted a handwritten, dated and signed, formal statement to the effect that he is freely and spontaneously committing himself for life, fully aware of the obligations ordination will entail (*CCL* 1028 and 1036).

### ***For ordination to the priesthood***

#### *Admission*

- 169.** As in the case of the diaconate, the Provincial Superior must forward to the Superior General the file accumulated to help him in his judgment.<sup>44</sup> In addition to submitting his recommendation and that of his council, the Provincial Superior will also supply the report he had requested of the local community, of the religious he had designated to accompany the deacon and of the Formation Director for the Province, as well as the testimony of the priests and lay persons who know him.

#### *Canonical requirements*

- 170.** The candidate needs:
- to have submitted a handwritten, dated and signed, request (*CCL* 1036);
  - to have reached his twenty-fifth birthday (*CCL* 1031 § 1);
  - to possess the required freedom (*CCL* 1026);
  - to be fully aware of the obligations priesthood entails (*CCL* 1028);
  - to have exercised the ministry of diaconate for at least six months (*CCL* 1031 § 1 – 1032 § 2).

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<sup>44</sup> *RL* 123 e, 159.

## VI – LIFE-LONG FORMATION<sup>45</sup>

### Convictions

171. Continuing formation is a matter of each brother's and each community's responsibility. Everyone should, in a spirit of initiative, take pains to profit fully from the occasions for formation offered by the Assumption and the local church.

Those who have provincial responsibilities should urge the brothers to continue their formation. They should consider their own needs and those of the Province.

172. Life-long formation should bring together all the attributes of an Assumptionist man (*homo assumptionisticus*): a man of faith, a brother living in apostolic community, an apostle for the coming of the Kingdom.

173. An Assumptionist should be a man of his time. He cannot live oblivious to those events that change the course of our human existence: globalization, communications explosion, the challenges of genetic science, new notions of the Church, thriving individualism, to name but a few. This is the world, changing at an accelerating rate, to which he is summoned to be an apostle.

174. "... let it be understood that if ever the religious stop studying, it will be the sign that the Congregation has outlived its usefulness and been cursed by God."<sup>46</sup> The future of the Congregation depends in good measure upon continuing formation. It is by no means a luxury; it is an obligation. Our concern for it determines the shape of the initial formation we provide and guarantees the healthy growth of the young people we receive.

175. Privileged moments of daily on-going formation occur when the brothers reread their lives and share them with one another in

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<sup>45</sup> VC 69: "It will be very important for every institute to provide, as part of its *Ratio Institutionis*, a precise and systematic description of its plan of continuing formation."

<sup>46</sup> ES, p. 208; *Circular Letters - 1875-1874*, p. 18.

community conversation, and when they read the official texts of the Congregation.

## **The Goals**

176. Life-long formation should facilitate the spiritual companionship of a brother along the path of life's changes and favor his integration as a person. It should spur him to daily conversion. It aims at actualizing the Assumption's charism that the Holy Spirit has given to the Church and to the world. It avoids maintaining the past as if it were an absolute and nurtures instead the growth of creative fidelity.<sup>47</sup>

## **The Means**

### ***Content***

177. Life-long formation attends to spirituality, to the life of the Church, to doctrinal and professional studies and to the charism of the Congregation.

### **Spirituality**

178. The means that promote a deepening of the spiritual life are: Assumptionist community life, Augustinian teaching, yearly and community retreats, spiritual companionship, *lectio divina*, the Divine Office, the writings of Father d'Alzon.

### **The life of the Church**

179. Our fidelity to the charism of the Founder calls us regularly to refurbish the methods and content of our pastoral engagements in order to respond better to the call of the Church's mission today. Serving on Assumptionist commissions, like the one for peace and justice, and participating in diocesan programs for formation are part of this endeavor to actualize life-long formation.

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<sup>47</sup> VC 37.

## **Doctrinal and professional formation**

- 180.** Updating ourselves doctrinally and professionally calls for furthering our biblical and theological studies, studying the documents of the Magisterium, becoming better acquainted with the cultures and the places where we live and work, and seeking professional and technical re-qualification when necessary.<sup>48</sup> RIAD (Rencontres Internationales de l'Assomption pour le Dialogue) and international sessions and exchanges are also tools specific to us for ongoing formation.

## **Furthering our understanding of the Assumptionist charism**

- 181.** “By studying the dominant ideas which governed our beginnings, you will advance in the perfection to which you are called,”<sup>49</sup> Assemblies, sessions and retreats are all gatherings that promote the deepening of our understanding of the Congregation’s charism. Reading the official documents of the Congregation also contribute to that end.

## ***Defining moments of life-long formation***

- 182.** These moments should be understood as varying with the individual and as merging with those unforeseen, elicited on the impulse of the Holy Spirit. In particular, we note the following critical stages:<sup>50</sup>

- the transition from initial formation to the experience of a more independent life, when a brother has to discover a new way of being faithful to God;
- the completion of about ten years after final profession when routine and the diminishment of zeal threaten to take over. It seems that this would be a good time for a brother to be afforded an extended period of time to distance himself from his everyday life in order to reread it by the light of the Gospel and the thought of the Founder;

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<sup>48</sup> VC 71.

<sup>49</sup> ES, p. 17; *Directory*, p. ix.

<sup>50</sup> VC 70.

- the years of full maturity when the danger of growing individualism looms large, especially for those brothers with active and effective temperaments;
- the call to accept new responsibilities, another occasion for further formation;
- those untimely times of crisis that can arise at any period of one's life, from external factors, like a change of assignment or of work, a setback, being misunderstood, being made to feel marginal, as well as from more personal ones, like sickness, spiritual dryness, strong temptations, a faith crisis, falling in love, having to deal with both at the same time. These are the circumstances in which a brother needs help to transcend himself through his crisis into greater faith;
- the stage of gradual retirement from an active life. These are the days to seize as a unique opportunity to allow oneself to be permeated by our Lord's Paschal experience, even to desire dying to "be with Christ," in conformity with one's original commitment to leave this life, living Assumptionist religious life.

## VII – BECOMING A FORMATOR

### **A conviction**

**183.** Assumption needs to form its formators. This duty arises from believing seriously that God continues to summon men to serve within the Assumption. The future of our communities and our continued fidelity to the charism of our Institute are grounded in the formation of our brothers and so, first of all, in the preparation of our formators. Formation is a mission, a ministry, rooted in our charism. Becoming a formator flows from who we are as Assumptionists: believers, apostles and disciples of Father d'Alzon and of Saint Augustine.

### **Being formed for the mission of formation**

**184.** It is essential that one have the time to prepare himself for the mission of a formator. It is to be hoped that the one who is called to this mission follow a structured formation program for spirituality, the theology of religious life, psychology, teaching skills, anthropology, for familiarity with the cultures of the brothers whom he will be accompanying, and for the various aspects of Assumptionist life and spirituality.

**185.** The formation of a formator calls for gradual integration into his mission: nothing replaces experience.

**186.** The mission of a formator requires his continual and further grounding by means, for example, of reading, following sessions, exchanging with other formators and with the brothers in formation, participating in the formation activities organized by the Conferences for Religious, and by spending time in other formation communities.

## **The Means**

- 187.** A formator needs to have a clear vision of what God is calling the Assumption to be and do, of what, in turn, the Assumption in the Province is trying to live out, and what the goal of Assumptionist formation is.
- 188.** A formator is called to share his vision in word and deed, especially in his accompaniment of the brothers entrusted to him. He should be wholeheartedly concerned about conveying his convictions passionately and disinterestedly.
- 189.** If he is to fulfill his mission as a formator, it will be important for him to know well the roots of that mission, to frequent Saint Augustine and Father d'Alzon, that he appropriate the history of the whole Assumption family, and that he become both heir and founder.
- 190.** To those ends he will have to:
- know and be close to those he is accompanying, taking the risk of loving them;
  - evaluate, adjust, and, if necessary, rework the formation plan;
  - try to complete his own formation, the better to respond to the exigencies of his mission.
  - ensure that he himself is accompanied and evaluated. His community, those who are being formed, the Formation Commission, his own spiritual guide, all can help him the better to fulfill his mission.
- 191.** A formator should want to share his experience, his doubts, his conviction, and the formation methods he uses, with other persons responsible also for formation, at intra-continental meetings, and with the various teams set up by the Conference for Religious in his country.
- 192.** A formator should try to gain the interest of all the brothers of the Province in what is being lived out in formation. He should invite some of them to collaborate with him, not only by teaching courses

but also by sharing their life experiences and by accompanying the brothers in formation along the way of their spiritual development.

- 193.** As a man of faith and of his time, a formator needs to find ways for the brothers in formation to assess the situation in their country, the events in the life of the Church, and the general situation where their process of formation is being lived out. The contribution of lay persons will prove priceless in this area.

## INFORMATION SHEETS

*\* These information sheets are meant to be distributed to the candidates and to the brothers as they enter the successive levels of their formation.*

### PRE-NOVITIATE

- *Teacher, where are you staying?*
- *Come and see.*

(John 1.38-39)

You have just crossed the threshold of an Assumptionist community. A time for formation is opening before you which will help you to confirm the call to Assumptionist religious life that you have received. This time will also help to prepare you for the stage of novitiate.

During the course of this period, you will set yourself on a path to growth that will take you to a better understanding of yourself, a road that you have already begun to walk with the brother accompanying you during the time before your admission to pre-novitiate formation.

This time preceding novitiate is focused on the discernment of your motives and dispositions that have shaped your desire for religious life. Before committing yourself to Assumptionist religious life, it is very important to examine the strength of your desire to follow Christ and to test your aptitude for Assumptionist community. Your living that life provides the best means and place for your formation. Your apostolic work should prove your desire to serve God and men and women in the Church.

At the end of this stage, you should be able, in all freedom and responsibility, to know whether to request admission to the novitiate. The community that receives you and the formator who accompanies you will be in a position to give their opinion concerning your aptitude for living Assumptionist religious life.

## NOVITIATE

*The novitiate is a time of transformation  
and the novice should have only one desire:  
to transform himself into Jesus Christ.*

(Emmanuel d'Alzon, *Circular Letters - 1874-1875*, p. 77)

As a novice now, you are about to live an intermediate stage between the life you led before and the life of a brother. This situation involves a temporary loss of landmarks that may leave you feeling lost and vulnerable. Take advantage of this privileged time to deepen, discern and confirm you calling to Assumptionist religious life. With the accompaniment of your Novice Master, you will be led to experience God more deeply, to experience and love Jesus Christ more intensely, and to follow in the footsteps of him who was poor, chaste and obedient for the sake of proclaiming the Reign of God. You will be called upon to give a more communal meaning to the gift of yourself to Christ in service to your brothers.

You will be initiated to apostolic life and to the announcement of the Kingdom by your gradual apprenticeship to religious life, and specifically to the religious life lived at the Assumption, and by a greater awareness of the reality of the Church and of the world where you live.

## POST-NOVITIATE

... *God gives us ever greater freedom to the extent that we allow him to reign more perfectly over us . . .*  
(Emmanuel d'Alzon, *Foundational Documents*, p. 102.)

With the completion of your novitiate, you are being called now to stake your life on that long post-novitiate venture. It will be the time for putting down roots and for deploying all that you have already discovered about religious life. Through an ever growing integration into the life and mission of the Congregation, it will carry you toward a definitive commitment to the Assumption.

Post-novitiate is a time of apprenticeship for faithfulness, endurance and patience. It is also a time when you will be able to deepen the spirit and the vocation of the apostolic community.

This stage will prepare you likewise for your future mission which, if it be your case, you will be able to assume within an ordained ministry.

## FORMATION FOR THE ORDAINED MINISTRIES

*May God bring to completion in you what he has begun.  
(The Liturgy of Ordination)*

On the night of your diaconate or priestly ordination, you found yourself on an equal footing with those brothers who preceded you. And yet, it still remains for you to get there. You will be supported along your way by one of those brothers. It will be important for you to let yourself be reshaped by your new mission, entrusted to you by Christ and the Church. It will be indispensable for you to learn to become a shepherd through practical apprenticeship and the acquisition of a pastoral sense. You are about to learn how to merge your ecclesial ministry with your religious life, with the result that your faith, your prayer, and your apostolic concerns will become sharply marked by their integration. And so, day after day, you will gradually become an apostle at one with the heart of Christ and in the spirit of the Assumption.

## LIFE-LONG FORMATION

*... let it be understood that if ever the religious stop studying,  
it will be the sign that the Congregation has outlived its usefulness . . .  
(Emmanuel d'Alzon, *Circular Letters - 1874-1875*, p. 18.)*

Final profession or ordination, you understand, do not mark the completion of your formation. The different experiences of your life and of your pastoral work will have revealed new horizons for you. Now you will need to continue to form yourself, heedful of Father d'Alzon's admonishment. On-going formation is hardly a luxury; it is indispensable to your being faithful to the mission you have received. Thus, little by little, will you also become a formator for the generations that will succeed you.

## EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRES

*The following questionnaires have been prepared as tools for evaluating the preparedness of the candidate or the brother in formation for the successive stages of his formation.*

*Their usefulness, however, can be expanded. They can also be used as instruments for animation in helping candidates, brothers in formation, formators and Assumptionist communities to review their lives. The hope is that they will be referred to not only at the time of preparing reports but at the local chapter or at the beginning of the year, to establish the program and the formation objectives of a candidate, a novice or a professed brother.*

*Each province can adapt these questionnaires to its own actual situation.*

# **1. EVALUATION OF A POSTULANT'S PREPAREDNESS FOR NOVITIATE**

## **1. Discernment and accompaniment**

- Has he had regular meetings with his formator and/or his spiritual guide?
- Has he prepared his life-project? Has he done so in rereading his life journey?
- How well does he know the Assumption? What aspects of Assumptionist spirituality have impelled him to move forward?
- Are his decisions consistent and free?

## **2. His human maturity**

- Does this postulant have a satisfactory awareness and acceptance of himself?
- Is he capable of adapting himself? Is he open to others?
- Does he show sufficient psychological and affective equilibrium? Does he discuss his affective life? Does he assume his sexuality in relating to himself and to others? Is he capable of loving?
- Does he have common sense? Is he polite, neat, orderly?
- Is he seen as possessing those Assumptionist characteristics of honesty, candor, warmth, simplicity, initiative, boldness, generosity and disinterestedness?
- How does he relate to his family? Is he concerned about maintaining his relationship with them? But is he also sufficiently free from them?

## **3. His faith in Jesus Christ**

- Does he sincerely desire to find, love and follow Jesus Christ?
- Is he happy and at peace participating in the life of the Church?
- Does he have a prayer life? Is he capable of silence? Does he love the Word of God? Does he meditate on it?

- Does he share with conviction in the community's prayer and in the Eucharist?
- Does he live by the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

#### **4. His life in community**

- How has he shared in the life of the community?
- Is he open to dialogue? Does he receive the other as his brother, acknowledging his culture and his origins?
- Is he helpful? Can he earn his own living? Does he contribute to the material upkeep of the community? Does he assume his responsibility in the use of goods? Does he render an account of the gifts he has received?
- Does he invest himself in the community's projects?

#### **5. His love for the Church and his service to her**

- Has the community helped him to enter into the life and mission of the local church?
- In what apostolic endeavor has he invested himself? How well has he received his mission? Was he faithful to his commitment?
- Does he allow himself to be moved by the living conditions of others? Does he show a capacity for openness and for compassion?

#### **Conclusion**

- Has this man evolved positively during his postulancy? In what areas?
- Is he prepared to live the stage of the novitiate?
- What are the points that you would call his and his formators' attention to, to help him grow further?

## **2. EVALUATION OF A NOVICE'S PREPAREDNESS FOR COMMITMENT TO RELIGIOUS LIFE**

*The process of evaluation should include a review of those remarks made at the conclusion of the candidate's postulancy.*

*What human growth has the novice shown in areas like psychological and affective maturity, interior freedom, family relationships, a sense of responsibility?*

### **1. A man of faith**

- Is Christ at the center of his life? Is he able to find him in his brothers, in the poor, in every person?
- Does he feed his faith with the Word of God, with the Eucharist, with the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
- Does he share actively in the community's prayer? Does he talk about his faith?
- Has he taken initiatives and been creative in animating the liturgy?
- What have the quality and constancy of his personal prayer been like? Have they shown themselves in personal discipline, in a certain capacity for recollection, in an experience of God through gratuitous encounters with him?
- What is the quality of his love for Mary and for the Church? Does he frequently read Father d'Alzon and Saint Augustine?

### **2. A brother living in apostolic community**

- Is it obvious that he can live community life and embrace diversity in unity?
- Does he share in building up and animating his community?
- Is he a welcoming person, a man of dialogue, of communion, of service? Can he deny himself?
- Can he engage in team work? Is he considerate of other people's opinions?
- Is he really aware of belonging to an international congregation and of what that means?

### **3. Following Christ who was poor, chaste and obedient**

#### *Religious poverty*

- Does he live a simple life, free in regards to material goods?
- Does he render an account of the gifts and money he receives?
- How much time does he give to work in his daily activities?
- Is he sensitive to social injustices? Is he dedicated to the very poor?

#### *Chastity*

- Is he spontaneous, uncomplicated, transparent, yet discreet, in relating to his brothers and everyone he meets?
- Does he have a sense of humor to enable him to rise above tensions and frustrations?
- Is he balanced in his emotional life? Does he speak about his friendships, with men as well as with women?
- Is he aware of the consequences of his choosing consecrated celibacy?
- Can he embrace solitude with joy and inner peace?

#### *Religious obedience*

- How does he understand obedience and how does he live it? In submission? In domination?
- What place does he give to spiritual accompaniment?
- Can he embrace community decisions and own them? Does he submit his activities to his brothers?
- Is he available to accept the mission and the apostolic orientations of his community, of the Province and the Congregation?
- Is he able, through dialogue, to challenge his personal preferences with the apostolic priorities of the Province and of the Congregation?

### **4. An apostle for the coming of the Kingdom**

- Is he concerned for the great causes of God and of man? Is he resolved to devote himself to evangelizing the world? How does he show concretely his passion for the Reign of God?
- Does his apostolic work reveal attitudes of selflessness, initiative, availability?

- Can he engage in team work? Does he accept points of view and ways of doing things other than his own? Does he value the role of lay persons in the Church and in the world?
- How does he focus his studies, his prayer and his relationships so that they take on an apostolic dimension?

## **Conclusion**

- Has this novice grown during his novitiate? In what areas?
- Is he ready to live by the vows?
- What things would you point out to him and to his formators, to help him grow further?

### **3. EVALUATION OF A BROTHER ON HIS WAY TOWARD FINAL PROFESSION**

*Each year a brother in formation must submit a self-evaluation. His formators and his brothers living with him in community must also submit an evaluation of his progress along the way he has chosen to pursue. The following are questions to help them all focus on specific issues that need to be examined.*

#### **1. A man of faith**

- Is Christ at the center of his life? Is he able to find him in his brothers, in the poor, in every person?
- Does he feed his faith with the Word of God, with the Eucharist, with the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
- Does he share actively in the community's prayer? Does he talk about his faith?
- Has he taken initiatives and been creative in animating the liturgy? Does he cultivate a taste for beauty and for the sacred in liturgy?
- What have the quality and constancy of his personal prayer been like? Have they shown themselves in personal discipline, in a certain capacity for recollection, in an experience of God through gratuitous encounters with him?

#### **2. A brother living in apostolic community**

- Is it obvious that he can live community life and embrace diversity in unity?
- Does he share in building up and animating his community?
- Is he a welcoming person, a man of dialogue, of communion, of service? Can he deny himself?
- Do the life and the mission of the Province find their place among his concerns?
- Is he really aware of belonging to an international congregation and of what that means?

### **3. Following Christ who was poor, chaste and obedient**

#### *Religious poverty*

- Does he live a simple life, free in regards to material goods?
- Does he render an account of the gifts and money he receives?
- How much time does he give to work in his daily activities?
- Is he sensitive to social injustices? Is he dedicated to the very poor?
- What means does he take to know about the social and economic realities of his country?

#### *Chastity*

- Is he spontaneous, uncomplicated, transparent, yet discreet, in relating to his brothers and everyone he meets?
- Does he have a sense of humor to enable him to rise above tensions and frustrations?
- Is he balanced in his emotional life? Does he relate well with people?
- Can he embrace solitude with joy and inner peace?
- Is he disciplined in his relationships, in going out, in his needs and in his use of the media?

#### *Religious obedience*

- How does he understand obedience and how does he live it? In submission? In domination?
- Can he embrace community decisions and own them? Does he submit his activities to his brothers?
- Is he available to accept the mission and the apostolic orientations of his community, of the Province and the Congregation?
- Is he able, through dialogue, to challenge his personal preferences with the apostolic priorities of the Province and of the Congregation?

### **4. An apostle for the coming of the Kingdom**

- Is he concerned for the great causes of God and of man? Is he resolved to devote himself to evangelizing the world? How does he show concretely his passion for the Reign of God?
- Does his apostolic work reveal attitudes of selflessness, initiative, availability?

- Does he inform and consult his community in matters dealing with his apostolate? Does he evaluate with them the mission confided to him?
- Can he engage in team work? Does he accept points of view and ways of doing things other than his own? Does he value the role of lay persons in the Church and in the world?
- How does he focus his studies, his prayer and his relationships so that they take on an apostolic dimension?

## **Conclusion**

- Has this brother grown during the past year? In what areas?
- Is he ready to continue along the way toward final profession of vows?
- What things would you point out to him and to his formators, to help him grow further?

## **4. A BROTHER'S SELF-EVALUATION AS HE PREPARES HIS REQUEST FOR ORDINATION**

*The purpose of this questionnaire is to give you, as you prepare for the ordained ministry, an opportunity to review critically your pastoral formation and experiences. In this self-evaluation you should also note your desires and your personal projects for the future. You should address this self-evaluation to your Provincial Superior and include: 1) your projected program for your diaconate ministry or, if you are a deacon requesting priesthood, your plan of apostolic activities foreseen for the initial years of your priesthood and 2) your letter requesting ordination, in which you should indicate the motives that led you to seek ordination to the diaconate or to the priesthood.*

### **1. A review of your formation and apostolic experiences**

- What have been the positive as well as the negative aspects of your pastoral formation and your apostolic experiences? During your formation prior to / during your diaconate, what initiatives did you take? What have you discovered? What were your setbacks?
- In terms of pastoral ministry, what are the strengths and qualities, the weaknesses and limitations that you have recognized in yourself?

*The following questions could be useful for this review:*

#### ***Ordained to serve the Gospel***

- Have you been finding the time to read the Word of God, to meditate on it, to understand it for yourself?
- What ease / difficulty do you have in presenting God's Word in a personalized way that is accessible to persons different from you by age, attitude or culture?
- Does God's Word dialogue with real life in your preaching and in the group reflections you animate?
- Are you concerned about good liturgy and the quality of sacramental celebrations? Do you stay aware of their character as instruments of God's action and privileged means for the Church's catechesis?

### ***Ordained to serve the Church***

- Are you a man of communion, able to gather persons and groups into the unity of God's People while respecting their differences and taking into account the inevitable tensions that arise among them?
- To what extent are you capable of listening, of collaborating, and of engaging in teamwork with the brothers in your community and with the priests, religious women and lay people around you?
- Do you follow the pastoral orientations of your diocese?

### ***Ordained for the coming of the Kingdom***

- Do you pay attention to today's world, to its changes, to its deepest needs? Do you read the day's events in terms of faith in order to perceive therein the summons of God?
- Do you cultivate the pastoral attitudes required by the Assumption: disinterested generosity, initiative, availability, concern for your ongoing formation?
- Are you attentive to the world of the poor, of unbelievers, of those distanced from the Church, of separated brothers and sisters?

## **2. Your personal project**

- How do you plan to develop your qualities?
- How do you plan to make up for your deficiencies?
- What attitudes do you intend to cultivate to become an apostle working from the spirit of the Assumption?
- What are your desire? Your projects? How do you integrate them into the needs and the overall project of the Province?

## **3. Planning and evaluating**

- At the time when you request ordination to the diaconate, you should establish your diaconate training program, on the basis of this self-evaluation and with the help of the one who will be accompanying you.

- Then toward the end of your diaconate period, you will need to evaluate your program with the input of your community and of the one who will have accompanied you, in order to ascertain whether you have really lived out your program. At that time you should also identify, with their help, the attitudes and apostolic activities that will define the initial years of your priestly ministry.

## **5. EVALUATION OF A BROTHER'S PREPAREDNESS FOR ORDAINED MINISTRY**

*A brother's local community and notably his Superior with his Council, those responsible for formation, the Provincial Council and the Provincial Superior himself are all asked to discern very carefully his aptitudes for Orders and to submit their opinion and the result of their vote.*

*This questionnaire ought to help them evaluate the preparedness of a brother for the ordained ministries*

**The elements on which this discernment and these opinions should be brought to bear:**

- The candidate's motives that have led him to request ordination.
- The distance he has covered in terms of his human, spiritual, community and pastoral development.
- His strengths and weaknesses, his aptitudes and deficiencies.

*It is a good idea to look over his personal profile, to review the issues that called for special attention and that were noted at the time of his admission to Final Profession. If doubts persist, they should be clearly stated and the basis upon which they remain conscientiously explained. This questionnaire should facilitate this scrutiny.*

### ***Ordained to serve the Gospel***

- Does he find the time to read the Word of God, to meditate on it, to see for himself what it is saying?
- Is he concerned about presenting God's Word in a personalized way that is accessible to the various persons he addresses?
- Does God's Word dialogue with real life in his preaching and in the group reflections he conducts?
- Is he concerned about good liturgy and the quality of sacramental celebrations? Does he show a concerted awareness that they are instruments of God's action and privileged means for the Church's catechesis?

### ***Ordained to serve the Church***

- Is he a man of communion?
- Is he capable of listening? Of engaging in teamwork with the brothers in his community and with the priests, religious women and lay people around him?
- Does he follow the pastoral orientations of the diocese?

### ***Ordained for the coming of the Kingdom***

- Does he pay attention to today's world and to its changes? Does he perceive the day's events in the light of faith?
- Does he cultivate the pastoral attitudes required by the Assumption: disinterested generosity, initiative, availability, concern for his life-long formation?
- Does he tend to the very poor, to unbelievers, to those distanced from the Church, and to our separated sisters and brothers?

### **Conclusion**

- Why do you think that this candidate could function well in the ordained ministry for which he has been preparing himself?
- To what issues in particular would you draw his attention and that of his formators in order to help him grow further?

## **6. A LAY PERSON'S EVALUATION OF A BROTHER'S PREPAREDNESS FOR ORDAINED MINISTRY**

*This questionnaire is meant to facilitate the contribution of our lay friends when we request their opinion as to an Assumptionist brother's suitability for ordination to the diaconate or to the priesthood.*

*The following questions can provide them with a framework. Should they see fit, their attestation could broach other aspects of the candidate's personality.*

1. Is he a man of communion? Is he concerned about the unity of a community? Is he able to accept persons and groups gladly, respecting their differences and taking into account the inevitable tensions that arise among them?
2. Does he know how to listen? How to be of service to others? How to make himself available? How to engage in teamwork?
3. Does he present God's Word in a personalized way that is accessible to persons different from him by age, attitude or culture?
4. What other qualities or shortcomings would you want to note as our brother nears his ordination?



## ASSUMPTIONIST BIBLIOGRAPHY<sup>1</sup>

### FOR PRE-NOVITIATE

*Readings in other areas should also be suggested to a candidate to help him:*

- *deepen his self-understanding and establish sound interpersonal relationships;*
- *understand vocation in general and vocation to religious life in particular;*
- *appreciate community living;*
- *get started in his life of prayer and to learn to read and meditate on the Word of God;*
- *deepen his knowledge of Jesus Christ and to develop his faith:*
  - *by reading at least one "Life of Christ,"*
  - *by reading selections from the Catechism of the Catholic Church on the Sacraments, the virtues, faith, the Trinity, etc.*

*Notes:*

- *During the time of his accompaniment to discern his vocation, a candidate / postulant should already be reading within the noted areas.*
- *A candidate / postulant should establish a program of reading (books, articles, selected chapters) with his formator, who should be meeting with him to check on his progress and his grasp of these readings.*
- *This reading should be accompanied by some written work resulting from synthesis, reflection and research (by internet, for example).*

**The goal: getting to know the Founder and the history and spirituality of the Assumptionists.**

***The Founder***

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***The history***

Books

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### **For Novitiate**

*The Novice Master will suggest a reading list to the novices to help them:*

- *understand Father d'Alzon and the historical context within which he lived;*
- *understand his spirituality and that of the Assumption;*
- *know the history of the Congregation;*
- *be acquainted with religious life and with the vows;*
- *know the thought and spirituality of Saint Augustine.*

**The goal: reading the Founder's fundamental texts, some studies on the spirituality of the Congregation and some works of and on Saint Augustine.**

## *Father d'Alzon's foundational texts*<sup>2</sup>

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## FOR POST-NOVITIATE AND LIFE-LONG FORMATION

*A professed brother should continue to pursue his formation in order:*

- *to deepen his understanding of the Assumption's spirituality;*
- *to know the actual life and mission of the Congregation.*

*He should do so by reading:*

- *the news bulletins put out by the Congregation and his Province;*
- *the Congregation's official documents (General Chapter and Provincial Chapter Reports, Letters from the Major Superiors) dealing with:*
- *religious life;*
- *Saint Augustine and the Fathers of the Church.*

**The goal: reading to complete one's familiarity with Father d'Alzon and with the spirituality and history of the Congregation.**

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13. Bugnard, Noël, A.A. *Le P. Emmanuel d'Alzon et les vocations*. Série Centenaire 1980, 3. Rome: 1979. 89 pages.
14. Walter, Julian, A.A. *Les Assomptionnistes au Proche-Orient (1863-1980)*. Série Centenaire 1980, 6. Paris: 1982, 84 pages. There is also an English version.
15. Olivier, Daniel, A.A. *Le Père d'Alzon et l'œcuménisme*. Série Centenaire 1980, 7. Rome: 1980. 79 pages.
16. Guissard, Lucien, A.A., Pierre Pierrard and Antoine Wenger, A.A. *Hier et aujourd'hui, d'Alzon et l'Assomption*. Série Centenaire 1980. Paris: 1982. 90 pages.
17. *Héritiers de l'Évangile. Prier trente jours avec les religieux de l'Assomption*. Paris: Bayard Éditions-Centurion, 1999. 193 pages.
18. Cleux, Angelome, A.A. *Emmanuel d'Alzon homme d'Eglise*. Saint-Gérard, Belgium: Éditions du Centre d'Alzon, 1961. 187 pages.
19. Monval, Jean, *Les Assomptionnistes*. Paris: Grasset, 1939. 256 pages.
20. Pépin, Adrien, A.A., *Les Religieux de l'Assomption*. Paris: La Bonne Presse, 1963. 252 pages.
21. Quénard, Gervais, A.A. *Les Augustins de l'Assomption, origines, esprit et organisation, œuvres*. Paris :La Bonne Presse,1928. 172 pages.

22. Girard-Reydet, Joseph, A.A. *Le Père Gervais Quénard, Supérieur général des Assomptionistes (1875-1961)*. Paris: La Bonne Presse, 1967, 302 pages. Currently being translated in Spanish.

\* To become acquainted with Father d'Alzon's first disciples, consult the bibliographies provided by Jean-Paul Périer-Muzet, A.A., in *Le Père Emmanuel d'Alzon par lui-même. Anthologie alzonienne. Contextes, thèmes et textes, données biographiques, indications bibliographiques et questionnaires*. Rome: Maison généralice des Augustins de l'Assomption, Bayard Service Édition, 2003.

- Father Étienne Pernet: p. 88.

- Father François Picard: p. 134. See also Jacqueline Decoux. François Picard, l'engagement d'un homme pour "faire en toute chose la volonté de Dieu.", Éditions du Signe: Paris, 2003. 128 pages.

- Father Vincent de Paul Bailly: p. 160.

- Father Victorin Galabert: p. 130. See also his *Journal*. Vols. I and II. Éditions de l'Université Sv. Kliment Okhridski: Sofia, 1998 and 2000. 604 and 350 pages.

\* See also Jean-Paul Périer-Muzet, A.A. *Notices Biographiques des Religieux de l'Assomption*. Rome, 2000-2001. 5 vols.

\* To become acquainted with our three Bulgarian martyrs:

- Holzer, Bernard, A.A. and Jean-Baptiste Michel. *Les rideaux rouges de Sofia. Trois simples prêtres martyrs, fusillés, bienheureux*. Paris: Bayard, 2003. 172 pages.

- Gallay, Pierre, A.A., *The martyrdom of the three Bulgarian Assomptionists*. Tr. by Richard Richards, A.A. Le Bourget-du-Lac: Bayard Service Éditions, 2002. 28 pages.

## FOR THE ORDAINED MINISTRIES

*Reading within the following areas will be especially helpful during the first years of one's ordained ministry:*

### 1. The documents of the Magisterium:

- Vatican Council II. *Lumen gentium, Gaudium et spes, etc.*

- Papal Encyclicals:

- *Mater et magistra* (1961)
- *Evangelii nuntiandi* (1975)
- *Redemptor hominis* (1979)
- *Redemptoris Mater* (1987)
- *Redemptoris missio* (1990)
- *Pastores dabo vobis* (1992)
- *Ut unum sint* (1995 - on ecumenism)
- *Novo millennio ineunte* (2000)

- Documents for the local and the continental churches:

- *Ecclesia in Africa* (1995)
- *Ecclesia in America* (1999)
- *Ecclesia in Asia* (1999)
- *Ecclesia in Europa* (2003)

### 2. The actual life and mission of the Congregation.

### 3. The spirituality of the Assumption.

### 4. Ecumenism and inter-faith dialogue.

## FOR THE FORMATION OF OUR FORMATORS

*Those preparing to assume responsibilities for formation or who have already done so should already have read the works listed in the bibliographies prepared for the candidates and the brothers in formation. They will also find the following to be helpful:*

1. Périer-Muzet, Jean-Paul, A.A. *Petit manuel. Histoire de l'Assomption*. Rome, 2003. 185 pages.
2. Lespinay, Guy. *Être formateur aujourd'hui: la formation à la vie religieuse: l'appel, le discernement, l'adaptation*. Montréal: Médiaspaul, 2002. 221 pages.
3. John-Paul II, *Consecrated life – Vita consecrata: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father John Paul II*.
4. Marechal, Claude, A.A. *Initier les jeunes à la vie communautaire apostolique: Le cœur de la formation à l'Assomption*. Louvain: July 1996. Translated into Spanish.



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