



A Word from the Postulator

The more I get to know the personality and holiness of Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon, the more I admire in him how open he was to his times and the more I find him to be a model apostle for the church of our time. In the *Signs of God* #10, we underlined his love and initiatives on behalf of the poor. Here we would like to emphasize his obsession with getting to know, entering into dialogue with, and above all evangelizing every dimension of society. The holy Pope John XXIII, at the time he convoked the Second Vatican Council, wanted the Church "to open its doors and windows" so that fresh air could circulate in it. Pope Francis hasn't stopped insisting on the fact that our Church must move beyond its doors towards the margins of humanity, lest it enclose itself in on its privileges and its fears and in order to bear the light, the consolation and the friendship of Jesus to those scorned and forgotten. Fr. d'Alzon, in the page we have published here, uses this same language. He urges us to move beyond our doors, to get to know the realities of the world, to enter into dialogue with the different categories of people, to become servants, to transcend the limitations of clericalism, and to share our wealth with the laity. Above all he teaches us to act always out of love of Jesus Christ and of the Church, his Bride.

Fr. Julio Román Navarro, A.A.

Emmanuel d'Alzon, an apostle, bold and creative

«Above all, we will be apostles», Fr. d'Alzon told the Assumptionists, whether they were religious or lay. And apostles for today's world. Not those of yester-year. «We must give thanks to God that our small Congregation was born at this stormy time because there are lots of new things to be accomplished» (ES, 1031). His convictions were simple and made a lot of sense seen from the point of view of faith: the love of Christ, the love of one's neighbor, the love of the Church are three inseparable aspects of the same reality. We desire the salvation of mankind because this is God's desire. We desire it out of love for Christ. We desire it out of love for mankind itself. Trying to build human happiness without God, without Christ, is a fatal illusion. Let us look around us, Fr. d'Alzon says, «To mock

everything, to resort to anything: gold, pleasure, power; by robbery, orgy, and revolutions. To proceed by hate, lying, and violence. Is this not a summary of the new rights? Either we must perish, or we must clamber out of the abyss...» (ES, 180). One requirement: **to know the world in order to witness to it.** How can we announce Christ to the world, if we do not know the world and if the world does not know us? Study the currents of thought «that govern the world», «speak a language that people can understand»; be attentive to events that reveal changes in the way people think and act so that you are ready to adapt your way of reaching them. Never neglect an ability to read hearts: «Whoever knows how to read hearts and minds surely knows more than books can teach» (ES, 749).

Fr. d'Alzon speaks to us

We must stretch minds and hearts to the cause of God; we must broaden the horizons of the short-sighted; we must light a fire under those who would settle for foot-warmers.

(Spiritual Writings, p. 693)

A Church which “goes forth”



Pope Francis
in the midst of a crowd

A Church which “goes forth” is a Church whose doors are open. Going out to others in order to reach the fringes of humanity does not mean rushing out aimlessly into the world. Often it is better simply to slow down, to put aside our eagerness in order to see and listen to others, to stop rushing from one thing to another and to remain with someone who has faltered along the way. At times we have to be like the father of the prodigal son, who always keeps his door open so that when the son returns, he can readily pass through it.

The Church is called to be the house of the Father... Frequently, we act as arbiters of grace rather than its facilitators. But the Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems.

If the whole Church takes up this missionary impulse, she has to go forth to everyone without exception. But to whom should she go first? When we read the Gospel we find a clear indication: not so much our friends and wealthy neighbours, but above all the poor and the sick, those who are usually despised and overlooked, “those who cannot repay you” (*Lk 14:14*). There can be no room for doubt or for explanations which weaken so clear a message...

Let us go forth, then, let us go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ. Here I repeat for the entire Church what I have often said to the priests and laity of Buenos Aires: I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy

from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the centre and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: “Give them something to eat” (*Mk 6:37*).

(*Evangelii gaudium*, Pope Francis, #46-49)

► «*We must act!*». How? For Fr. d’Alzon, the basis for all apostolic action, that which is *fundamental and most powerful*, is without a doubt prayer. Action, works, go without saying. However, he refused to let himself be closed in. Nothing was to be ruled out. Everything depended on circumstances, on places, on needs. Should this be

taken to mean that action is to be determined by one and all? Certainly not. We must not «*waste our time on activities which might be useful and even excellent in themselves, but which in fact would distract us from the path we have set*» (ES, 156).

(Extracts from the *Fiche d’Alzon 80*, #3, on «*The Mission*, » by Fr. François Péjac, A.A.)

Knowing the world in order to enter into dialogue with it

All of us, inasmuch as we are Christians, are one; we are one body, since we all partake of the one bread – the bread of the Eucharist. Diverse ministries there are, but these ministries denote difference, not opposition. ...

Isolation, ignorance, distance

A priest may be inclined to pride and domination. He may isolate himself from secular affairs to the extent of not knowing what goes on in the world about him. A layman may, likewise, ignore the Church and bask in the independence of his views....

In a sense this isolation is beneficial. We are no longer involved in the ‘rat-race’ – no longer victims of social pressure. Yet, in another sense it is a disaster. The clergy have been cut off from human contact. Society is no longer amenable to spiritual influence such as only the Priesthood can provide. And the priest, driven back into his corner, comes to ignore the aspirations – the needs and necessities – the true situations in which ordinary people find themselves. He has become an outsider, living his own little life which has little to do with theirs..

And from thence a deplorable impotence. Nobody listens to the priest anymore. He speaks an alien language, using a strange vocabulary which ‘men of the world’ can no longer understand. What has he to offer the world with which he is now so completely out of touch? He solves problems which no longer exist. He refutes false opinions which are no longer held. Other opinions, other errors, have taken their place. He propounds his theological learning to people who know nothing at all about religion – but what does he know about anything else? What does he know about the immediate causes of all their anxiety? He hasn’t even begun to study the questions which perplex them. Modern Science appears to be his greatest enemy – but if he knew anything about it, it would become his staunchest ally. He shuts himself up in his musty Mysticism. People expect facts – historical truth – scientific demonstration – the kind of reasoning they can understand. He has nothing to say about anything they

think matters. He has lost the confidence of the masses. What does he know about ‘humanity in the raw?’ – he doesn’t have a clue.

Don’t try to dominate! Domination is the foundation stone of ruination! There is far too much independence in the world today. Men will no longer endure absolute authoritarianism, or bow their heads to dictatorship. Be humble instead – and be so willingly. In a certain sense, turn yourself into a lay person. Bring about a happy fellowship – an exchange of views – a ‘talking point.’ Our priestly state may place us on a different footing from the rest of men – we must, nevertheless, renew acquaintance with them, re-establish communications, breathe once again the same air. Let us pursue our studies: no longer as men who have quit the world, but as men who still belong. Let us familiarise ourselves with whatever the world has to say. Let us speak to the world of today in today’s language.

Religious and laity complement one another

There are germs of death within the ‘lay’ spirit... but also signs of life, and great hopes for the future. Yes, we may benefit by the very eagerness with which every established principle is questioned, investigated and analysed. We may benefit by that insatiable curiosity, which is prepared to go the greatest lengths in search for an adequate explanation for all our human problems. It may be an evil and disruptive curiosity. But it can be turned into a salutary and constructive one. Illuminated by the torch of Faith, it could be used for the purpose of studying Religion – and Science and Literature too. Why not use it to get at the truth and uphold the cause of God?

... Our small congregation does permit us to be frank and free with our lay colleagues, and they with us. We are able to cultivate relationships of mutual acceptance and understanding,



Sculpture of Fr. d’Alzon at Assumption College, Worcester, MA.

compassion, and goodness. The priest need not worry about falling back into the failures and limitations he may have experienced himself in the lay state. Rather he should take his relationships with lay colleagues as opportunities to work side by side with them and getting close to them. These relations help him to enter better into their world, to speak their language, and to learn the truth as they understand it and how to express the truth in ways that they can understand.

And so all things come together in Jesus Christ. Each of us becomes ‘all things to all men’ in charity. We no longer attribute success to our individual efforts – doing good is no longer our particular monopoly. We all have knowledge to impart – we have all studied – we all work hard for the improvement of the human spirit. We practice obedience – Christian obedience in freedom and full honesty. Our tendency to dominate subsides, slackens, and gives way to humility. Our tendency to rebel comes under control and gives way to obedience. Isolation ceases; separation disappears; everything comes together in a harmony that is at once simple and peaceful.

(Fr. d’Alzon, to the Teachers at the Collège of Nîmes in 1846, *Spiritual Writings*, 1292-1296).

Favors and graces received



Young Chileans on pilgrimage to Nîmes, August 2010.

I got a telephone call from my 80-year old aunt for whom we have been praying since January 2013, when she fell and broke her leg. The doctor told her that at her age it would be hard to imagine her walking again. However, today she was told that the bone had healed and she could begin exercising. Let me also take advantage of this note to tell you of my mother's healing: for a week she had been prevented from walking because of a Baker's cyst. Both of these cases have led us to thank Fr. d'Alzon whose intercession we had requested (Juan Antonio, Elche, Spain).

I pray every day to good Fr. d'Alzon on behalf of my daughter. I have confidence in him; he has often heard my prayer and come to my aid... (Danièle, Rochefort, France).

The Lord's tenderness has been shown to me daily in spectacular fashion...I have dared to ask the Lord, through the intercession of Fr. d'Alzon, for the healing of the syringomyelia of Daniel, whose uprightness the Lord is aware of. I pray that he might be given faith and hope (Christiane, Aix-en-Provence, France).

I lost my sister a little while back (June 1)... She and I have had a lot of love for Fr. d'Alzon... I would ask you to keep her and me in mind at Mass... (Suzanne, France).

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News from the Secretariats

Mexico: *On July 21, 2014, Fr. Julio Navarro, Postulator, appointed a Secretariat in Mexico to promote the cause for the beatification and canonization of Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon. This Secretariat includes three young religious and five lay members who are involved in the spirituality and the ministry of the three Assumptionist communities: the parish of Emperatriz de América, the parish of San Andrés de Totoltepec and the Casa Manuel formation community.*

Mexico: *Dear Fr. Julio, I would like to inform you that we have made number of decisions at our recent meetings concerning our work together. Here are two concrete ones:*

1.-Placed a register in our churches where the faithful can inscribe the names of their sick loved ones for whom they seek prayers. Every Thursday, during the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament ("Holy Hour") we make mention of those people commended to our prayers, invoking the intercession of Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon for them.

2.- Found a spot in our parishes to place an image of Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon in order to make him better known. (Carlos Alberto Bravo, A.A., 04/06/2014).

Buenos Aires: *Fr. Julio, I'd like to tell you that Easter Thursday we went to visit Máximo Agustín, the child healed of Philadelphia Chromosome Positive Leukemia. The witness they family gave is remarkable! The doctor, too, who did the graft said that as far as Máximo's healing was concerned, there must have been divine intervention. The child is leading a perfectly normal life and is preparing for his First Communion. What a beautiful case! (Cristina Berardi, 06/05/2014).*

Nairobi: *Hello, Fr. Julio! During Lent I met a number of people and asked them a few questions (about Fr. d'Alzon and his power of intercession). They all replied that they were aware that they could receive graces through Fr. d'Alzon and counted a lot on his intercession, because, in fact, they prayed to him often. Certain of them told me that they ask him for a lot of things for their children and that they have since observed changes in the lives of their children and of the entire family. Others told me that they pray to him, but don't have any specific method. Still others listed the different virtues they recognize in Fr. d'Alzon and pray that they might always imitate these same virtues... We've organized a day when we're going to talk about all this... (Kizito, A.A., 27/05/2014).*