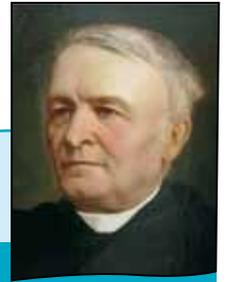


4

Signos de Dios

Signs of God

Signes de Dieu



A Word from the Postulator

To really come to know the person and the holiness of Fr. d'Alzon, one must know the place where he was born and lived, his family, his surroundings and the era in which he acted. One must also know the particular Church, that of Nîmes of yesterday and of today, where he took root and where he exercised his ministry from his priestly ordination until his death. A saint is not self-made. He becomes such within a specific people and a particular Church. He becomes a saint by sharing "the joys and hopes, the sadness and distress" of the people of his time. The reflection of Cardinal Amato, which we present in this circular, invites us to exercise a ministry alive, one which in turn transmits enthusiasm and participation, and which consists not only in making known the figure and holiness of Fr. d'Alzon, but also invites us to imitate his virtues and to make of him a saint for ourselves and for the people of our day. The place, the land, the Church where Fr. d'Alzon continues to live today is our Assumption Family. We are responsible for his heritage, that is, for his charism and his spirituality, which are gifts from God for the whole Church; it is up to us to share them with many others. May the Lord soon grant us the joy of being able to invoke him as saint.

Fr. Julio Navarro Román, A.A.

The Reputation of Father d'Alzon's Holiness

It is the honest truth that, during his life, the Servant of God had a great reputation for holiness, not only within his Congregation, where the religious, exemplary witnesses of his conduct and of his virtues, venerated him, but also among his superiors, the bishops of Nîmes, and among the other persons who had the opportunity to know him.

The reputation for holiness that Fr. d'Alzon had, in particular among his religious and those persons who addressed themselves to him, and which is based above all on his heroic virtues, continued to grow over time with these same virtues, up to the end of his life and little by little took on that characteristic of veneration that one has for the saints.

It is worth mentioning, even highlighting, one fact that is noted

by numerous witnesses: that is the love of the citizens of Nîmes for Fr. d'Alzon. It was not the prominence of his talent or his speech that influenced the population; rather it was a sort of fascination with his dedication, his love and the holiness of this apostle that touched their hearts.

He was, it was said, the master of Nîmes. D'Alzon's influence on the people was amazing, wrote a witness. To what was it due? Whence came his prestige? From his name? From his fortune? No. Undoubtedly, these external gifts capture peoples' attention, but they excite only respect and admiration. Fr. d'Alzon's influence went further, in greater depth: he reigned over peoples' hearts. They loved him because they felt loved by him; he understood the people to whom he gave himself with all

Father d'Alzon Speaks To Us

We desire to be pleasing to those whom we love. If my heart is totally given over to Our Lord, I should desire to please him, and this desire should be equal to my love for him. Now, that which he desires most is that I be a saint. If therefore I have but a weak desire for my perfection, it is because I love him too little.

(Spiritual Writings, p. 40)

The Pastoral Dimension of the Causes for Beatification and Canonization.



Bust of Father d'Alzon, in his birth place

The first characteristic of a cause for beatification or for canonization is the pastoral dimension. In effect, the beatification which takes place within a local Church, provided there is good preparation of the faithful, appears to be very effective. Why? Not only to make the future Blessed better known as an exemplary witness of the *sequela Christi* (as one who followed Christ), but also to promote among the faithful the means to imitate him and to ask of him graces and favors both spiritual and material. Thus, the feeling of psychological and existential closeness to the saints is reinforced and expanded among the faithful; and thus is established an affinity of mind and heart, an affective and spiritual “sympathy”, a “spiritual communion”.

So it is that all those concerned follow the juridical process by their interest and their prayer in such a way that the Postulator

is not the unique sponsor of the Cause, as is often the case, but that the entire ecclesial community becomes responsible. Which is to say that a rich combined effort of the enthusiasm and participation between the postulation team and the other promoters of the Cause is produced: the diocese, the congregation or religious institute, the religious movements, the laity involved. In this way, all those involved, according to their diverse qualifications, will show each other in the first place and then others their interest in the figure of the Servant of God and their dedication in requesting the intercession of the future Blessed or Saint within the context of the Cause. So it becomes evident that the road to beatification or canonization is not to be reduced to a bureaucratic procedure, but that it concerns a **road to follow** by the entire ecclesial community. This interest and this participation show the vitality of a cause and allow the necessary discernment to be made in order to identify, among the favors and graces obtained, the miracle requested.

In this context, time also plays a fundamental role. The more or less long years that the procedure takes should not be considered as time wasted, but as a providential opportunity to promote among the faithful the a mature and profound knowledge of the Servant of God.

Pastoral ministry is meant to be a source of animation of the Christian community. The opening of a process of beatification or its pursuit towards canonization is

- ▶ the strength of his great soul. Among men he was a true leader: his desires were considered orders; his words electrified the masses; but it was his example above all that attracted the crowds. And what an example! He was seen more than once tending the sick with his own hands and exercising toward them the work of a Sister of Charity. The poor, we have been told, would tell, as they shed tears of gratitude, how this holy priest had made himself a nurse to wash and treat their wounds.

And the poor, by way of conclusion, added : “He was a true saint”.

These acts and many more brought the people of Nîmes to hail in him a man worthy of all their gratitude and all their love. They were proud of Fr. d’Alzon.

(Drawn from “*Articles for the cause...*”, publication presented by Fr. Aubain Colette for the cause of beatification of Fr. d’Alzon conducted at Nîmes, 1958, # 168).



Le Vigan, the place and house in which Father d'Alzon was born

precisely a privileged occasion for this animation by reminding the faithful of their call to holiness. Thus, parishes, organizations, other groups, religious communities, each of the faithful and, why not also the persons estranged from the Church, will feel themselves like never before participants in this work of knowing and esteeming the Servant of God. He himself lived in their land, shared with them their specific character and, often, became a symbol of unity, almost an “identity card” of the local, and even the national, reality.

Civic and cultural institutions do not remain untouched by the value of a holiness which very often has had an extraordinary and exemplary repercussion in the social arena.

To propose figures who have transformed their lives into gifts of self becomes something of interest to everyone. These women and these men on the way to the glory of heaven are not persons who were isolated or uncommitted, but people who worked with generosity and intelligence, overcoming every type of difficulty with an incredible trust in Divine Providence. The lessons of faith, hope and love which they have left us safeguard and increase authentic human and Christian values.

These considerations do not constitute a simple pastoral strategy. Considering the value of place is not foreign to the faith: it is rather a condition for ecclesial faith to take root and to develop. In effect, the

Word of God was made flesh and he came to live among us in a precise place. Similarly, the mystery of the Church is not realized in an extraterrestrial sphere, but in the historic place where Christians are called to live. The places where the saints lived and where they are known constitute the milestones of salvation history. To give responsibility and dynamism to a local reality means contributing effectively to spreading the Gospel of Christ..

(Extract of the address by Cardinal Angelo Amato, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints of January 11, 2010)

Favors and Graces Received



Painting of Father d'Alzon by Fr. Pedro Pinto Olivares, first Chilean Assumptionist

*I needed some extra income for house expenses and I mentioned it to a person dear to me (my aunt). She gave me a picture of Father d'Alzon and suggested that I ask him to help me. I had not done so before because I thought there were more important needs to ask for; but she explained that what I would ask was not money so much as for work which would enable me to earn it. I did as she said. I began a novena and, before I finished, some "extra" work presented itself. I was able to do it with a lot of sacrifice and was thus able to do what I had wanted. Since then I always pray to Fr. d'Alzon and I make him known to other persons who have serious health or personal problems. **Thank you, Fr. d'Alzon!** (Alicia Bonichelli, Rosario, Argentina).*

Since the death of my husband I have had many financial problems; fortunately Fr. d'Alzon has always supported me, I thus want to thank him with a very big thank you. (Yvette)

The list would be very long of all the graces obtained through the intercession of Father Emmanuel d'Alzon. I pray to Father d'Alzon in union with you every night. (Christiane, Aix-en-Provence, France).

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News received

Concerning the 150th anniversary of the Near Eastern Mission

This year when the Assumption, Augustinians of the Assumption and the Oblate Missionary Sisters of the Assumption, celebrates the 150th anniversary of the Near Eastern Mission, desired and decided by Fr. d'Alzon, it is good to see the "signs of God" in the very communities of that Mission today.

In Jerusalem, for example, an Oblate Sister of the Assumption told me : "For me, the 150 years of the Near Eastern Mission have taken on particular importance as a result of the beatification of our three Bulgarian brothers, Pavel, Kamen and Josephat: 150 years to produce three martyrs and three 'saints' or blessed, that is already a great sign which God has given us. Therefore let us profit from this anniversary of the Near Eastern Mission to continue our Mission in the spirit of Father d'Alzon and the recognition of his holiness will be more easily made!"

In Istanbul, on the Asian side, Fr. Xavier Jacob, a.a. who has just completed 52 years in Turkey (more than a third of the Assumptionist history in the East!) has written several articles "on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the arrival of Fr. d'Alzon in the Ottoman Capital". The first article appeared in the diocesan bulletin of the Catholic Church in Turkey, # 2, year 27, of February 2012, pages 6 and 7, illustrated with three photos, under the title "the Assumptionists in Istanbul" where he speaks also of the arrival of the Oblate Sisters in 1868.

And, elsewhere, in the church of Our Lady of the Assumption in Kadikoy-Moda, in the chancel, we can observe on the left a large framed painting representing Saint John Baptist de la Salle painted by Brother Michel-Justin in 1900 with a plaque indicating the year of the canonization of the founder of the Christian Brothers (who have a large high school in the same neighborhood), but curiously on the symmetrical wall on the right remains an empty space which seems to await a painting of the same grandeur with the portrait of Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon as soon as he will be declared Blessed or even Saint! In any case it is the fondest wish of several Assumptionist religious and Oblate Sisters of that community of the Near Eastern Mission!

(Remarks collected by Fr. Lucas Chuffart, A.A.
March 2012)