



Word of the Postulator

Here is the second number of “Signs of God”; the principal subject is again the miracle. Let us continue to ask God for the gift of a miracle obtained through the intercession of Father d’Alzon. It is the confirmation which the Church requests in order to publicly recognize the holiness of our Founder.

From January 9 to February 7, I followed a course (obligatory) for Postulators, on the theology and history of beatifications and canonizations. It is a course organized by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. I learned a lot of new things, among which, that it is the local Church or the religious family in which he lived, acted and witnessed to his faith, that does the true recognition of the holiness of the Servant of God. That is why we, Assumptionists (men and women religious and laity), are the first who should believe in the holiness of Father d’Alzon and, consequent to this certitude, have to make him known as a model of holiness for us today. Let us imitate his virtues, let us adopt him as spiritual father, let us ask his intercession!

Fr. Julio Navarro Román, a.a.

The Holiness of Father d’Alzon

“It is with a heart profoundly moved and eyes filled with tears that I have just learned of the edifying death of Fr. d’Alzon. [...] Rev. d’Alzon was an incomparable father and master, he was above all a great figure demonstrated in the sacrifice of his life; we owe him the benefit of a Christian education; he especially formed us by his example and the pre-eminent influence of his spirit and his dedication. His holy soul lived for the Church and France alone. His heart beat in a special way for young people. His life was a rare example of disinterestedness. A simple priest in the Church’s hierarchy, he was

nonetheless one of the most noteworthy and most brilliant in the Church of France in the 19th century. If I differed from him and from the school of which he was the soul on certain issues which remained open to debate, no one admired more than I his sincerity, his loyalty, his humility, his passion for souls, his measureless and limitless charity, and his devouring need to sacrifice all for his neighbor, for his country and for the faith.”

(Testimony of Frédéric de Fabrèges, Former student of Fr. d’Alzon, in a letter dated November 21, the very day of Fr. d’Alzon’s death)

Father d’Alzon speaks to us

Perfection consists in not considering oneself perfect but in taking up anew daily the work of one’s soul without ever thinking that one has reached the end.

Let us keep ourselves constantly in the presence of God, as faithful servants prepared to obey him, disciples set to gather his teachings, soldiers ready at the first sound of the trumpet to take up arms in his battles.

The function of the miracle in the processes of beatification

Obsolete, the miracle? On the contrary it seems to be in marvelously good health! As Benedict XVI seems to be pursuing the ambitious policy of beatification of his predecessor (whom the crowds, at his funeral ceremonies, called for him to be beatified) the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints announces regularly that a miracle has been attributed to the intercession of such a “servant of God”, the official name of the “candidate” for beatification. For if the popes of our contemporary era, from Pius XI to John Paul II, have had the desire to simplify and to modernize the procedure for recognizing the holiness of a baptized person, the miracle continues to play an indispensable role.

We might be surprised at that. Why attribute to the miracle such prominence when our modern age, at least in the West, tends to see in it but some archaic, medieval relic or a questionable concession to popular piety? Before examining the arguments that can justify this situation – I will propose four – it would without a doubt more useful to recall briefly the general context of the procedure for beatification.

The Church has never pretended to draw up the exhaustive list of those of her children who share the glory of their Lord. On the one hand, it is God’s secret and, on the other, as stated in the book of the Apocalypse, we are talking of “a great multitude that no one can count” (7:9). On the other hand, she wishes to encourage the faithful to walk in the way of

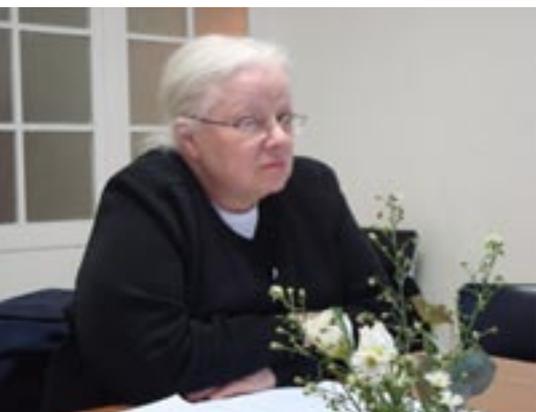
holiness (the universal vocation of Christians as Vatican II reminded us) by proposing models and fraternal intercessors. Beatification is thus the public recognition of the holiness of a baptized Christian who has died. Canonization is not a supplementary grade, but the extension to the universal Church of the more restricted cult authorized at the beatification. In both cases, the procedure takes the form of a legal action during which the arguments for and against are presented. It begins at the level of the diocese, in principle at least five years after death, by the painstaking inquiry of the bishop of the place where the servant of God died. This is followed by the transfer of the dossier to the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints. After the publication of the decree establishing the “heroic qualities of virtues”, the person is declared “venerable”. It is at this point when, *except in the case of a martyr*, one necessarily must introduce at least one miracle attributed to the intercession of the venerable, post-mortem. Failing this, the procedure is blocked among thousands of examples; one can cite the case of Pauline Jaricot, whose decree of heroic virtues dates back to 1963. When the miracle is authenticated, it is announced by decree. The pope can then decide to proceed to the ceremony of beatification. Canonization is subject to the same rules: it is a second procedure and requires another miracle, and this is also applicable to martyrs.

The miracle thus serves as a proof. What theological justification can we attempt to give it?

1. The miracle testifies to the reputation of holiness.

This is obvious: no miracle is attributable to a servant of God if his intercession has not been solicited by one of the faithful. Since beatification is linked to the public character of the holiness of so and so, this point is important. One could say that here one appeals to an aspect of *sensus*





Meeting of religious and laity to justify the Cause of Beatification, Brussels, 19 February 2012.

latter allows one to judge that the latter is clearly within the intimacy of his Lord. One could say, with a little humor, that it is a way to verify that God is in agreement. That is why the groups that work in favor of the beatification of a person distribute prayer cards whereby graces are asked of the venerable as much for those who are praying as for the success of the procedure.

3. The miracle moves in the way of grace, which moves in the way of life.

Last obvious factor: the miracle does some good! It is not in the first place an unexplainable act in the current state of human understanding. It is a gift graciously accorded to a person who experiences great distress. The miracle causes life to spring up where death seemed destined to triumph. In this sense, it witnesses to the goodness of God and to the care he gives to persons: yes, he is the Master and friend of life, “he did not create death” (Wis 1:13). The miracle is the sign, given on earth, of a hope that will be fulfilled in heaven. Far from devaluating life in the present, the miracle reminds us that God reveals himself. Even though spiritual, the miracle has a profoundly realistic character, for it is concrete and verifiable (even by non-believing experts). It is all the more true that the miracle consists almost always in a healing. We here reconnect with the privileged stature which the Christian faith gives to the body: is it not by his Incarnation that the Son of God came to meet us?

4. The miracle is a sign of the communion of saints

Because the miracle is read as a response of a baptized person in glory to the request of a baptized person who is suffering, it creates a link between the Church of heaven and the Church on earth, the Church triumphant and the Church militant, to use the traditional terms. It is one of the ways we can understand the communion of the saints, as mentioned in the Apostles' Creed. Now the saints, as already mentioned, do not all have a crown on their head! To the extent that holiness is the vocation of every Christian, the faithful who confide in the intercession of a future blessed one can and must recognize in him a model, that is to say, a concrete encouragement to advance in an ever more Gospel-oriented way of life. Furthermore, the request for intercession is not made haphazardly for it manifests more often a form of spiritual attraction. The person to whom we pray is not a demi-god, but an elder brother or sister who has traveled the way which the Church indicates to all her children.

In its realistic and concrete, even provocative, character, the miracle is thus like a seal which authenticates the dynamic and life-giving character of the holiness lived in a human life.

*Christelle JAVARY
Catholic Institute of Paris
(in “Itinéraire Augustiniens”,
n° 36, July 2006, p. 35-38)*

fidei (the sense of the faith of the believing community): the capacity to perceive almost intuitively the authority proper to holiness. And since the Church provides models for the Christian faithful, it is important to raise the fact that certain persons already play this role for a significant number of faithful.

2. The miracle certifies divine favor.

Again something obvious; it is God who accomplishes the miracle and not the future blessed! But the “efficacious” intercession of the

To share in groups

- What is the difference between beatification and canonization?
- Is the Church right in requesting a miracle to recognize the holiness of one of her sons or daughters?
- Concretely, in what does the “communion of saints” that I proclaim in the Creed consist for me?

What are the conditions for a healing to be considered a miracle?

- 1) **The illness must be serious;** the healing extremely difficult or really impossible. This seriousness implies, in a certain sense, that the illness is irreversible, the recovery of normal functions of the organism being impossible.
- 2) Medication specifically aimed at healing the illness should not have been administered, or if it was, **it proved ineffective**. That is why it must be excluded with certainty that the effects of the therapy applied had succeeded in substantially modifying the diagnosis. This applies as well to cases where an illness disappears immediately.
- 3) **The healing must be instantaneous,** that is to say, the healing must be extremely quick in contrast to the time it would normally take for a healing to take place.
- 4) **The healing must be perfect.** Certain signs of the illness, such as scars, can remain without invalidating the miracle. But for the healing to be total it is imperative that the recuperation of the functions of the organism be perfect.
- 5) **The healing must be stable and lasting,** without tendency to recur or relapse. By tendency to recur we mean the recurrence of the same illness after a certain amount of time. By relapse we mean the return of the illness after a very short period of apparent healing.

(See : José Carlos Martin de la Hoz and Ricardo Quintana Bescós, *Causas de canonización y milagros*, Desclée de Brouwer, Bilbao 2009 p. 107-108)

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Favors and graces received



Celebration before the painting of Fr. d'Alzon, Nîmes, 30 August 2009.

I am very attached to the person and to the heart of Father d' Alzon who, following Saint Paul, tells us: "For me to live is Jesus Christ". (80120 Rue, France).

I thank Father d' Alzon to whom I have been praying for more than 50 years and who almost always hears my prayers.(01430 Maillat, France).

In memory of Father d' Alzon, whom I discovered thanks to my children who live in Nîmes, I send you this offering...

It is my mother who venerated Father d' Alzon and who helped me to know him some 40 years ago ... I continue her work for great is my confidence in the powerful intercession of Fr. Emmanuel d' Alzon with the Blessed Mother because I was healed. (Strasbourg, France).

We are faithful to Fr. d' Alzon. Since the first issue of "Voulez-vous" of Layrac, we pray to him with fervor... I stand fast in affirming that we really love our Fr. d' Alzon. (Bordeaux, France).

I have known of Fr. d' Alzon for many years and I have received from God through his intercession many graces. (Pontrieux, France)

I am very thankful that last year you sent me a very beautiful photo of your founder, Fr. Emmanuel d' Alzon. I speak to him every day as I pass before his beautiful photo which I have placed where all can see him. (Marseille, France).

I have prayed to Fr. Emmanuel d' Alzon every day and for many years now. My husband, who passed away 11 years ago, prayed to him and always entrusted his decisions to him...For some time I have been entrusting to him every day a delicate matter which has just been resolved. I truly believe in the efficacy of his intercession. (Sens, France).