



A Word from the Postulator

Recently, Fr. Benoît Grière, the superior general, wrote a letter to the congregation of the Augustinians of the Assumption, on religious poverty. He invited his brothers to change the way they do things in a world where materialism, consumerism, the waste of goods, and a lack of solidarity reign and to make concrete commitments in favor of the poor and the excluded of our society. For his part, Pope Francis never stops repeating : « I want a poor Church for the poor! »

Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon had the same preoccupation. Even though he came from a rich and aristocratic family, he generously stripped himself of all his possessions and personally led a life that was sober and austere, one of exemplary evangelical poverty. The poor were always in his sights when considering apostolic priorities. There would be a long list needed to record all the works he undertook in on behalf of the working class, young boys and girls threatened by exploitation, orphans and children deprived of an education, the poor and the most abandoned of the society in which he lived. This love of the poor found its source both in his love for Christ who made himself poor among the poor and in his apostolic zeal to give rise to a society that was more just, more fraternal, and more rooted in Gospel values. This love of the poor is just one more indication revealing the holiness of Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon.

Fr. Julio Navarro Román, A.A.

Emmanuel d'Alzon, friend of the poor

Father d'Alzon's influence upon the multitude was prodigious. Where did his prestige come from? From his name? His fortune? His commanding presence? His eloquence? No. Without doubt these gifts may prove very attractive, but they elicit only the admiration, respect and deference that we usually have for any outstanding person.

Fr. d'Alzon's influence went further, deeper; he reigned over hearts. People loved him because they felt loved by him. He understood people, to whom he gave himself with all the strength of his noble soul. He was a real leader among men. His wishes were commands. His words electrified the masses. He was followed enthusiastically, passionately, almost deliriously. Doesn't his memory still have

an astonishing fascination?

He knew how to treat people with respect and tact, with a heart that was generous and unselfish. He spoke to even the most humble with exquisite courtesy, in simple and familiar language. He treated even the poorest with utmost delicacy. For him, poverty was a dignity. He seemed to know everyone and be at ease with everybody. All seemed genuinely pleased to approach him and have a word with him. Above all, he cared for souls; but he also took care of material privation and bodily sufferings. He often nursed sick people with his own hands, like a Sister of Charity. I've heard poor people, with tears of gratitude in their eyes, recounting how this holy priest became their infirmarian, washing them and bandaging their sores. ▶

Fr. d'Alzon speaks to us

It was by way of preaching the gospel to the poor that evangelization began. In this respect let us be faithful to our vocation.

(Ecrits Spirituels, 163)

« I want a poor Church for the poor »

God's heart has a special place for the poor, so much so that he himself "became poor" (2 Cor 8:9). The entire history of our redemption is marked by the presence of the poor. Salvation came to us from the "yes" uttered by a lowly maiden from a small town on the fringes of a great empire. The Saviour was born in a manger, in the midst of animals, like children of poor families; he was presented at the Temple along with two turtledoves, the offering made by those who could not afford a lamb (cf. Lk 2:24; Lev5:7); he was raised in a home of ordinary workers and worked with his own hands to earn his bread. When he began to preach the Kingdom, crowds of the dispossessed followed him, illustrating his words: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because



Pope Francis embracing Vinicio

he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor" (Lk 4:18). He assured those burdened by sorrow and crushed by poverty that God has a special place for them in his heart: "Blessed are you poor, yours is the kingdom of God" (Lk 6:20); he made himself one of them: "I was hungry and you gave me food to eat", and he taught them that mercy towards all of these is the

key to heaven (cf. Mt 25:5ff.). (...)

This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us. Not only do they share in the *sensus fidei*, but in their difficulties they know the suffering Christ. We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them. The new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives and to put them at the centre of the Church's pilgrim way. We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them.

(Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii gaudium*, # 197-198, Pope Francis)

► What did he not do for the people of Nîmes? What works did he not create to help and console unfortunate people? That's why the poor remained his friends, steadfast in their affection, whereas some of the upper class, including the clergy, opposed his endeavors, found fault with his zeal, and ridiculed his actions — because they did not understand their purity or their greatness.

Let me cite an example of why poor people understood him. At Assumption College there was, and still is, a Conference of St. Vincent de Paul. Students visited the poor in their homes. To Paul de Pèlerin and his friends was entrusted the section of Nîmes where the weavers lived, between the roads leading to Uzès and Avignon. An old paralytic and his daughter lived there in back of a

dilapidated house, beyond a yard filled with junk and manure, in a dirty, damp, and airless cave. The cripple slept on the only bed while his daughter slept on a pile of old rags and mildewed straw. I've seen Paul de Pèlerin airing out the rags in the courtyard. I've seen him bathe the old man and make his bed. I once took part in a sort of little family feast brought in by my friend. Seated on a wooden box, Paul tried to encourage the old man and his daughter to eat the food. Their joy was a pleasure to behold. They laughed until they cried, laughter of happiness, tears of gratitude. That's how Fr. d'Alzon trained his students.

(Canon Galeran, *Sketches of Fr. d'Alzon*, p. 161-163)



Young lay Assumptionists with street people in Bogotá, Colombia

« They must be cared for »

Evangelizare pauperibus misit me (“He sent me to preach the Gospel to the poor” Lk 4:18; Is 61:1). Such was the program Jesus Christ drew up for himself – and to reassure John the Baptist in prison, he gave as proof of his mission that the poor were having the Gospel preached to them (*pauperes evangelizantur* Lk 7:22).

Very well, we must evangelize the poor all over again, beginning from “square one.” We must look after them – we must see to all their needs in advance.

If there is one sign of hope for the future, it is the devoted care with which the poor are being served by a number of priests, religious and valiant layfolk. Charitable organizations are rapidly spreading. We have the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul (the S.V.P.) – the Association of Saint François Regis and that of Saint François de Sales. We have working men’s circles, youth clubs, industrial federations... who could name them all? And though no single one of these admirable initiatives would be powerful enough by itself to save France from ruin, banded together they form an Army-Corps of no mean proportions. (...)

We must look after our working people. We must look after the abandoned. We must go forth to meet them. We must preach the God they have come to ignore. We must show them the path of peace and reconciliation. We must teach them the positive value of human suffering. Do this, and see how, little by little, faith is restored to warped minds and peace to broken hearts. These are not lost souls – just souls who have got lost. Win them over to Christ, and watch His Church triumph over the whole world. Amen.

(Fr. d’Alzon, *Eighteenth Meditation, Ecrits Spirituels*, 470-471; also in *D’Alzon Day by Day*, selection for January 11)

« The poor and the important are the friends of God »

I am now deeply convinced that, if we wish to convert the nations, we must rid ourselves of aristocratic trappings. Democracy is on the way, and has come to stay, bringing very radical consequences in its wake.

If only you were here (editor’s note: in Rome for the First Vatican Council) and could see for yourself! The Hungarian bishops – the last Grandees of Europe – are no longer given pride of place. People now look to the Missionary bishops – to those who walk to the Council meetings because they can’t afford a carriage. Even the learned «experts» – those thanks to whose skill the various laws and decrees are drawn up – now take a back seat. They are here merely to assist the others. Those for whom the Council is intended are the poor, the unimportant, the «friends of God.» Believe me, the future belongs to them. If the world we live in is to be saved, it will be saved by poverty and lowliness.

Nothing would upset me more than to watch the Oblates go astray. What gives me a «soft spot» for you is, above all, your humble attitude. It renders you much more capable of influencing that section of human society for which Our Lord Himself has such a «soft spot». These are the ones who need our extra-special concern.

(Fr. d’Alzon, to Mother Correnson, December 14, 1869. *Ecrits Spirituels*, 1191-1192).

Favors and graces received

I owe a lot to Fr. d'Alzon ; every time I have a concern, a problem, I ask him to intercede for me before the Lord. Very often I get an answer. Every day I ask him, « May the Church recognize the holiness of Fr. d'Alzon ». (Marguerite, 59112 Carnin, France).



Students from Colegio Manuel d'Alzon in Buenos Aires

Every Friday, in both of our institutions, at the primary and secondary levels, with students, staff, teachers, and parents alike, we recite the prayer for the beatification of Venerable Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon. As part of this prayer we present the intentions of the school community, of the Congregation, and the health of the sick commended to us. It is very moving to hear the tiny voices of these young ones praying with such conviction. (Fr. Juan Carlos Marzolla, A.A., director of the Assumptionist schools in Buenos Aires).

My thanks to Fr. d'Alzon for protecting my family. I pray to him every day and entrust my large family to him. (J. P., France).

My thanks to Fr. d'Alzon after a novena I offered to receive good news concerning my health... Thanks as well for all the other graces received. (R. B., France).

Maman Stella reports that her mother-in-law was recently very ill. «In our family, all we relied on was the prayer of intercession through Fr. d'Alzon so that my mother-in-law might recover her health. Today, she's already back on her feet. In spite of her advanced age, she is showing signs of being well again ». Maman Stella likewise got a local mechanic, Etienne, interested in reciting the prayer of intercession through d'Alzon. In

fact, Etienne, having become an orphan, saw the responsibility of raising his younger brothers fall completely on his shoulders. One day one of his younger brothers died. At the same time his sister was very sick and had to undergo surgery. And Etienne didn't have enough money to face all this. But with God's help, Etienne found a benefactor. The young girl recovered her health thanks to the intercession of Fr. d'Alzon, especially with regard to the money needed, DR Congo).

News from the Secretariates

Goma : On March 21, 2014, the Secretariate for the Cause of Fr. d'Alzon was launched. At present it is made up of four lay-people who are awaiting the nomination of the Assumptionists and the Oblates of the Assumption. For quite a few years there has been a large group of lay Assumptionists present here. The Oblates founded here in 2002 and the Assumptionists in 2013. For all communication, please write to Ferdinand SAHANI (ferdinandla@yahoo.fr).



Lay Assumptionists in Goma (Democratic Republic of the Congo)

Chile : During the month of March an office for the Cause of Fr. d'Alzon was established in Santiago. Three religious and four lay-people, from different parts of the country, form the team (Santiago, Lota, Rengo). The coordinator of the office is Fr. Diego Martín Nace (martinnace@hotmail.com).

Kinshasa : « We hold meetings every other month. During these meetings we read the newsletter and talk about what we have been doing since the last meeting. Each meeting lasts about two hours, including 30 minutes of prayer of intercession through Fr. d'Alzon... We have to translate the newsletter into Lingala (and one day into Kikongo)... » (Fr. Jean-Marie Katabu : munungakat@yahoo.fr).

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