



TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO ...



Emmanuel Joseph Marie Maurice d'Alzon was born at Le Vigan in the southern part of post-Revolutionary France. He was the only surviving son of a well-to-do aristocratic family: Viscount Henri Daude d'Alzon and Vicountess Jeanne Clemence de Favertine.



Emmanuel d'Alzon as a young child

TODAY ...

men and women, young and old, here in the United States and in 40 countries and on every continent – the extended Assumptionist family remembers and celebrates the man whose vision has made a definite difference in our lives.



Father d'Alzon in 1869

IN THIS BICENTENNIAL ISSUE ...

we hope to introduce you to him. Books have been written about him; studies have been done concerning his very extensive writings.

In these pages, we hope to open our scrapbook for you: photos, excerpts from his letters and sermons, sketches by his companions (and especially by Father Henri-Dieudonne Galeran, one of his early students at Assumption College) and stories from his biographers (in particular Father Richard Richards, AA).

Please don't look here for a complete and detailed history of this great man. Rather, pour a cup of coffee or tea, make yourself comfortable, and listen to him and to his friends. Let us share with you some of the thoughts, words and actions of this man whom God gave us as Father, teacher and model. (Galeran)

Emmanuel d'Alzon inherited from his parents a strong sense of responsibility for society and the obligation to help those in need. He and his friends felt a powerful call to make a real difference in their world. He knew that he wanted to "roll up his sleeves" and give his life for the transformation of society. Rooted in an overpowering love for Jesus Christ and His Church, he decided that the best way for him to accomplish that goal was as a priest, dedicated to serving God's plan for humanity: the coming of the Kingdom of God. His belief that the only lasting transformation of society would come when God regained his rightful central place led him to define his life and that of his followers in the motto which he took from the Lord's Prayer: Thy Kingdom Come (Adveniat Regnum Tuum - ART).



- 1789 - 1799 - French Revolution
- 1810 - Emmanuel d'Alzon born on August 30 in Le Vigan
- 1815 - The Congress of Vienna redraws the European map. Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, end of Napoleonic Wars
- 1828 - In November he enrolled in Law School
- 1834 - On December 26, he was ordained a priest in Rome
- 1843 - He purchased the College de l'Assomption in Nimes
- 1845 - At Christmas, he founded the Augustinians of the Assumption or Assumptionists
- 1846 - Pope Pius IX until 1878
- 1860 - He founded the first mission, in Australia
- 1863 - As a result of Pope Pius IX's request, he founded the Eastern Mission in Constantinople (Istanbul)
- 1865 - He founded the congregation of the Oblates of the Assumption
- 1865 - the end of American Civil War. President Abraham Lincoln is assassinated
- 1865 - 77: Slavery is banned in the United States
- 1869 - 1870 - First Vatican Council
- 1870 - He participated in the First Vatican Council as his bishop's theologian
- 1871 - He founded the first aluminate or "apostolic school" (minor seminary)
- 1880 - He created La Croix Revue which in 1883 became the daily newspaper La Croix.
He died on November 21 at the College de l'Assomption
- 1991 - On December 21, Pope John Paul II declared him "Venerable"

"Fr. d'Alzon seemed totally indifferent to food. He was as sober and frugal as a hermit, ate rapidly, too rapidly for his health, for he regularly suffered from stomach cramps. Nonetheless, he was very fond on of a special type of soft-shelled almonds, called 'ladies' almonds' which grew abundantly at Le Vigan and Lavagnac.. And old servant at Le Vigan recalled how it was easy to tell which trees Emmanuel had climbed, by the piles of empty almond shells strewn over the ground. Fr. d'Alzon never lost his weakness for almonds." (Galeran)



Emmanuel d'Alzon as a young man

"Mme d'Alzon vaunted his skill [as a hunter]. The first bird her dear Emmanuel had killed, she had had stuffed ... the same bird, a jay, I believe, that the young Emmanuel holds in the portrait given to Fr. Picard by the Count of Pusegur." (Galeran)

"...years ago, small candy priests were sold at every fair in Southern France ... at Gignac, not far from the Chateau of Lavagnac, they had the old-fashioned tasseled biretta or four-cornered hat. Imagine a tiny piece of candy, the size of your thumb, in the shape of a priest, with cassock, cincture, rabat, and square bonnet. There were beady little eyes and healthy, fresh rosy-red cheeks. the round and ruddy faces were the supreme achievement of the confectioners' art. Fr. d'Alzon, as a child, was crazy about these little candy priests. His childhood tantrums were calmed by the promise of a candy priest. " (Galeran)



the assumptionist...

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"He was remarkable because of his noble exterior, distinguished manners, and chivalrous spirit. At eighteen he was a handsome, amiable, sprightly lad. His conversations were lively, tasteful, unostentatious, and they captivated everyone. He always seemed at ease and dignified, as befitted the son of a great nobleman." (Galeran)

"Vicountess d'Alzon took advantage of her son's visits home to replenish his wardrobe. He would arrive quite ragged because he gave away everything.

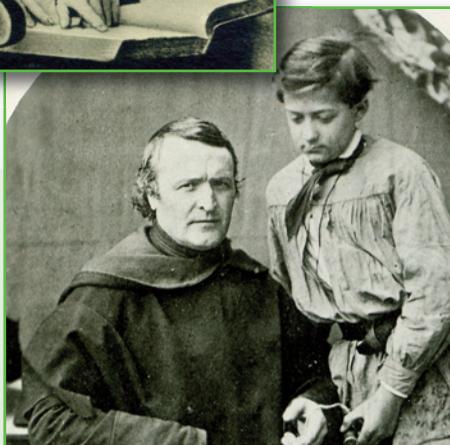
One day Father returned with a suitcase full of fine clothes, all marked with his name. His mother had herself packed everything for her dear 'beggar,' and had included among other things a half-dozen pairs of black silk socks. As Fr. d'Alzon arrived, the beggars stretched out their hands. Father opened his suitcase and gave away everything in it. It is said that near the Maison Carree one could see a beggar in rags who had on his feet fine silk socks of which he was very proud and wouldn't give up for any price. He showed them off and told everyone where they came from." (Galeran)

"Father once had this to say to a pupil who was rather hard to get along with. 'Cheer up my friend. you always seem to be at war with the whole human race. Everyone must put up with your faults, but you think that you have the right to complain about the faults of others. If you were the least bit clever, you'd turn your sour disposition back upon yourself alone and then you'd be a saint. Passions are forces, and you must learn to use them to your advantage, not to your loss.' "



(Galeran)

"Avoid singularity and exaggeration. Don't be sulky, but remain even-tempered. Be dignified in your manners, without being affected. Don't put on sanctimonious airs... In your meditations, simply let yourself go, and don't try to turn your meditations into theological treatises." (Galeran)



Father d'Alzon with Assumption students c 1850

"He started the Society of St. Aloysius Gonzaga for children of the nobility and upper class. Later he would take over the Society of St. Stanislas, aimed primarily at the children of the working class. By 1847, both societies were to be united in the Youth Apostolate ... To the doctrinal aspect Fr. d'Alzon added a recreational approach: he obtained billiard tables, sponsored wrestling matches, and even took part in fencing bouts. Such activities, in what we might call his "waiting years," were extremely useful. Fr. d'Alzon was constantly seeking among his pupils and associates bright, upstanding young men and women upon whom he could later call as teachers or for some other help. By 1847, Fr. d'Alzon was in effect working with most of the Catholic youth of Nimes." (Richards)



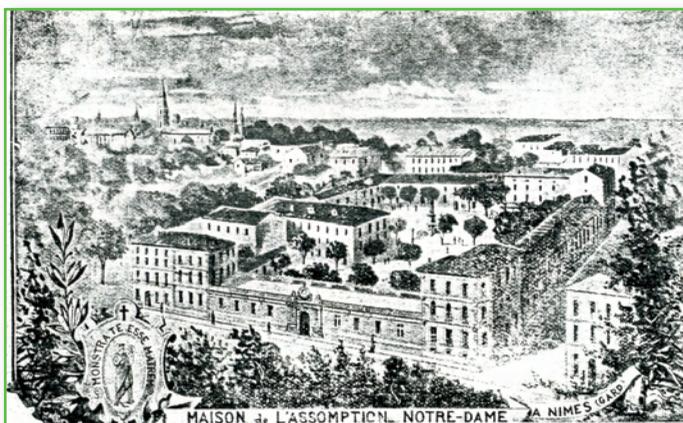
Abbe d'Alzon c1838-1839

"Fr. d'Alzon's room was at a real monk's cell with white-washed walls. To the left as you enter it was the bed: two saw-horses, three boards, and a hard straw mattress. ... a green cotton curtain hanging from brass rings hid his clothes. To the right was a plain wooden table with a crucifix, a statuette of the Virgin, and a skull. Nearby was a small chest of drawers and a three-shelf bookcase, holding such books as the Bible, The Confessions of St. Augustine, Treatise on the Mass, by Cardinal Bona, the Imitation of Christ, and a few rules of religious orders. Besides that there were only two ordinary chairs and the bed side rug." (Galeran)

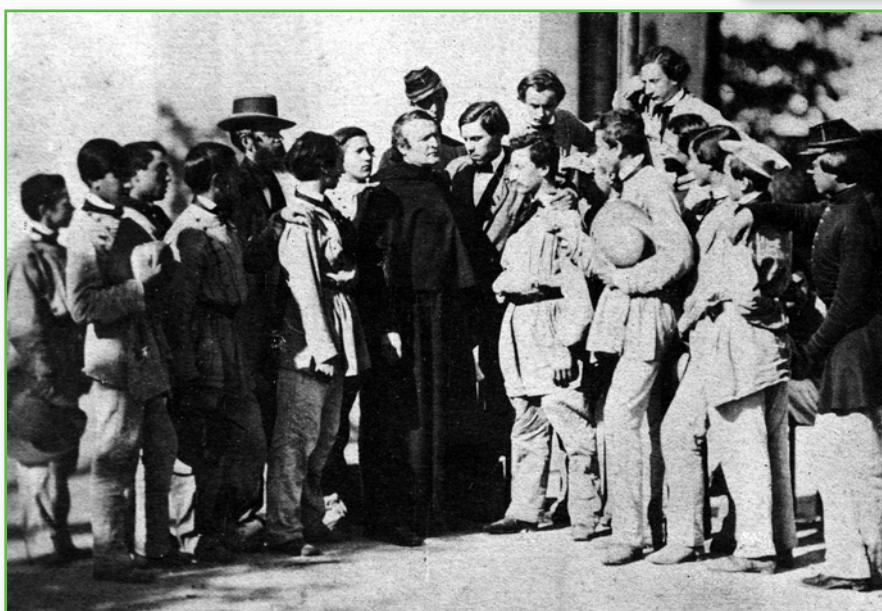


"As I study religion, I discover, in the depths of Catholic dogma, such a great wealth ... that it seems to me that the only way to strengthen the flagging spirits or heal the moral fatigue that everyone laments today is to expose society to the brilliant light of the eternal Word. The most intimate thought of my soul is that the world needs to be penetrated through and through with a Christian idea; otherwise it will fall apart. And the world will not receive this idea but from men who will be taken up with it before all else in order to proclaim it in every form that it might assume. They say the world is evil. No doubt, passion turns it away from what is good. But I believe most of all that the world is ignorant. Therefore we need to teach it and to do so in words that it can understand." (Letter, March 1835)

"At Assumption College, he gathered the heirs of southern French aristocracy, not to surround himself with aristocrats, but because he believed that if he formed the children of the upper classes for God, for church and nation, he was preparing for the future beneficial forces for the good of the people." (Galeran)



Assumption College in Nimes



Father d'Alzon with students in the courtyard of the College

"In late 1844, he became headmaster of Assumption College, ... a vigilant Master, tempering firmness with fatherly love. He loved his children and they adored him. He cared for them day and night. Often, in the middle of the night, we'd see him walking in the dorms, clad in a long robe of white wool, carrying a little lantern. He blessed the sleeping children and had a word for those who were still awake. We got into the habit of sticking a tiny piece of paper on our foreheads, with the words, "Father, wake me up," if we wanted to speak to him. He'd listen kindly to what we had to say, and answered us with words that touched our hearts." (Galeran)

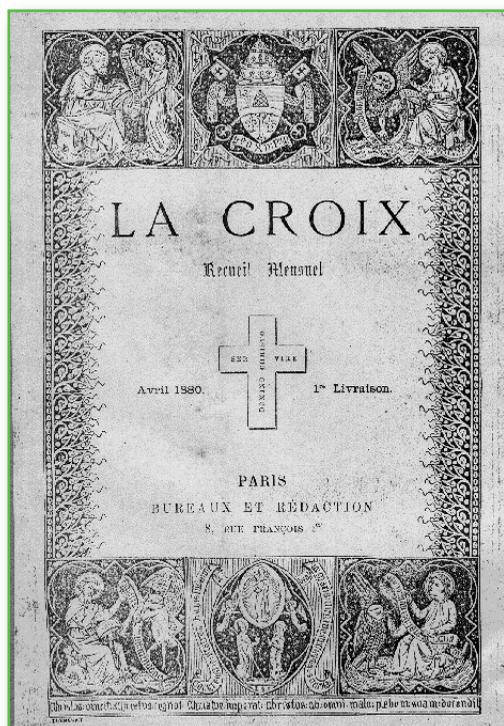
"We will welcome in our alummates, from earliest youth, all of those youngsters whom our efforts and the charity of the faithful will allow us. How numerous these good young boys would be if our available funds kept pace with the present number of vocations! Counting on divine providence, we have already begun... and see how God has blessed us. Our initial success is a clear indication that he wishes us to continue. So continue we will ...and we will welcome whoever knocks on our door and seeks admission, however old he is and wherever he comes from." (Instruction for the Chapter of 1873)

"It is up to us never to lose heart. If they suppress our educational establishments, if they prevent us from teaching in the open, then let us go and teach underground, in the cellars and catacombs." (19th Meditation)



"... all those works by which people can be raised up, informed, moralized, all those works by which democracy can be Christianized." (Galeran)

"The alumnists were chosen exclusively from among the poorer youngsters who could not pay for such schooling, yet they were given complete freedom of choice. They could become diocesan priests, religious of any Order or Congregation, even Assumptionists." (Richards)



La Croix, April 1880

"I would like you to write up a program for a Catholic newspaper. You are to explain: 1) that we are Catholic before else; 2) that we are not a political party; 3) that we are, nevertheless, a political party in the sense that, as Catholics, we want our place in the public forum and are prepared to extend a hand to all honest individuals whatever the party and to respect their opinions as long as they respect our principles." (Letter to Emmanuel Bailly, December 1870)

"Flourishing under God's blessing, the alumnates send forth swarms of young men each year to seminaries and various religious orders. These houses are amazingly fertile." (Galeran)

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

"Statistics on vocations from alumnates are hard to come by, but Clairmarais alone furnished one archbishop, one bishop, and almost 430 priests, regular or secular." (Richards)

"In order to offset the terrible effects of offensive and often immoral literature, Fr. d'Alzon developed parish libraries. These were established in 236 of the 249 parishes of the Nîmes diocese, and soon the idea spread until in four neighboring dioceses there were 903 such libraries, out of a possible 1069. The Parish Library Review was started, a monthly magazine with bibliographies, reviews, lists of new publications. It was initially financed almost completely by Fr. d'Alzon. The propagation of good books was evidently one of his great concerns, and included distribution of such books to prisons, hospitals, soldiers, workers and peasants. The hawking of objectionable books had become a national plague, and to counteract it Fr. d'Alzon organized teams of salesmen who for many years sold good books door-to-door." (Richards)

"Preaching, teaching, spiritual direction, and works of charity: let these be our principal activities. Combine them in such a way as to achieve the final results we have set for ourselves." (Letter to the Master of Novices)

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

" Amid so many occupations, Fr. d'Alzon continued his intense preaching activity. Sometimes he preached three or four times a day. It has been calculated that between 1851 and 1880 he preached about 5,000 times, including at least 98 retreats (some a week long).. " (Richards)





Father d'Alzon and early Assumptionists in 1879

"This little Association has existed for nearly 10 years. It has about 25 to 30 members. It runs two schools, one in Nimes where the Congregation began, the other in Paris ...The work is supported by devoted laypeople who have organized themselves into a Third Order directed by the religious. ... works of charity, publication of good books, teaching poor children is the goal of this Third Order. The religious aim especially at spreading the reign of Jesus Christ in souls, ... by having the children confided to them involved in all sorts of good works, ... by inculcating in them a profound sense of their duty, not only as simple Christians, but also as members of the great Society of the church." (Note given to Pope Pius IX around May 1855)



Pope Pius IX

"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... 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." (Galeran)

"Dr. Forbes, bishop of Brechin in Scotland, called by the English press the only theologian in the Anglican church, once said: "Fr. d'Alzon has the audacious zeal of Manning and the power of synthesis of Newman. Were he English, he would be at the head of the religious movement toward Rome.' " (Galeran)

"The Association [Notre Dame de Salut] organized public prayer on a grand scale ... it has given birth to pilgrimages ... And these public professions of Faith, which we were told no longer corresponded to the modern mentality, have now become not only popular but fashionable." (Instructions of 1873)



"... we have commissioned steam locomotives to carry crowds of pilgrims to a host of shrines. ... Watch them puffing along on their new mission, shuttling thousands of fervent pilgrims to the famous shrines in our land. ... Pilgrimages have come to stay... By undertaking these prayerful journeys, the Church assumes possession of the public forum and comes out into the open air. We affirm our Faith for the whole population to see. ... Christians unafraid to affirm their Faith." (Instruction of 1873)

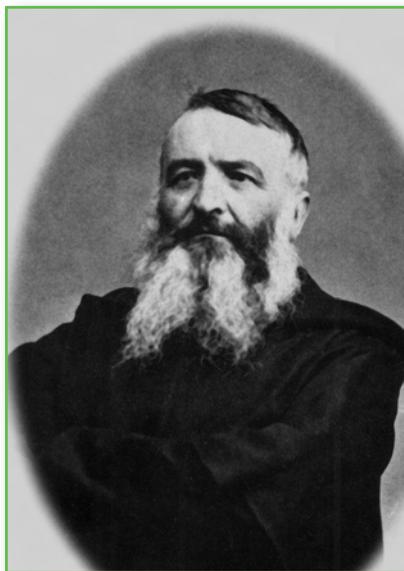
DID YOU KNOW THAT...

In addition to local and national pilgrimages in France, the Assumptionists organize the Assumptionist National Pilgrimage to Lourdes as well as pilgrimages in Chile, Madagascar, Congo



“Assemble around you a group of intelligent people. Think of what you could accomplish with their cooperation: propagating Christian ideas, preparing Catholic universities, organizing Catholic working class movements, protesting worldly ideas, fostering vocations... How are we to disseminate Christian ideas and attitudes? How are we to bring about Christian social conditions? How are we to encourage religious vocations? To all three queries it seems to me that Third Orders offer an attractive answer.” (Third Circular)

“Do you know one of the aspects of Rome that moves me the most? It’s to meet bishops from all over the world. At the Vatican on the day of our audiences, there was the bishop from Porto-Rico (sic), an elderly Capuchin. We went to St. John Lateran and there we found a Dominican bishop, with his Chinese valet. Leaving the Office of the Propaganda, I met Bishop Brunoni, the former bishop delegate of Constantinople. And it is like this everywhere: North America, South America, Asia, Chaldea, Syria, Egypt, and Central Africa. Each region provides its contingency and all of this works entirely for the Catholic Church.” (Letters)

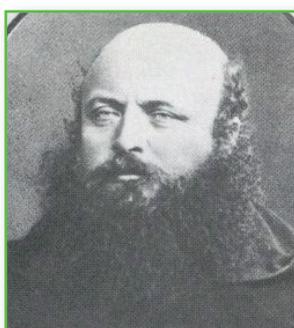


Father d'Alzon returning from Constantinople in 1863



Vatican Council I

“I haven’t yet mentioned our foreign missions. Australia will have to be put aside for the time being, because certain contractual obligations which were made have not yet been kept. But we are doing great work in Bulgaria. We have launched an Association of Employers and Apprentices and opened a school for two hundred boys. Both have had lasting success. Our Oblate Sisters have most effectively backed us up by opening a hospital, a dispensary, a boarding school and several primary schools.” (Instructions for the Chapter 1873)



Father Victorin Galabert, AA, (1830-1885), a medical doctor and a doctor in Canon Law, became the founder of the Assumptionist mission in Bulgaria

‘Above all else, we advocate developing in hearts and minds a love for the Church in Rome.’ (Letters)

“One of the missions of the Assumption is to achieve unity, a unity of love, feeling, faith longing and the determination to bring about the triumph of the Church. For this, we need a boundless heart; we should love everything Our Lord loved.” (Letters)

“He had generously offered to God his fortune, talents, physical beauty, all the advantages of a splendid social position, and all the dignities that he could easily have grasped by simply stretching forth his hand. Our father had the mind of Christ.” (Galeran)

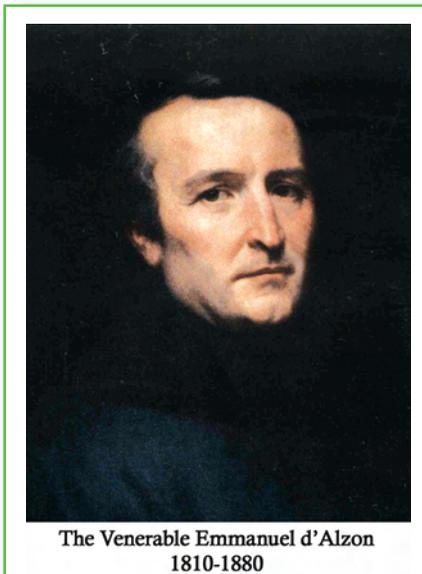




THE ASSUMPTIONISTS
AUGUSTINIANS OF THE ASSUMPTION
330 Market Street
Brighton, MA 02135

Assumption Family celebrates the Bicentennial of Emmanuel d'Alzon's birth.

In the United States Region:



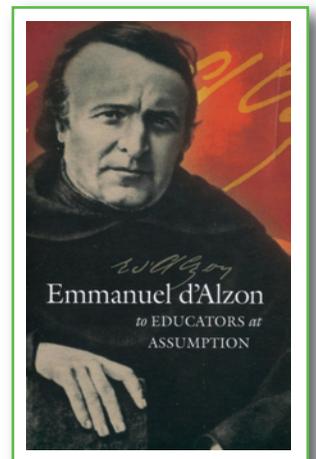
The Venerable Emmanuel d'Alzon
1810-1880

- the Assumptionists will gather to participate in a special Bicentennial retreat on Father d'Alzon as a model for holiness from August 8 to 14 directed by Father Richard Lamoureux, A.A. (Superior General)
- on April 25 a special celebration has been set up for gathering family members, relatives and close friends
- in May, a pilgrimage organized by Assumption College, will take pilgrims to the d'Alzonian sites in Nimes, Paris and Rome.
- similar pilgrimages in the 'Footsteps of Father d'Alzon' are organized by Assumption communities in France and Canada
- August 14 will gather members of the extended Assumptionist Family, both lay and religious

Revised biographies of Father d'Alzon and anthologies of his writings have been published for this

occasion.

- "Emmanuel d'Alzon Fighter for God" by Richard Richards, A.A.
- "Emmanuel d'Alzon to Educators at Assumption"



To learn more about these and similar events as well as other available publications please visit our website at www.assumption.us