

A Word from the Postulator

For Fr. d'Alzon, mercy is a virtue that every Christian must cultivate. It flows from charity and is an essential aspect of any apostolic work. One is struck by the great sensitivity that Fr. d'Alzon had for « social work » or the « worker question », from the very first years of his priesthood till the end of his life. The works that he founded or took control of in the diocese of Nîmes are countless: adult education classes for the poor, youth shelters, orphanages, alternative detention centers for juvenile delinquents, workers' circles, soldiers' circles, an association for the distribution of Catholic literature, parish libraries, home visits to the poor, foundation of a women's congregation for domestic workers (The Work of St. Martha), a center for liturgical vestments, the Association of the Ladies of Mercy, etc. He established the Association of Our Lady of Salvation to foster all kinds of social outreach efforts. Among them he included pilgrimages. His first disciples understood perfectly well the spirit that was to permeate these efforts and the importance of this ministry for the Church and the society of their time. Great was the admiration that Fr. d'Alzon had for the ministry founded by Fr. Etienne Pernet, the Little Sisters of the Assumption, and their apostolate among working families. In this newsletter we will cite several extracts from Fr. d'Alzon's works. « Go and preach the gospel to the poor »!

Rev. Julio Navarro Román, A.A.

Proponent of works of mercy

Fr. d'Alzon was a great proponent, and sometimes founder, of works in behalf of workers and the disadvantaged. Here we read two examples (Life of Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon, Siméon Vailhé, volume II, pp. 190-193).

Association of Watchmen

This association had as its objective the spiritual and material assistance of the needy sick, during the night... This care was given free of charge, the watchmen taking care of men and their female counterparts the women. What characterized this association in Nîmes is that the lion's share of those recruited came from the mass of simple people, who, after having labored and sweated all day long, would deprive themselves of sleep to watch over and console the suffering members of the body of Jesus Christ. From the very start of its existence, there was such a great number of members who joined, so many needy sick who were comforted, so many

who received the last rites before dying, that the results exceeded all expectations and the bishop declared that this new ministry would be definitively maintained...

During this period there returned to Nîmes, for only a few years, a humble Assumptionist priest who spent lots of time among workers and whose ministry was never fully understood except by the poor. He, too, would soon be brought to provide the needy poor with watchers day and night, who would offer their services free of any compensation whatsoever... Who knows whether or not Fr. Pernet did not discover in this work in Nîmes the initial idea for his Congregation of the Little Sisters of the Assumption, attendants for the working poor at home?

Liturgical vestment center

Fr. d'Alzon procured work for choice laborers among the poor and enhanced the beauty of liturgical worship by the care that these workers paid in making vestments

In Fr. d'Alzon's words

Charity is a beautiful tree the seeds of which are at the disposition of the Holy Spirit.

The Ladies of Mercy

D'Alzon was blessed with an acute sixth sense that allowed him to anticipate the Revolution of 1848; he was taken up with it when he gave his talks to the Ladies of Mercy. He urged ladies of high society to be prepared and to take every precaution.

Moreover, these ladies repeated to us how, during their meetings, he would energize their Christian lives. He told them that they weren't giving enough, that they needed to turn this situation around by making visits filled with a spirit of faith, with uplifting words, with holy examples, and by the transparent and loyal demonstration of Christian women distributing alms of hope and of truth everywhere!

He told them that, in order to bring peace to people, they had to *draw them to Him*.

He also committed them to pay close attention at the same time to the lessons they could learn from the misery they witnessed and from patience as well as from the grumbling they heard and from their experience. (...)

We have found a handwritten list of instructions that he must have made around this time entitled, *Subjects of the instructions for the Association of Mercy*. In these few lines one can grasp what he wanted to convey to these ladies of high society:



Little Sisters of the Assumption tending to working families

- On the obligation to give to the poor (he often returned to the precept of almsgiving, applying it to what one did not really need).

- On the renunciation of the sensual life (eyewitnesses have told us that people would try to attract members of Catholic high society to galas sponsored by Protestant society to destroy, with their endless worldly celebrations, even during Lent, the fervor among Catholics that Fr. d'Alzon had stirred up).

- On respect for the souls of the poor (Father often preached on the scandal given to the lowly by the rich).

- On the need for almsgiving as

a means of voluntary impoverishment.

- On poverty as a means of acquiring spiritual goods.

These last two instructions on voluntary poverty, albeit to women of the world, underline quite well the force of his preaching.

If he repeated such serious warnings to the Ladies of Nîmes' high society, it was as a result of the keen interest he had for workers.

(from *Notes et Documents pour servir à l'histoire du T. R. P. d'Alzon et de ses œuvres de 1810 à 1850*, E. Bailly, volume IV, pp. 66-68)

and other items worthy of their destination... The city of Nîmes was known for the beauty and quality of its cloth, no less than for the traditional craftsmanship of its weavers. Sometimes they were without work and orders often lagged at a time when meager salaries did not always provide enough bread for a household. In December 1852, in the middle of the industrial crisis, Fr. d'Alzon was

taken up by this initiative... He had samples sent from England... The samples of cloth they received as well as the designs soon became models for albs, chasubles, rugs, etc. Two years later, a priest who was visiting the factory... remarked that nowhere in France could one find such a complete collection of cloth in such a rich variety of colors...

What Fr. d'Alzon teaches us

Our mercy...

It is said, you know, that God is best known on earth by his gift of mercy, but his mercy embraces everyone, is extended to everyone. Our mercy must resemble God's mercy and, to do so, it must be stripped of all self-interest. I am not at all unaware that we are speaking of the highest level of Christian perfection, but I am not unaware either that Jesus Christ addressed his disciples with these striking words, « When you have done all you have been commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants.' ». My dear ladies, you will have plenty of work to do, lots of fatigue to support, but Jesus Christ said, « The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent are taking it by force »...

Charity does not seek self-interest. This is how we should look at it. I am not talking about material self-interest. God forbid, ladies, that I would even think you capable of such a thing! But charity can at times be corrupted when poisoned by self-centeredness. One might be caught saying, « I've really invested in this work; I'm the one who planted it in the ground », and when someone else comes along and waters it, I start grumbling. And what did St. Paul say about getting so attached?

The need to convince oneself of his uselessness, *servi inutiles sumus*. The proof that God blesses a work is when he allows it to pass into another's hands.

The need to do everything for God and not to please others or oneself. As far as oneself is concerned, selflessness; as far as others are concerned, charity; as far as God is concerned, gratitude (**To the Ladies of Mercy**, Nîmes, February 8, 1836).

Go the poor!

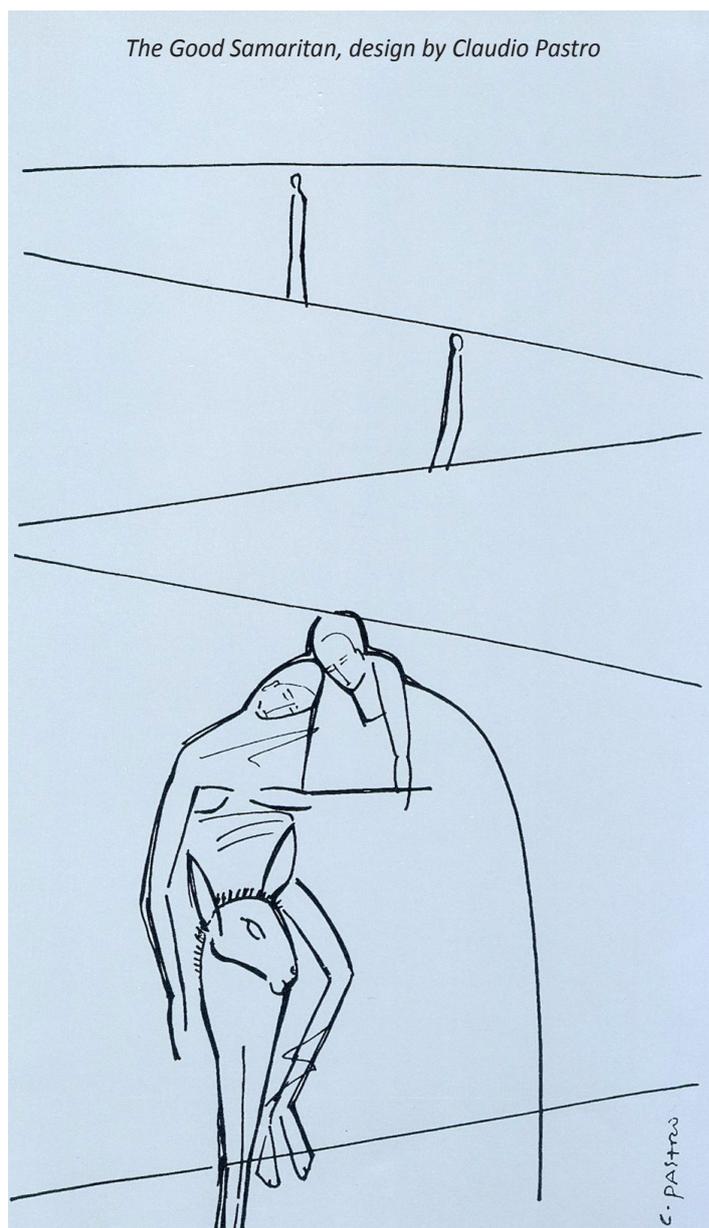
May God shower you with his blessings and make you grow in a holiness that is contagious, in such a way that you personally and all your daughters may work for His kingdom! Make apostles of them, go to the poor through them. Give them a great sense of zeal for the souls of the poor... (**To Fr. Pernet**, Nîmes, December 24, 1878).

May God be blessed as a result of what you have written to me! It makes my heart rejoice. How very good God is in having your daughters serve Him. Tell them how overwhelmingly happy they make me. May they continue to be ever-faithful to their spirit. Here can be seen the wonders of poverty reflected in such

charity. Continue to build up your daughters and go to the poor that they be evangelized. This is how the Lord wanted us to be seen. I kiss your feet for I am hardly worth a thousandth part of your little finger. (**To Fr. Pernet**, Nîmes, February 21, 1880).

Just a quick word of encouragement, my dear Mother. Your ministry is one of those that God most obviously desires, to save those rogues in spite of themselves. You are one of the most beautiful rays of that great attribute of God, his mercy. Make every effort to have it penetrate old, hard, dessicated, and shriveled hearts that they may be softened, for Our Lord wishes to conquer them with his goodness. Take courage, then, and be merciful to sinners, and you yourself will receive great mercy... (**To Mother Marie de Jésus Fage**, Nîmes, December 24, 1878).

The Good Samaritan, design by Claudio Pastro



Favors and graces received

A healing through the intercession of Venerable Emmanuel d'Alzon

My sister María Luján told us that she was pregnant. That made all of us in the family happy. However, after the third ultrasound the doctor told her that there were problems with the child and that they would have to operate on him soon after he was born. At first everything seemed pretty simple, but afterward things got complicated..., they operated on him and he remained in the hospital for two months. His recuperation went very well in spite of the doctors' doubts. To the contrary! He got better and better, but he had to grow and get stronger because they needed to operate on him again.

The second operation didn't go so well. Everything seemed to go bad: the infant went into a coma and cardiac arrest. The doctors gave him no hope. My husband and I, Christians of deep faith, went to Mass every day. One Friday at Mass when ADRIÁ (that is his name) was in extremely bad shape, Fr. Roberto Favre prayed, as always, the prayer to Fr. d'Alzon (whom we did not know). But we were so desperate that we began to pray and speak to Fr. d'Alzon. The child began to improve. I spoke with Cristina Berardi (lay Assumptionist) and I told her; she gave me the holy card of Fr. d'Alzon and we have been praying to him every day. The doctors said that Adriá would have after-effects, that he wouldn't grow, and that he wouldn't walk. It's now been a year and none of their predictions have come true. He is beautiful and growing well.

Let me add that my sister was not a believer and her husband, my brother-in-law, was a Jehovah's Witness. They have an older child. When we first received news from the doctors that that the child would not live, I invited them to the hospital chapel to pray. So we went to pray. Adriá's improvement was so good and rapid that they had both children baptized. Every day now my sister sends me the gospel of the day and prays the rosary. My brother-in-law more or less.

This is our testimony. My nephew Adriá's life was saved. He has regular check-ups but he is doing very well. Fr. d'Alzon performed two miracles: the child's life and the conversión of his parents!

Carla and Eduardo, Buenos Aires, March 2016.

Result of Father d'Alzon's Intercession

In March last year, we constituted a team which is working seriously, especially with the sick. From that time, we identified the sick who needed our loving care: regularly we have visited them and prayed with and for them. We have seen some miracles both in the lives of those who have passed away and in the lives of those who have got healed. The following is the list and the situations of those we have been praying for:

- Nancy Kerubo of Katua: unfortunately, she passed away due to liver cancer. However, something miraculous happened in her life. She was an orphan of both father and mother who were Catholics. But she was not baptized. She was living with a husband without the benefit of marriage, a man named George M., a non-practicing Adventist. As we were praying for Nancy, we were also praying for George, her husband, to be responsible, to be comforted in taking care of his wife, and to show her more love at the time of sickness. Nancy had become an Adventist since she followed her husband in his denomination. During her sickness, as we were praying for her and assisting her materially, she freely expressed the need to be baptized as Catholic, something which took place on her sickbed before death. She therefore died as a Christian. The miraculous aspect that we see in her life is that she got spiritual healing: if d'Alzon did not lead us to her, she probably would have died as a pagan. According to the testimony of Rozina Ntenya, L.A., who accompanied Sister Monica Sylvester who baptized her, Nancy looked at them after receiving the sacrament and smiled very beautifully, though she was already unable to speak. This, for us, was a sign of grace at the moment of her death.

(There follows a long list of the sick who are the object of intercession to Fr. d'Alzon).

All in all, we see the wonders of God in the lives of the aforementioned people through the intercession of Venerable Father Emmanuel d'Alzon. May the will of God be done. (For the Local Secretariat, Nairobi, Fr. Muvunga Charles, a.a., Mrs Helen Rugutu, L.A.).

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