



A Word from the Postulator

For Fr. d'Alzon, obedience as well as humility finds its origin in faith. The most perfect model of obedience is Jesus himself, the Son of God, born of a woman, who became man among us so as to carry out the plans of God his Father. That is why obedience, for our founder, is not simply an ascetical virtue, destined solely for one's personal sanctification, but is, above all, an apostolic virtue. In the following way the current Rule of Life of the Assumptionists translates these words of Fr. d'Alzon: « *Lived in faith and prayer, obedience opens our hearts to God and to all human beings. Gradually, it transforms our tendency to dominate into a desire to serve and to promote the good of others. It reveals our faith and our availability to the will of the Father. It is thus a sign of the Kingdom* » (#43).

For Fr. d'Alzon, obedience also translated into absolute loyalty and fidelity to the Church, especially to the teachings, guidelines, and decisions of the Pope: « *Religious will have absolute and filial obedience first and foremost to Our Holy Father the Pope...* » (*First Constitutions of 1855*, Book I, ch. 10).

Let us also not forget that Fr. d'Alzon was himself an energetic and charismatic superior, whom we would describe today as a true leader; he had the knack of forming men and women to be full of creativity, initiative, faith, and generous commitment in their ministry. Not only did he know how to respect their personal gifts, but he also opened them to broad, new horizons where they could exercise their apostolic passion: Étienne Pernet, François Picard, Marie Correnson, Victorin Galabert, Vincent de Paul Bailly, etc.

Fr. Julio Navarro Román, A.A.

The Virtue of Obedience

Fr. d'Alzon has given us an understanding of obedience at once lofty and original; it is rooted in an exceptionally apostolic spirit. For Fr. d'Alzon, our obedience flows fundamentally from the filial obedience of the Word of God, inscribed from all eternity in his divine person and made manifest in the eternal decree of his redeeming mission that destined him for death, and death on the cross. This perfect obedience of the Son of God enlightens the entire history of the world just as it penetrated the life of Christ among us on earth. We must always keep it before our eyes because our obedience is also an obedience of those sent by God for the salvation

of the world. In his own rule of life, Fr. d'Alzon writes, « The apostle himself is a 'nobody.' He derives all his worth from whoever sent him – and his value depends on how faithfully he carries out his commission. This is why I must endeavour to be an obedient apostle. Obedience, in all its goodness, places us under God's immediate control – so I will be truly obedient only in so far as God assumes complete mastery over me. The apostle loves whoever sent him. But he also loves those to whom he is sent, because his mission is one of love and mercy. » (*E.S.*, p. 781). (*First Constitutions*, note from the chapter on obedience).

Fr. d'Alzon's speaks to us

Admirable mystery, in which God gives us ever greater freedom to the extent that we allow him to reign more perfectly over us and in which the perfection of our obedience is the source of the very perfection of our freedom.

(“First Letter to the Master of Novices,
” *Ecrits Spirituels*, p. 153)

Obedience: humble, prompt, faithful

Shrine of the Consolata in Turin, Italy, the church where, in June 1844, made a vow to renounce all appointments to higher office in the Church.



Speaking of the virtue of obedience, we can see the disposition that characterized Fr. d'Alzon throughout his life, how he sought to submit himself to God's will, revealed on the one hand by his superiors --- the bishops he served under, the Pope, and Vatican I, and, on the other hand, by the Rule of the congregation he founded.

As a young priest, still a student in Rome, the Abbé d'Alzon envisioned missionary work among the Protestant population of southern France, but he understood that he would have to do so in perfect harmony with his bishop's wishes, « I am convinced above all, » he wrote to his mother, « that it is not in doing my own will that I can do the will of God ». He adds a little later on, « My will consists in going to find the bishop of Nîmes and doing neither more nor less than what he tells me ». And, in fact, when the bishop brushed his plans aside, however much it may have cost him, he accepted the decision « trying to throw himself blindly into the

arms of Providence ».

As to his own initiatives, he respectfully submitted them to the bishop... So it was especially with his plans to found his congregation, for which he had to wait five years before Bishop Cart gave authorization for the beginning of a canonical novitiate.

Before the opening of the First Vatican Council, he preached to his religious the importance of accepting the decisions that would be taken there.

As for Fr. d'Alzon's obedience to the Pope, let it suffice for us to recall three quite remarkable examples : the immediate submission that the young d'Alzon gave to the request of Pope Gregory XVI to the encyclicals condemning the doctrine of his friend and mentor, Félicité de Lamennais; the way in which he responded, in 1862, to Pope Pius IX's invitation to direct the activity of the young congregation to the Christian Near East; the heroic submission he showed when, in 1880, Pope Leo XIII called all religious

congregations to sign the declaration of political neutrality presented to them, even though he had little confidence that the results would be effective.

« Obedience, at its very heart, immediately places one's soul under the action of God and I will truly be an apostle only inasmuch as this action penetrates all my being », writes Fr. Alzon in his rule of life of 1845. In the minutes that Victor Cardenne, one of his first novices, left us, we read, « Obedience, not obedience to this one or that, but to Jesus Christ; obedience, simply keeping Our Lord in mind, in everything and everywhere, in the children we are to form just as we are called by the rule to do. Obedience, enlightened by faith, will double the energy of the will, dispossessed of pride by humility, and will give birth to a reverence that is free, conscious, and persevering, and an intelligence that is governed freely and submits freely».

(Compendium on the Life and Virtues, vol. I, p. 130-131).

What He Teaches Us

For Fr. d'Alzon obedience is rooted in the unconditional love of God; the model of all obedience is Jesus Christ. Rather than limiting our obedience and our initiatives, obedience is an extraordinary means for attaining perfection.

Faith and Obedience

Faith is an act of our intelligence to God's revealed truth; but in teaching us what we must believe, faith also teaches us what we must practice.

In revealing to us the relationship that should exist between God and us, obedience shows us what our duties are in his regard. If God is the sovereign Master of all things, if we are his servants, if, by grace we are his children, then in two respects we owe him the most absolute dependence.

But our readiness to show him our submission can go beyond carrying out his orders; we can seek out what he desires and make of that what guides us in all things. In this way obedience takes on a particular character of perfection and of love, which becomes manifest in a vow: this is the first link to the religious life.

Obedience, taken in this sense, is the sacrifice of my will, which I renounce so as to carry out God's

will alone, made known to me by my superiors (E.S., 53).

Jesus Christ, our model

« He humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross » (Phil 2:8). Such is the model of perfection: nailed by obedience to the Cross. He is there for us to look at all the time – to remind us that just as sinful rebellion was the cause of Man's downfall, so the obedience of the Perfect Man was

Christian life; it is unquestionably the very essence of religious life. Obedience concerns that which is most excellent in our lives --- the will (E.S., 531).

A means of perfection

What is obedience if not the obligation we freely impose upon ourselves to become and remain as perfect as our human nature permits? (...)

So the disposition to obey is a disposition to become perfect and the undertaking to obey is an undertaking to become perfect. From which I conclude that, in order to practice obedience perfectly one day, one must engage in a period of preparation by practicing certain acts of obedience. (...)

The vow of religious obedience embraces our entire life ... in the sense

that whatever one does in religious life is to be done for God and our neighbour. Numerous acts, indifferent in themselves, assume, thanks to obedience, a saintly and meritorious character. Who can possibly calculate the intensity that a will which is ready to give of itself is able to attain? Who can tell how often the will can renew its gift of self by repeated acts of obedience? (E.S., 535-6).



Shrine of Notre Dame des Victoires, Paris, where, in 1845, Fr. D'Alzon pronounced religious vows in private

the cause of his salvation..

Therefore, both the beginning and the end of the life of Jesus Christ are stamped with the seal of obedience, and, in between, the evangelist takes care to let us know that, during the eighteen years of his 'hidden life' "he was subject" to his parents: et erat subditus illis (Lk 2:5).

So obedience seems to be one of the fundamental virtues of the

Favors and graces received

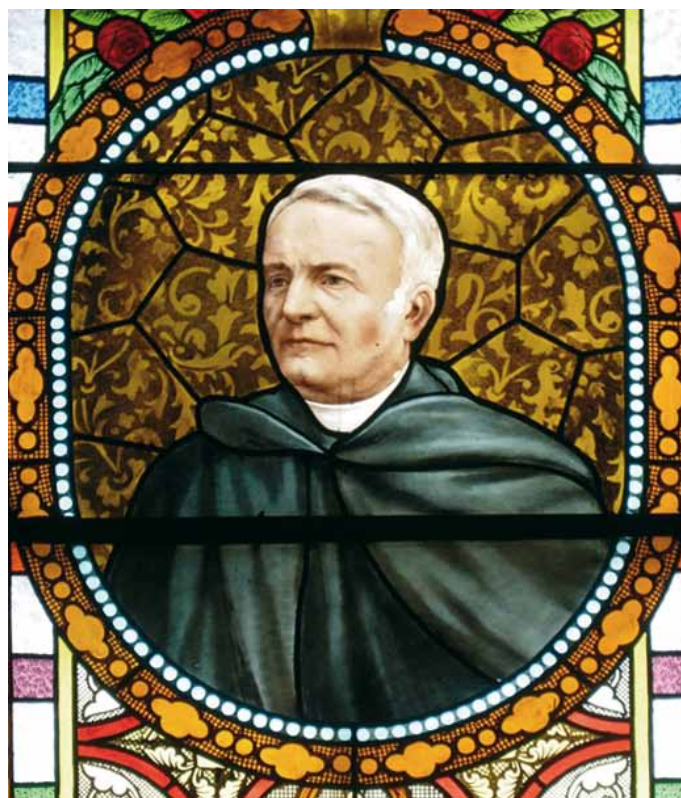
Andrés Orlando CORREA DÍAZ

(recall #12 of « Signs of God » in which we spoke of what seemed to be a possible miracle of Fr. d'Alzon. Dr Paul Carpentier, of Gardner, Massachusetts, studied the case. Here is a summary of some of his conclusions)

« Had the mother presented to me, I would have gently explained that she was likely miscarrying but that I could not be sure. I would have explained that an ultrasound at this early point in pregnancy is not likely to be accurate and can be misleading, and the uncertainty could be difficult to handle, especially emotionally. I would have ordered the ultrasound only on the chance that she was further along and the chance that we could reassure her. I would not have expected to determine whether or not she was miscarrying because I would have known ahead of time that I could not determine that. So I would already know, before any ultrasound, that I would not be recommending a medicine to evacuate the uterus.

Her father, prayerful and respectful of the tremendous gift of life, though professionally out-ranked by the obstetrician, advised his daughter that together they would pray for the intercession of the Servant of God, Emmanuel d'Alzon. They received the grace of courage and wisdom to avoid the prescription and to seek a second opinion. These graces of courage, patience and wisdom, in my opinion, might well be attributable to the miraculous intervention of Fr. d'Alzon.

Most people in her situation would have complied with the advice of the physician and consequently, unknowingly, aborted an otherwise healthy embryo! Thus, miraculous graces are necessary to have faith beyond likely reality, and stand up for your child, when all evidence and advice suggests otherwise. »



Stained-glass window of the chapel of Condamine in Le Vigan, the house where d'Alzon was born in 1810

News from the Secretariates

***Nairobi :** Here is the text that I have sent to our religious (Assumptionists, Oblates) and Lay Assumptionists. We are holding monthly meetings, each second week of the month.

“I am sending you this letter to request your collaboration in promoting the cause for the beatification of Father Emmanuel d'Alzon. Since last December, I have been receiving letters from Fr. Julio Navarro Román, a.a., the Postulator for the above cause, requesting my availability to constitute the local secretariate that will collaborate with him in the work that he performs. This letter seeks to convey to you his message and to share with you my own convictions and knowledge about Father d'Alzon...”
Fr. Muvunga Charles, a.a.



**If our obedience is to be acceptable to God, it must be humble, gentle, prompt, and faithful, without complaint or negligence. »
(E.S., 52)**

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the Cause of the beatification
of Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon.

Postulator: Fr. Julio Navarro Román, A.A.
Via San Pio V, 55 – 00165 Roma – Italia
@: postulazioneassunzionisti@gmail.com