

JEAN-PAUL PERIER-MUZET, A.A.



**FATHER EMMANUEL D'ALZON:  
IN HIS OWN WORDS**

Dalzonian Anthology  
Volume II

**Father Emmanuel d'Alzon:  
In His Own Words  
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# **FATHER EMMANUEL D'ALZON: IN HIS OWN WORDS**

## **Dalzonian Anthology**

Background, Themes and Texts,  
Biographical Information,  
Bibliographical Annotations,  
And Study Questions

## **Volume II**

**JEAN-PAUL PÉRIER-MUZET, A.A.**

Translated from the French  
By Eugene Laplante, A.A.

Bicentennial of the Birth of  
Venerable Emmanuel d'Alzon

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# Preface

*Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon: In His Own Words, vol. I*, was published in 2003 and has already been translated<sup>1</sup> into Portuguese (2003), Spanish (2003), and English (2007). It has become indispensable in introducing laypeople and young people to the person and thought of Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon, the founder of the Assumptionists and the Oblates of the Assumption. Few readers will have the time to skim through the eighteen volumes of the critical edition of the correspondence of Fr. d'Alzon. That is why it was a stroke of inspiration to choose fifty of his most important letters and thus put this imposing mass of writings within the reach of a much larger group of readers and make it possible to discover the human and spiritual depths of this figure of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Church whose personal and intimate side can get lost in his more public or didactic writings.

Now Fr. Jean-Paul Périer-Muzet, the indefatigable archivist and historian of the congregation, has produced in record time a second se-

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<sup>1</sup> In Spanish: Fr. Tomás GONZALEZ, A.A. *El Padre Manuel d'Alzon por sí mismo. Antología alzoniana*, Rome, 2003, 290 pages; in Brazilian Portuguese: Mr. Gilmar SAINT' CLAIR RIBEIRO, *O Padre Emanuel por ele mesmo. Antologia Alzoniana*, Rio de Janeiro, Gavea editions, 2003, 325 pages, in *Coleção Assunção, Escritos n° 4*. Paul PHAM VAN HAO, A.A., produced a partial but substantial translation in Vietnamese in 2005, a copy of which may be found in the general archives. In English: Fr. Eugene LAPLANTE, A.A. (translator) and Fr. John Franck, A.A. (editor), *Father Emmanuel d'Alzon: In His Own Words. Dalzonian Anthology*, Rome, Bayard editions, 2007.

lection of fifty new letters which he has organized according to certain significant themes and has likewise provided well-researched historical notes. We owe him a great debt of gratitude for helping us, with this second volume and his numerous other publications, to get to know Fr. d'Alzon more deeply. I consider this current volume to be the first of a long series of publications which have been foreseen for the upcoming bicentennial celebration of the birth of Emmanuel d'Alzon, who was born on August 30, 1810, in Le Vigan, in southern France. In the spirit of this series, the second volume of a *Dalzonian Anthology*, like the first, bears witness that the spiritual insights of Emmanuel d'Alzon continue to be a source of inspiration nourishing many men and women, lay and religious alike, who are seeking God.

It is incumbent upon us to thank Fr. Périer-Muzet for the considerable amount of time and energy he has invested in this current project and so many others. I would also like to take advantage of this preface to express my appreciation to all the translators and editors who have worked so diligently to produce editions of the first volume in different languages. This dedication gives us the hope that in a not too distant future we will have translations in Vietnamese, Tagalog, Korean, Swahili, Malagasy.....

Richard E. Lamoureux, A.A.  
Superior General

March 15, 2007

# Foreword

With the bicentennial of Fr. d'Alzon's birth approaching, it seemed timely in first place to produce a second volume of the *Anthology* of the founder's writings, in the manner and according to the spirit of the first collection which appeared in 2003 and which has stood the test of numerous presentations and retreats. May this more direct means of access to his thought and spirituality contribute to making him better known and loved by all those to whom he is recommended today and so assure him a living posterity where the Assumption Family works to hasten the coming of the Kingdom and where one day the Spirit will send them with the help of his grace.

The upcoming bicentenary will no doubt prompt a certain number of celebrations and compositions, whether musical, historical, or other. For its part the General Council decided to undertake the production of a series for this occasion entitled *Cahiers du Bicentenaire d'Alzon* (D'Alzon Bicentennial Series) on various themes and aspects dealing with the founder and the life of the congregations he founded. It would also be appropriate that certain initiatives take place at the provincial level, especially where there are a lot of young people. Once a number of the Series is ready, it can be printed and distributed to communities. Let us hope that in this way honor may be amply accorded to the memory of the one who gave birth in the Church to the Assumption charism and that one day the Church may fully recognize the holiness of Fr. d'Alzon whose life goes on in that of his two religious families.

Fr. Jean-Paul Périer-Muzet, A.A.



# Part I

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## A Tone Set For a Happy Childhood and Adolescence (1822)

**T**his letter, the first of the voluminous correspondence of Emmanuel d'Alzon (1810-1880) to be preserved, goes back to his carefree childhood days at Lavagnac, where his family moved in 1816. It reflects the warm family atmosphere, peaceful and well-balanced, of a twelve-year-old adolescent in a rural and protected setting, whose companions are mostly female, not to mention the numerous servants working at the magnificent chateau built on a small elevation overlooking the River Hérault. The bonds of family are marked by this sweetness of living in the enchanting region of the eastern Languedoc plain covered with vineyards and fields of grain. The young d'Alzon benefited from lessons with a tutor, a certain Abbé Bonnet, who also

served as chaplain at the estate. Many priests, probably former religious who had been secularized at the time of the French Revolution, lived this way serving wealthy families that provided them with room and board in exchange for the primary education of their children and liturgical services in their chapels. Opportunities to have fun in such a beautiful country setting were not lacking and varied according to the season: walks, visits, sports, horseback riding, and hunting. We know that on one of his birthdays Emmanuel had received a small Camargue horse from his father on which he set out to discover the region of Montagnac and the surrounding villages. At another time his father bought him a pair of pistols which led him to begin a collec-

tion of hunting trophies. We have a portrait of Emmanuel holding a stuffed bird, done by a local artist, Pauline Lebrun; having obtained it from a taxidermist, d'Alzon's nephew, Jean de Puységur, gave it in turn to Fr. Picard in 1883 and for a long time it was kept in the oratory of the Orantes of the Assumption in Le Vigan. This good-natured atmosphere of an aristocratic, country lifestyle also brought with it practices proper to the upper class: taking medicine at the

least sign of illness, not neglecting good hygiene, and addressing one's parents with an affection that did not dispense children from the rules of a refined etiquette, characterized by deference and even a respectful distance. In these lines written by a child, one senses a kind of measured nobility at once marked by a distant proximity and a reserved affection, resembling the sartorial manner of the Restoration Era, elegant but also very "straight-laced."

*My dear Dad,*

*I had been counting on writing to you with the last mail pickup to wish you a happy feast-day<sup>1</sup>, but Mom told me that since Augustine<sup>2</sup> was writing to you, we shouldn't send both letters at the same time. I admit that I should have written to you sooner. But the little sickness that I was feeling kept me from doing so. Now that I have completely recovered, I am sometimes so good as to take a bath before dinner. Today I am a bit out of sorts<sup>3</sup>. Augustine took some medicine today. Mimi<sup>4</sup> is really cute. When she is asked where you are, "In Paris," she replies. "And where in Paris?" "In the Chamber (of Deputies)." "And what does he do in the Chamber?" "He disputes ("scolds")." "And what is he?" "He's a deputy." I plead with you not to let this Chamber and these ministers make you forget your precious ones ("petits choux"- "little cabbages") who are always thinking of you.*

*Good-bye, dear dad. I am and will always be your loving son.*

*Emmanuel d'Alzon.*

E. d'Alzon to his father, Lavagnac, June 11, 1822  
(date corrected according to the manuscript),  
*Letters*, in the Vailhé edition, Bayard Presse, 1923, vol. A, p. 1-2.



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<sup>1</sup> The Viscount **Henri Daudé d'Alzon** (1774-1864) celebrated his patron, St. Henry, according to the Roman calendar of the period, on July 15. Emmanuel's letter explicitly indicates the date of June 11, 1822; either the child made an involuntary error of dating (which led Fr. Vailhé to make a correction) or delays in mail delivery in those days imposed this precaution. It took no less than a good week to cover the distance between Montpellier and Paris by stage-coach. The Viscount lived in Paris during parliamentary sessions. In May 1822, he had been elected deputy of the Hérault Department according to the provisions of the electoral system of the period. At the beginning of the 1823 school-year, the whole family went to Paris and stayed at a boarding house called Crapelet, at 9 Rue Vaugirard.

<sup>2</sup> **Augustine** (1813-1860) was Emmanuel's first sister, three years his junior. She remained unmarried even though many asked for her hand. She lived at Lavagnac with the family, carrying on the traditions of Christian faith full of charity.

<sup>3</sup> "détraqué"/"out of sorts": a familiar term which indicates an intestinal disorder, very likely the same as the one mentioned above.

<sup>4</sup> **Mimi** is the diminutive form for Emmanuel's second sister named **Marie-Françoise** (1819-1869). It is she, later nicknamed Countess Abraham, who furnished a posterity for the d'Alzon family when in March 1837 she married **Anatole de Puységur** (1813-1851) with whom she had three children: **Alix** (1838-1895), **Marthe** (1839-1845), and **Jean** (1841-1910). "Mom" in the text refers to the **Viscountess Henri d'Alzon, née Jeanne Clémence de Faventine** (1788-1860). The d'Alzons had a fourth child, **Jules** (1816-1818), who died in infancy. The recorded utterances of little Marie-Françoise make one think of the cute remarks and babble of children of that age, an echo of grown-up conversations she heard. They don't lack wit. The deputy in parliament followed the laws of "disputatio" or argument, while for a child the reality of being scolded ("disputé") by one's parents didn't win for them any parliamentary aura.

## For Further Reflection and Research

### On the Restoration Era

- Emmanuel de Waresquiel, Benoît Yvert, *Histoire de la Restauration 1814-1830*, Perrin, 2002, 499 pages, Tempus collection.

### On childhood in the privileged or working-class milieus of this period

- There are numerous echoes on this subject in the literature of the period: e.g. in *Le Petit Chose* of Alphonse Daudet (1868), *Les Souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse* by Ernest Renan (1882), the novel by Hector Malot, *Sans famille* (1878), not to mention novels by Charles Dickens such as *Oliver Twist* (1837), which give quite realistic portraits of contrasting social milieus.

## For a Personalized Reading

- What aspects of Emmanuel d'Alzon's letter show that we are dealing with someone from a well-to-do milieu?
- What are some of the striking experiences of your own family life? Did you find in it the same balanced affectivity and a care for education in good manners, for social life, and for warm surroundings?
- Did you have an opportunity to express to your parents the feelings that their relationship with you fostered?
- What memories of your childhood have you kept of discovering your natural surroundings, the region you came from, your friends and relatives of that time?

## Researching Family Roots (1831)

This letter from 1831 highlights the d'Alzon family's longstanding historical attachment to this region. Their origins are found in this part of the country which is precisely called "Dalzonnenque" at the heart of the Cévennes Mountains, straddling two departments, those of Gard and Aveyron. The political revolution of 1830 had forced the d'Alzon family, out of prudence, to leave the capital seething with tension. Emmanuel, secluded at Lavagnac, gave himself over to an almost Spartan regimen of study; but he was also bored at times far from his Parisian acquaintances. At the end of the summer of 1831 his parents eased up on the reins and gave him permission to undertake, with two companions, a pilgrimage of sorts to the family cradle, beginning at Le Vigan. The first part of the journey took

place on foot with well-planned rest stops along the way: St. Jean du Bruhel in the heart of the Dourbie River Valley, the Causse Noir\* of Larzac, and the forest of La Salvage, ending with the chateau of Monna, near Millau, the homeland of the de Bonald family. The return trip was made, at least in part, in horse-drawn carriage or stage-coach. Certainly during this adventure d'Alzon had many enriching and even picturesque encounters with distant or close members of the family, who agreed to put up these three imps on their spree. One letter from this period, addressed to the same d'Esgrigny (August 19, 1831), also makes mention of the small chateau of Algues, *ruined capital of the feudal estate of one of my uncles*. It was from here that sprung up the de Roquefeuil, the original line of the d'Alzons, according to a genea-

logical tradition that was carefully preserved in all the aristocratic families. Little by little, a branch of the Daudé d'Alzon came to be established above Le Vigan, at St. André de Majencoules. There is safeguarded there the memory of a place called the Chateau de la Coste, which was the theater of clashes in the wars of religion, in which a number of Daudé d'Alzons distinguished themselves. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Daudé d'Alzons settled in the foothills of the Cévennes on the Gard side, in the La Condamine and La Valette sections

of Le Vigan itself, a city situated between the mountains and the plain traversed by the Arre River. Thanks to services rendered to "Religion and the King," the ancestors of Emmanuel d'Alzon obtained, in 1727, under King Louis XV, their letters of nobility. Mention is made in several of Fr. d'Alzon's letters of properties and landed estates located within this town: La Valette, La Condamine, L'Elze, Arènes, Bagatelle, le Moulin du Pont, Anglas, tangible proof of their deep ancestral roots in the Cévennes region.

*....The more I travel, the more I can feel the roots sinking in. And yet, to what will I be attached? I was beside myself, when at six in the morning, having walked for some fifteen minutes, I turned around and looked at the bell tower of St. Jean<sup>1</sup> hiding behind some mountain chestnuts. Still, what was I leaving behind in this village? Persons that I had seen for a few days and would probably not see again. I was with two of my cousins<sup>2</sup> and I was on my way to the de Bonalds<sup>3</sup>. Since I wanted to get to know the area, we went on foot along the goat paths. I was sad and saying little. The sight of the village of Cantobre<sup>4</sup> woke me up. Imagine a tower some 300 to 400 feet high plunging straight down into a small river, not far from a nearby mountain accessible through a narrow passageway, and on top of this tower some twenty houses built, or rather suspended, like swallow nests on the edge of a cliff. We went down toward the river and crossed it in order to go up the other side. What was St. Jean, then, compared to the mountains which hid it from me? And what of its inhabitants alone, the people I had seen? And if, passing from one mountain-top to the other which delimit the valley<sup>5</sup>, one were to fill the void between them, what would St. Jean be, what would its inhabitants be other than a*

*dry, cold, stony plateau over which an eternal North Wind would blow the clouds along?*

*We had dinner with the pastor of St. Sauveur<sup>6</sup>. We had completed half of our trek and walked for three good hours. As we continued on our way, I wanted to share with one of my travel companions the sadness that was weighing me down. His wit aside, he did not really understand what I was trying to convey and responded with pleasantries. I left him abruptly and hurried ahead. I called to you. I felt like I was giving you my arm and telling you of my sadness. For two hours I shared with you so many things which I no longer remember. Climbing, I ran out of breath. Descending, I let myself go running at full speed. This is how we crossed the Causse Noir and the beautiful forest of La Salvage<sup>7</sup>.*

*Upon our arrival, we found Mr. de Bonald ill. I was really happy to see his grandson again with whom I shared a close bond<sup>8</sup>. We spent a good part of the night talking....*

Emmanuel d'Alzon to his friend, Luglien d'Esgrigny, Lavagnac, September 9, 1831, *Letters*, Siméon Vailhé edition, B.P., 1923, p. 233-234.

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**Luglien de Jouenne d'Esgrigny** (1806-1888) was Emmanuel d'Alzon's best friend during his youth. They met when they were both law students in Paris and together attended the conferences at the home of Mr. Bailly on Rue de l'Estrapade.

\* The Causse Noir is a Jurassic limestone plateau west of the Cévennes in the center of the southern edge of the Massif Central. It gets its name "Noir" (black) from the dark shades of the pine forests which cover its length and breadth.

<sup>1</sup> Saint Jean de Bruhel is a small and old village at the extreme eastern end of Aveyron. It has a picturesque bridge over the Dourbie River. In 1880 it had 2,450 inhabitants and was the homeland of the **Daudé de la Valette** in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>2</sup> The Misses **Daudé de la Valette**, including **Elisabeth. Numa Baragnon** (1835-1892) successively married two Daudé de la Valette sisters, **Marie** (+1871) and **Amélie**.

<sup>3</sup> The **Viscount Louis de Bonald** (1754-1840), writer, politician of the Restoration Era, and academician who married a relative of the d'Alzons, **Elisabeth Guibal de Combescure**.

<sup>4</sup> A small, mountain-top village in Aveyron, near Nant and St. Jean de Bruhel that one must really visit in autumn light in order to taste all of its romantic charm.

<sup>5</sup> A careful study of Michelin map n° 240, fold 2, of the *Languedoc-Rousillon* region, allows one to re-trace with precision the itinerary of Emmanuel d'Alzon and his two companions.

<sup>6</sup> St. Sauveur du Larzac on the bank of the Causse is a small village where Emmanuel made a rest stop at the home of the pastor of the time, Rev. **Louis Bousquet** (1791-1867), a typical rural pastor who totally identified with his parish since he served it from 1828 until his death. There remains the beautiful

village church at this picturesque location, perched over the Dourbie River valley. Nearby there is a place called Montredon, whose name figures in the titles of the **Viscountess d'Alzon, née de Faventine-Montredon**.

<sup>7</sup> Crossing this forest is another beautiful, recommended outing. A little shrine bearing the same name still exists next to the military camp of Larzac.

<sup>8</sup> One of the Viscount's grandsons mentioned here is none other than **Séverin de Serres** (1809-1902), son of **Louis-Alexandre de Serres** (+1835) and **Anne Henriette Elisabeth de Bonald**. Séverin married **Angélique Delandine du Saint-Esprit**.

## For Further Reflection and Research

### On the regional roots of Fr. d'Alzon and his family

- Siméon Vailhé, *Vie du P. Emmanuel d'Alzon*, B.P., 1926, vol. I, p. 4-12.
- Gérard Cholvy, "Emmanuel d'Alzon. Les racines," in *Colloque d'histoire, Emmanuel d'Alzon dans la société et l'Eglise du XIXe siècle*, Le Centurion, 1982, p. 19-36.
- Henri-Dieudonné Galeran, *Sketches of Fr. d'Alzon*, various passages.
- Robert Sauzet, *Les Cévennes catholiques. Histoire d'une fidélité XVIe-XXe siècles*, vol. I, Paris, Perrin, 2002, 415 p.
- Patrick Cabanet, *Itinéraires protestants en Languedoc XVIe-XXe siècles*, vol I, *Cévennes*, Presses du Languedoc, Cahors, 1998, 480 p.
- Ph. Joutard, *Les Cévennes de la montagne à l'homme*, Privat, 1979, 508 p.

### On the genealogy of the Daudé d'Alzon

- *Dossier sur la vie et les vertus du P. d'Alzon*, vol. II *Documentation biographique*, vol. I, Rome, 1986, p. 5-10.
- Hubert Lamant, *Armorial général et nobilaire français*, vol. IV, p. 169-195 (article on Daudé by Yves Chassin du Guerny).

## For a Personalized Reading

- Have you tried to trace your genealogy? What are the benefits of such research?
- Do you, like Emmanuel d'Alzon, feel attached to one or several areas where you and your family came from or where you have lived?
- What are some of the outstanding traits that you may or may not have preserved from your family heritage? Have you intentionally severed ties with this heritage or made a conscious effort to preserve it?
- Do the places you grew up still exist in fact? What changes or sale of properties other than to family members have taken place?

## In the Company of Books (1830)

**V**ery early in life, Fr. d'Alzon acquired a taste for reading books, magazines, and newspapers that was favored by the cultured milieu in which he was raised. It prepared him to benefit greatly from his student days in Paris between 1823 and 1830 during which his intelligence and his openness to the issues of his day, stimulated by an excellent memory and a keen sense of observation, instilled in him a passion to read, to be informed, and to enter into relationships. This was not some bookish form of knowledge, for it fostered in him a pressing desire to discuss and communicate. He maintained the habit of reading, pen in hand, throughout his life, a habit reinforced by the apostolic urge within him to write.

Already at Lavagnac he had put together with his allowance a good library which he enriched

throughout his life at the Collège de l'Assomption in Nîmes; he never hesitated to put notes in his books, to accumulate file cards, and inform himself of new books in publications he read or that were mentioned to him by friends. Collège Stanislas introduced him to literature, French as well as European, if we can believe his correspondence about the matter; he had a particular love for the great classic authors who formed good taste and expression. From his youth he appreciated the first great works of the Romantic Era, especially those of a traditionalist bent; literature, however, quickly gave way to philosophy and the religious sciences. The latter did not particularly shine in the firmament of French publishing during the period of the Restoration and even during the July Monarchy, for theological thought had suf-

ferred enormously from the void and brain-drain caused by the French Revolution. Theological thought came to life more quickly on the other side of the Rhine. It wasn't until 1836 that Fr. Migne undertook the publication of the *Bibliothèque universelle du clergé*, then dictionaries and encyclopedias, among which were the famous Latin and Greek *Patrologies*; the young d'Alzon subscribed to this series and was an enthusiastic reader of them. Under the Second Empire, art in all its forms was quickly laicized. Lamartine and Hugo symbolize this evolution in literature which

separates religious sentiment from any denominational connection. In any case, the clergy tended to be satisfied with the pages of *L'Univers* that implacably censured any modern ideas with the fire of an intransigent Ultramontanism. In the religious sphere, Renan, in rejecting dogmas, founded a rational and critical Christianity, in which the Catholic interpretation seemed to be emptied of any substance. Reduced to rear-guard apologetics, theology itself would revive only in the Thomistic renaissance at the end of the century.

*Since Bridieu<sup>1</sup> takes the liberty of writing to you to give you errands, why can't I enjoy the same freedom, my dear<sup>2</sup> Eugène? So, if you could do this for love of me, it would make me really happy: I would be much obliged if you went to Dufort's, Quai Voltaire, #1, and asked them to send me by mail or by stage-coach, if they find it more economical, the following:*

- 1) two copies of the Harmonies by Lamartine<sup>2</sup>;*
- 2) The History of Philosophy by de Gerando<sup>3</sup>;*
- 3) A History of Rome by Niebuhr<sup>4</sup>;*
- 4) Ancient History by Schlosser<sup>5</sup>.*

*The latter two have been translated. Since all of these works are for people who cannot obtain them in the provinces, I would be much obliged if you could ask them that the bill be placed in the packet that will be sent to me. If it is sent by stage-coach, my address is: Mr. Briffaut<sup>6</sup>, deputy mayor of Montagnac, to be given to Mr. d'Alzon, Hérault Department. I don't know why but I feel no shame in giving you my errands to run. I would also be much obliged if you could post the letter I am enclosing. Since I don't have the time to write a longer letter*



*and this letter is meant for errands, I pray that you allow me to pay for it<sup>7</sup>.*

*Goodbye, my dear friend. Once again excuse me. It is very late and I can't write more to you.*

*Emmanuel d'Alzon*

**E. d'Alzon to Eugène de La Gournerie, Lavagnac, June 25, 1830,  
Letters, Siméon Vailhé edition, B.P.,  
volume A, p. 95-96.**

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**Eugène de La Gournerie** (1807-1887) was another of the friends Fr. d'Alzon came to know in Paris during his studies.

<sup>1</sup> **François-Marie-Antoine Marquis de Bridieu** (1804-1872) was a French lawyer and politician.

<sup>2</sup> **Alphonse de Lamartine** (1790-1869) was a French poet, historian, and politician. In 1830 he published *Les Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*, considered to be really modern psalms.

<sup>3</sup> **Joseph-Marie, Baron de Gérando** (1772-1842) was a French publicist and philosopher, the author of *Histoire comparée des systèmes de philosophie relativement aux principes des connaissances humaines*, published in 1804.

<sup>4</sup> **Barthold-Georg Niebuhr** (1776-1831) was a German historian and diplomat who wrote a history of the city of Rome (*Beschreibung Roms*).

<sup>5</sup> **Friedrich Christoph Schlosser** (1776-1861) was a German professor, historian and librarian, author of a universal history of antiquity (*Universalhistorische Übersicht der Geschichte der alten Welt und ihrer Kultur*, 1st part, 1826; 2nd part, 1834).

<sup>6</sup> We were able to identify **Antoine Brifaud** or **Briffaut** (1762-1840), postmaster at Montagnac and deputy mayor from 1826-1830.

<sup>7</sup> The postage stamp was introduced in France in 1849. Until then, postage was usually paid by the addressee and not the sender.

## For Further Research and Reflection

### On the evolution of ideas in 19<sup>th</sup> century

- Patrick Bethier, Michel Jarrety, *Histoire de la France littéraire* under the direction of Michel Prigent, vol. III, *Modernités XIXe-XXe*, P.U.F., 2006. 856 pp.
- Michel Winock, *Les Voix de la Liberté. Les écrivains engagés au XIXème siècle*, Paris, Le Seuil, 2001, 678 p.

### On the teaching of theology in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

- Edgar Hocedez, *Histoire de la théologie au XIXème siècle*, 3 volumes, Paris-Bruxelles, 1947-1952.
- Marcel Launay, *Les séminaires français aux XIXe et XXe siècles*, Paris Cerf, 2003, 265 pages in the collection *Histoire*.

## For a Personalized Reading

- What do you prefer to read? With regard to your history of personal reading, have you noticed an evolution in your tastes and preferences?
- What are the great works that have most influenced you?
- In the community where you live, have you detected a policy for buying books, for the budget of the library, and for cataloguing? Do the religious sciences hold a preeminent place there?
- Do you now have other means and support for the information and formation you get?

## What to Choose? The Future of a Rich Young Man (1831)

When he left the capital before the whirlwind days of July 1830, Emmanuel d'Alzon carried in his mind a lot of study projects he wanted to undertake in the calm retreat of Lavagnac. As the months went by, his intellectual ardor did not wane, but nostalgia for the lively Parisian scene did take hold of him, the memory of his friends haunted him, and the rural solitude ate away at him, even if he *whimsically thought that spending six months at the Grande-Chartreuse would be a splendid idea* (*Letters*, vol. A, p. 209). He was simply not cut out for the solitary life of an extended retreat. His spirit was full, but his waiting soul had not yet perceived the hour of illuminating grace. His ambitions for a career had also disappeared. In 1828 he had

taken up the study of law but only at the behest of his father; however, he never acquired a taste for it. Judgeships, elected office, political commitments no longer appealed to him; his heart longed for a full life that the present seemed to deny him. More than a regimen of study, he needed a direction for life that would give meaning and strength to his studies. Already in his teenage years, he had been attracted to the possibility of a vocation to the priesthood; later, this attraction was superseded by one to a military career, which his parents totally rejected. But neither books nor arms sufficiently fed his heart. So there he was, seeking meaning and direction, like the rich, young man in the Gospel, whom the advantages and attractions of the world left unsatisfied in the end. During the long

months of uncertainty, Emmanuel did not neglect meditating on the Scriptures and the great works of the Fathers of the Church, including those of Augustine. This contact enkindled smoldering embers within him; it would help him clarify his future when, in the light of his intelligence, the courage of a decision, received in divine grace and rooted in prayer, would be strengthened.

Moreover, Emmanuel loved to spend time with a few priest friends in the area, among whom could be counted Fr. Gabriel and a seminarian by the name of Justin Paulinier, at the rectory of Sainte-Ursule in Pézenas; it was a meeting-place for the followers of Lamennais in the region, whom the old Gallican voices never ceased

to rebuff. It was in human interaction and spiritual exchange that Emmanuel would find satisfaction and finally discern his way in life. His mind was honed in ideas and journal articles amply debated and analyzed, but his heart and soul found peace in those conversations where the Spirit blew. This Spirit was the friend whom *God gave him to help him on his way and lead him to Him*, as he wrote in May 1831 to Henri Gourard and in other terms to d'Esgrigny in November 1831, "*I don't know if I have already told you that for a while now I feel like a new man and the light that helped me get there was prayer*" (*Letters*, vol. A, p. 241). The future of the rich young man was now clear.

*...Here is what I do*

1) *I read and take notes. At the moment I am developing a case of indigestion with the works of the Baron<sup>1</sup>.*

2) *I study a little German and a little Italian.*

3) *I always complete my religious instructions\* --- which wouldn't be without fruit, if I were but a bit more zealous.*

4) *From time to time I have conversations with two or three local parish priests, the only reasonable creatures in the area. At the beginning of the week I spent nearly three days at the home of one of them at a time when the others were also there and, although I wasn't feeling well, we had some rather interesting conversations<sup>2</sup>.*

5) *I spent the last days of 1830 quite bored; I ran after wild ducks that I couldn't catch.*

6) *From time to time I run into some rather stupid people, but I don't look down on them; I prefer to pity them.*

7) *As far as politics go, I don't have any fixed ideas. L'Avenir turns me off, but not as much as it does you. When La Quotidienne doesn't cause me to laugh, it bores me to death. Le Correspondant is interesting at times, but in general lacks vitality<sup>3</sup>.*

8) *I am not worth much these days. I'm going to Montpellier<sup>4</sup> in a few days where I hope to regain some life.*

*As to the other questions you posed, they're not easy to answer because: 1) as to my plans, I have none except going to visit you after Easter, if that is possible; 2) as to my desires, fears, and hopes, I am unsure. Perhaps I am wrong. I could really try working on the future, but in order to do so, I would need encouragement; I would have to hear ideas other than the ones I keep formulating myself. As it is, everything that I have heard seems so unreasonable to me as to discourage me from trying anything on my own.*

*I don't fear or hope for anything excessive one way or the other in this part of the country. I am convinced that despite the stupid article in La Revue de Paris we will hold out against the vexations which arise day in and day out from new corners. There are plans to publish a newspaper in Montpellier entitled, *Mélanges Occitaniques*. If you haven't yet heard of it at Le Correspondant, I'll fill you in on its spirit, aims, etc..., when I get to Montpellier.*

*Emmanuel*

Emmanuel d'Alzon to Luglien de Jouenne d'Esgrigny,  
Lavagnac, January 9, 1831,  
*Letters*, Siméon Vailhé's edition, B.P., 1923, vol. A, p. 182-183

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\* refers to the religious instructions that d'Alzon gave to the staff at Lavagnac

<sup>1</sup> **Baron Ferdinand d'Eckstein** (1790-1861) was a publisher of Danish origin, a Jewish convert to Catholicism, a historiographer friend of Lamennais, a collaborator at the review *L'Avenir* and ultramontane editor of a magazine called *Le Catholique* (1826-1829).

<sup>2</sup> Without doubt the Pézenas group met at the home of **Rev. Jean-Louis Gabriel** (1796-1866).

<sup>3</sup> *L'Avenir* was the political, scientific, and literary journal founded by **Félicité de Lamennais** on October 16, 1830 to spread his liberal ideas. It folded on November 15, 1831. *Le Correspondant*, first version, was founded on March 10, 1829, as a weekly, then as a biweekly journal edited by the group of *L'Association pour la défense de la religion* under Mr. Bailly. It closed in 1830 in favor of the *Revue eu-*

*ropéenne* which survived until 1845. *La Quotidienne* began in 1792, was suppressed in 1793, revived in 1795, and in 1814 became the royalist organ par excellence. There also existed the *Mémorial catholique*, founded in January 1824 by the Revs. **de Salinis** and **Gerbert**, two of the early disciples of Lamennais, not to mention *La Tribune catholique*, a daily newspaper launched in 1832.

<sup>4</sup> The d'Alzons had an apartment in Montpellier, on Rue Trésoriers de la Bourse, in a very old, private boarding house; it was an example of private home architecture dating back to the time of Louis XIV.

## For Further Reflection and Research

### On the French press in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

- Under the direction of André-Jean Tudesq, Fernand Terrou, Louis Charlet, Robert Ranc, Charles Ledré, Pierre Guiral, *Histoire général de la presse française*, vol. 1, P.U.F., 1976

## For a Personalized Reading

- What plans had you made for yourself before entering the Assumption?
- What factors led you to choose a life in the service of the Church?
- What role do human exchange and encounters play in the deepening of your decisions?
- For you, what are the key elements in spiritual discernment?

## The Thrust of a Priestly Vocation (1832)

It is never easy, even for the person in question, to account for his priestly vocation; *a fortiori* for the people around him, or before the mass-media. Emmanuel d'Alzon tried to do it a few times in his correspondence with some of his friends. He's pretty good at talking about it: the various opinions, convictions, the call of grace and the heart's responses, the role of a person's will and intelligence. This kind of truth or of lucid questioning really belongs to the conscience alone. In a way, Emmanuel d'Alzon's vocation seems to have been tested more severely than that of an ordinary seminarian because his decision was taken when he was older. However, this situation spared him neither personal interior struggles nor the misunderstanding of others. Once he made up his mind, he told his family, consulted priests,

and relied on divine grace. We know that his theological formation was a bit *sui generis*, at first and for a brief time in the halls of the major seminary of Montpellier (March 1832-June 1833) and afterwards as a self-directed student in Rome, guided by some theologian friends and aided with a few partial courses at the Roman College. It was precisely in Rome that he would live out so profoundly the drama of the "Lamennais Affair" and undoubtedly learned more about ecclesiastical practices through it than he would in any treatise on ecclesiology. Even an "unattached"\* priest must get involved in an institution whose methods of functioning are not always revealed in the Sacred Scriptures!

Can a faith that has not experienced trial by fire produce the future fruits of an indestructible commitment, clear-sighted dis-

cernment, or unfettered inventiveness? When Emmanuel decided to become a sub-deacon and a priest, he was well aware of what he was getting into. Just a few days before, had he not been obligatorily “invited” to sign a document condemning Lamennais? Hadn’t he gone for a month to rub elbows with the Jesuits in Rome at St. Eusebius, he who did not have much sympathy for the “apprentice Pharisees”? One can, of course, wear a monk’s habit and still prepare in one’s cell the venom of falsehood or calumny. In Emmanuel’s heart there was a certainty that would never wea-

ken, that he had answered, without reservation, the call of God for the spiritual welfare of others: *Above all else I am convinced that it is not in carrying out my will that I do God’s will. There are many things that I would not have done had I done only what I wanted.* The Church, in spite of its shortcomings and wrinkles, is not simply a human institution. It crosses generations and centuries not as an earthly empire that sooner or later experiences its rise and fall, but as a permanent reality that was born in time only to accompany its founder into his eternity on high. *A priest forever.*

*To get back to your letter, which you have undoubtedly forgotten, but that I preciously preserved, I would like to thank you for all the wonderful things you related to me. It seems that my entering the seminary<sup>1</sup> has people talking about it in many ways, but very few have understood it as well as you. Some have said that I was taking the cassock because I was forced by my parents’ fanaticism<sup>2</sup>. They would have had to be terribly fanatic to oblige me, in the state that we are, to become a priest against my will. Others have said that I wanted to serve Henry V<sup>3</sup>. Undoubtedly so that we could mount a seminarians’ plot! Oh, what idiots! Some of the more subtle ones thought that there was something happening behind the scenes, that there must be some underlying hidden agenda. Do you understand their cleverness?*

*A gracious God gave me the grace to love a life of dedication and I felt growing within me the desire to defend the faith<sup>4</sup> at the moment that it was being attacked the most. I enjoyed thinking, at this moment when everything is confusing, unsettled, and uncertain, where the future above all seems so obscure that everyone, whatever one’s status or opinion, is threatened, that I would bind myself to something fixed*



*and unchanging, and that, if I were to expose myself to any danger, it would at least be for a worthwhile cause. A few times I have certainly told you: nothing rouses my indignation so much as the egotism that I see invading modern society. It is like ice that paralyzes everything; it is a leprosy that is rapidly gaining ground and that is spreading corruption and death. Love has taken refuge in what is most material --- and whoever respects himself blushes at the thought of looking for it in such low places --- or in religion where it is purified more and more and whence it will soon gush forth on those who fail to understand it....*

*Emmanuel d'Alzon*

E. d'Alzon to his cousin, Edmond d'Alzon, Lavagnac, July 10, 1832,  
*Letters from the Siméon Vailhé edition, B.P., 1923,*  
 vol. A, p. 312-313

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\* a priest who chooses not to be incardinated in any particular diocese

**Edmond d'Alzon** (1811-1873) was Emmanuel's first cousin, from the Pouget family at Lestang (Hérault). In 1849 he married Miss de Saint-Germain and was a career administrator. The couple had four children: Charles (1850-1869), Marie-Jeanne-Augustine-Henriette (1851-1870), Louis (1859-1933), nicknamed Loulou (he married Marie-Claire de Maistre [1863-1942]; the line of the Hesse-d'Alzon issued from them), and Jean, the last-born (1864-1894), who married Valentine de Grateloup.

<sup>1</sup> Emmanuel d'Alzon left the Lavagnac estate on March 14, 1832 in a stagecoach headed from Montagnac to Montpellier.

<sup>2</sup> Emmanuel's parents did not oppose their son's vocation at all. Their Christian spirit allowed them to accept the sacrifice of their only son, in whom lay the hope of descendants bearing the family name. But there were, and that is certainly true, various feelings about it among close relatives up to the 1860s, notably those of an uncle as attested by the Spiritan Father **Jean-Baptiste Loevenbrück** (1795-1876) in the Midi (*Souvenirs du P. Louvenbrück*, edited by René Charrier, Spiritan, vol. 5).

<sup>3</sup> **Henry V** is none other than the **Count of Chambord** (1820-1883) on whom lay all the hopes of the legitimist royalists until the death of this pretender to the throne. Whatever the links between the monarchy and Catholicism were, the real priorities that the future Fr. d'Alzon would form were misunderstood.

<sup>4</sup> The expression "to defend religion" was a part of the apologetics vocabulary of the period, especially at the end of the reign of Charles X and the July Monarchy, which ushered in a clear laicization of the French state.

## For Further Reflection and Research

### On the French clergy of Montpellier in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

- Ferdinand Saurel, *L'ancien clergé du diocèse de Montpellier*, 1901, 4 volumes.
- Gérard Cholvy, *Le diocèse de Montpellier*, Paris, Beauchesne, 1976, in the collection *Histoire des diocèses*.
- Pierre Pierrand, *Le Prêtre français du concile de Trente à nos jours*, DDB, 1986.

## For a Personalized Reading

- What are the strongest motives that Emmanuel d'Alzon expresses to account for his vocation?
- Materialism and spiritualism form a stereotypical pair of opposites. But, in your own opinion, what realities may be hidden or inferred behind these expressions?
- How would you give an account of your own vocation, keeping in mind the various influences that came to bear on it?
- Does divine initiative maintain its preeminence in the presentation that Emmanuel d'Alzon gives for his choice?

## In the Shadows of a Master Not Easily Understood, Lamennais (1832)

The subject of the relationship between Emmanuel d'Alzon and Rev. Félicité de Lamennais between 1828 and 1834 has not failed to elicit many questions. There were echoes of this matter during the history colloquium in 1980\*. It is true that the young Emmanuel placed himself under the intellectual direction of this renowned priest, but, unlike others, he did not attend his school at La Chesnaie in Brittany. Besides, his parents made sure to temper whatever excessive enthusiasm he might show for the latest ideas in vogue. At times Emmanuel has been a little too quickly characterized as a disciple of the 'master of thought' of the young clergy of the day whose fame had reached its zenith before the publication of the first encyclical

condemning him, *Mirari vos*, promulgated in Rome on August 15, 1832. D'Alzon didn't hear of its publication until the following October. Since the document doesn't mention anyone by name, it was possible to interpret it in many different ways. However, the young seminarian that d'Alzon was wasn't unaware of the deep aversion and the more or less loyal maneuvers of the fiercest opponents of this priest including some declared Gallicans. Nevertheless, numerous intrigues, controversies made public in pamphlets, all led to the matter making its way to Rome for a more substantial and fatal investigation of 'doctrines.' As in 1834, in spite of the explicit condemnation this time of Lamennais by the new encyclical, *Singulari nos*, signed by Pope Gre-

gory XVI on June 25 but not published until July 7, Emmanuel continued to demonstrate unfailing loyalty to the person and ideas of Lamennais, encouraging him rather to be prudent and discreet, communicating to him the contradictory murmurings in which ecclesiastical Rome loved to engage behind the screen of opinions, gossiping, and false silence. It was known that Lamennais had little time for any of this pettiness. Over time, Emmanuel's situation had changed: in 1828, he was a simple, far off student in Paris; in 1832 he had become a seminarian in Montpellier; from November 1833 on he was in Rome to prepare for the priesthood while Lamennais, since January 1834, had completely broken with the Catholic Church. In any case it was especially Lamennais' political ideas that brought him condemnation and

ostracism in the first place, whatever his religious development may have been. How sad a spectacle was the rabid hostility of his adversaries who, to their loss, drove him into a corner! One can understand how, from that time on, d'Alzon's and Lamennais' paths diverged even if their personal attachments gained in intensity and intimacy, even in the midst of such tempests. When Fr. Colette was finally able to take a look at the Lamennais-d'Alzon dossier, carefully recopied in a dark office of the pontifical police, it only confirmed the perfect loyalty he showed to his friend as he did to the Church. As to the 'doctrines' of this priest which were condemned, time took care of purifying them. In the process, Fr. d'Alzon came to love Rome in a way that was less naive, often more critical, and always freely mature.

*I wrote to you that Rev. Bastet<sup>1</sup> died. This poor man was retaining urine and I don't know why they left the catheter in him. He had a fall, the catheter burst the bladder, and he died in less than fifteen minutes amidst the sharpest pains. Rev. Blaquières<sup>2</sup> has been named to replace him. Apparently, Rev. Blaquières made it known for quite a while that if he were offered a canon's post, he would refuse. Upon Rev. Bastet's death, they wanted, it is said, to offer him the position out of courtesy with the hope that he would refuse; but Rev. Blaquières took them at their word. They talk a lot about him, but what they say boils down to their not seeing anything positive in people like him.*

*Without much reflection I transcribed for you what in Mr. Mont[lambert]'s letter related to his friends; but admit, nevertheless, that here there is strong evidence that it is not cliquishness that motivates Rev. de la M[ennais]<sup>3</sup>, as it is claimed. For, in the end, the brief he would have received from the Pope would have been for him, I believe, something of a success; but he dismissed it. Some think he acted wrongly. I think he acted quite well. Sooner or later, it will be made known and although he obviously didn't act in such a way to make this happen, it will result in bringing him no less honor. I have maintained a prudent silence in this matter, but I am aware that people say a lot of things in my presence to see how I will respond. I take the higher road: I don't respond.*

*Emmanuel d'Alzon*

E. d'Alzon to his father, Montpellier, November 12, 1832,  
*Letters*, Siméon Vailhé edition, Bayard Press, 1923,  
volume A, p. 367-368.

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\*On the occasion of the centennial of Fr. d'Alzon's death the Assumptionists sponsored a colloquium to examine the place of the founder in the larger context of 19th century French history. A number of scholars, Assumptionists and independent researchers, contributed to this event, the acts of which were published in a volume entitled *Emmanuel d'Alzon dans la société et l'Eglise du XIXe siècle: Colloque d'histoire* under the direction of René Rémond and Emile Poulat, published by Le Centurion in Paris in 1982.

<sup>1</sup> **Rev. Joseph Bastet** (+1832) was professor and rector at the major seminary in Montpellier where he had been named in 1822 by **Bishop Marie-Nicolas Fournier de la Contamine** (1750-1834); he was the author of a *Manuel pour les jeunes prêtres*. **Bishop Charles-Thomas Thibault** (1796-1861) succeeded him as bishop of Montpellier. Both had strong Gallican convictions. Bishop Fournier even forbade seminarians from reading *L'Avenir*.

<sup>2</sup> **Rev. Constant-Clément ou Marie-Jean Blaquières** (1797-1847) was, according to Emmanuel d'Alzon, named rector of the major seminary of Montpellier in 1832 to replace Rev. Bastet.

<sup>3</sup> **Félicité Lamennais** (1792-1854) was an ex-priest, a polemical writer, and a man of politics.

## For Further Research and Reflection

### On Lamennais and What happened in Rome

- Gaston Bordet, *Emmanuel d'Alzon et la crise mennaisienne 1828-1835*; Jean-René Derré, *Les relations entre E. d'Alzon et Lamennais* in *Emmanuel d'Alzon dans la société et l'Eglise du XIXe siècle: Colloque d'histoire 1980* under the direction of René Rémond and Emile Poulat, Le Centurion, Paris, 1982, p. 37-82 and 83-106.
- *Dossier Lamennais-d'Alzon*, in *Pages d'Archives*, new series, #9, August 1958, p. 321-344.
- Jean-René Derré, *Lamennais, ses amis, et le mouvement des idées à l'époque romantique*, Paris, 1982. *Correspondance générale de Lamennais* published by Louis Le Guillou, Paris, Colin, 1973. Guy Dupré, *Formation et rayonnement d'une personnalité catholique au XIXe siècle. Le Père Emmanuel d'Alzon (1810-1880)*, Lille, 1975, 420 pages.

### On Lamennais in English

- Chadwick, Owen. *A History of the Popes: 1830-1914*. Oxford History of the Christian Church series. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003, 624 pages (especially p. 12-31 "Lamennais and the Idea of Tolerance").
- Dawson, Christopher. "Lamennais and The Catholic Church in France" at <http://www.ewtn.com/library/HOMELIBR/LAMENNAI.TXT>.
- Livingston, James C. *Modern Christian Thought: The Enlightenment and the Nineteenth Century*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2006, 544 pages (especially p. 148-153 "Hugues Felicité Robert de Lamennais").
- Oldfield, John J. *The Problem of Tolerance and Social Existence in the Writings of Felicite Lamennais 1809-1831*. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 1973, 268 pages.
- "Hugues Felicité Robert de Lamennais," article in [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hughes\\_Felicit%C3%A9\\_Robert\\_de\\_Lamennais](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hughes_Felicit%C3%A9_Robert_de_Lamennais)

## For a Personalized Reading

- What does the formula taken from Fr. d'Alzon's Letters inspire in you: "Always act for Rome, never against Rome, sometimes without Rome"?
- Could it happen that in the course of history popes might be mistaken in their judgments and teaching? What does the doctrine of papal infallibility specify in this regard?
- What is it in Lamennais' teachings that seems condemnable today?
- How would you hold together the principle and the practice of loyalty, prudence, and openness in matters of conscience when it comes to opinions?

## Papal Rome under Gregory XVI (1834)

**I**t was a whole new, real world, no longer the one he imagined, that the young Emmanuel d'Alzon discovered upon his arrival in Rome in November 1833. His correspondence from 1833-1835 offers numerous insights into the pontifical city of the period, into ecclesiastical and popular mores, as well as into the innumerable attractions of a site urbanized since Antiquity. Emmanuel did not limit his activities to the French circles of Rome that gravitated around the embassy; he befriended a young Englishman, Charles MacCarthy, and several Italian prelates. He decided not to reside at the Ecclesiastical College of Nobles but preferred to lead a more independent life as a boarder at the monastery of the Minimes at Sant'Andrea delle Fratte. Accompanied by his fellow countryman, Rev. Gabriel, he did the

inevitable rounds of basilicas, churches, and monuments of antiquity in the city and expressed his often unusual impressions and evaluations. At the time, the Vatican was restoring the Leonine walls of the Borgo; its museums were overflowing with masterpieces; European artists and sculptors continued to flock to this capital of the arts and decorate it, this city that the Baroque period had not entirely suffocated.

In addition to the influx of pilgrims who would attend jubilees, the European intelligentsia, from the time of the Renaissance, never forgot the road to Rome. Many artists opted to make their home there, for a time or definitively. They opened salons or workshops under the sponsorship of Academies or National Schools. Diplomats were not outdone in their efforts to make their rulers'

influence stand out. Under Gregory XVI the conservative powers held sway, those who followed or were financially beholden to Metternich and who sought to contain the liberal aspirations of peoples. Any movement that smacked of the Carbonaris\* was stifled. England sharply criticized the conservative administration of the Papal States claiming that this central state of the Italian boot was the most backward country of Western Europe. Such modern innovations as the railroad, gas lighting, and the practice of vaccinations were prohibited and even denounced as the products of satanic minds. The department of public works and transportation as well as of public hygiene hadn't advanced since the Middle Ages, even if

interest in archeology, especially the Christian past, kept rising. The catacombs continued to be explored and inventoried. What might possibly have been forgiven the aged Leo XII became less and less acceptable under the pontificate of Gregory XVI. All of Italy was being subjected to the leaven of new ideas and movements that neither the borders with the Alps nor the seas nor the police censures of autocratic sovereigns could stop. Ecclesiastical Rome was particularly permeable to Lamennais' ideas which, there as everywhere else, divided individuals but also provoked fruitful exchanges and international dialogue and raised powerful questions about the future.

*I have already made some good acquaintances. Cardinal Micari<sup>1</sup> treats us really well, Rev. Gabriel and me. I went to see Rev. de Retz<sup>2</sup>, who received me very well. I have not yet been able to find the address of Mr. Bouteillier<sup>3</sup>. Rev. de Brézé<sup>4</sup> is supposed to introduce me to Cardinals Lambruschini<sup>5</sup> and Odescalchi<sup>6</sup>. Others will introduce me to Cardinal Weld<sup>7</sup>. I wrote to you, I think, that I have seen Fr. Ventura<sup>8</sup>, who received me very well and who helped me make the acquaintance of Fr. Mazzetti<sup>9</sup>, who is one of the premier theologians in Rome and who would be happy to receive me from time to time for classes in theology. Rev. de La Mennais has sent me two letters, one for McCarthy<sup>10</sup>, the young Englishman whom I find to be charming. He received me perfectly and it is through him that I found out that the last letter of Rev. de La Mennais delighted the Pope<sup>11</sup>. Thus the fears of*



*schism have evaporated. The other letter is for Fr. Olivieri<sup>12</sup> who is considered the best theologian in Rome; I will be going to see him the day after tomorrow with Fr. Lamarche<sup>13</sup>, whom I have taken as my confessor. I am also taking German lessons; I'm thrilled with them. I have a deal with a good young man who has befriended me and with whom, in addition to the lessons themselves, I run errands during which he always speaks to me in German<sup>14</sup>. It's the best way to learn it quickly. I have enough books, because I have subscribed to a fairly good literary association...*

*Emmanuel*

**E. d'Alzon to his father, Rome, January 1, 1834,  
from the Siméon Vailhé edition of the *Letters*, B.P.  
vol. A, p. 479-480**

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<sup>\*</sup>The **Carbonari** ("charcoal burners") were groups of secret revolutionary societies in early 19th-century Italy. They played an important role in the Risorgimento and the early years of Italian nationalism.

<sup>1</sup> **Ludovico Micari** (1775-1847), Capuchin preacher elevated to the rank of cardinal by Pope Leo XII in 1824, a friend of Lamennais, nicknamed the "red cardinal."

<sup>2</sup> **Msgr. Alexandre-François de Retz** (1783-1843), French clergyman, Auditor of the Roman Rota, Canon of St. Denis.

<sup>3</sup> **Marquess Henri-Louis Le Bouteillier** (1783-1834), an acquaintance of the d'Alzons. He lived in Rome, where he died on April 17, 1834. Emmanuel never managed to meet him.

<sup>4</sup> **Msgr. Pierre de deux-Brézé**, a classmate of Emmanuel d'Alzon at the Collège Stanislas in Paris. He studied and was ordained in Rome in 1834. He was bishop of Moulins from 1849 to 1893 and became an Ultramontane.

<sup>5</sup> **Luigi Lambruschini** (1776-1854), former nuncio in Paris from 1827 to 1831, raised to the rank of cardinal by Gregory XVI, who made him his Secretary of State from 1836 to 1846, viscerally anti-liberal and a proponent of a Europe in Metternich's style.

<sup>6</sup> **Carlo Odescalchi** (1786-1841) became a cardinal and later a Jesuit, which led him to renounce the purple. It was he who ordained Emmanuel d'Alzon a priest in his private oratory on December 26, 1834.

<sup>7</sup> **Thomas Weld** (1773-1837), an English prelate who became a priest after his wife died, raised to the rank of cardinal by Pius VIII in 1830.

<sup>8</sup> **Gioacchino Ventura di Raulica**, a Theatine priest, favorable to the ideas of Lamennais. He had to leave Italy after the anti-republican disturbances of 1849 and lived in exile in France.

<sup>9</sup> **Giuseppe-Maria Manzetti** (1778-1850), Italian Carmelite, Consultor of the Holy Office, author of theological, pastoral, and pedagogical works, advisor at the Court of the Bourbons in Naples after 1838.

<sup>10</sup> **Charles MacCarthy** (+ c. 1886), an Englishman, a seminarian in Rome at the time, living with his cousin, the future Cardinal Wiseman, friend of Lamennais and Emmanuel d'Alzon. He decided against an ecclesiastical career and became a diplomat.

<sup>11</sup> The pope in 1834 was none other than the former Camaldolese monk, Mauro Cappellari, under the name **Gregory XVI** (1765-1846), who was very hostile to liberal ideas. He condemned Lamennais twice

and proved himself to be very reactionary politically, under the thumb of Metternich. On the other hand, he vigorously supported the missionary movement outside Europe thanks to certain liberating impulses.

<sup>12</sup> **Benedetto-Maurizio Olivieri** (1769-1845), Italian Dominican, theologian, Consultor for Roman Congregations, for a time in charge of his order.

<sup>13</sup> **Vincent Lamarche** (1780-1849), Belgian Dominican, who corresponded with Lacordaire whom he supported in the restoration of the Dominican order in France; he was also the confessor of Emmanuel d'Alzon in Rome.

<sup>14</sup> We do not know the identity of this German teacher who already demonstrated an excellent method for teaching languages.

## For Further Reflection and Research

### On ecclesiastical Rome in that period

- Philippe Boutry, *Souverain et pontife. Recherches prosopographiques sur la Curie romaine à l'âge de la Restauration (1818-1846)*, Rome, edition De Boccard, 2002, 785 p, in the collection of *L'Ecole Française de Rome*, # 300.

### In English

- Chadwick, Owen. *A History of the Popes: 1830-1914*. Oxford History of the Christian Church series. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003, 624 pages
- Friedrich Nippold; Laurence Henry Schwab. *The Papacy in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, part of *The History of Catholicism since the Restoration of the Papacy*, New York: G.P. Putnam, 1900.

## For a Personalized Reading

- Who are the theologians and philosophers that influenced you during your years of formation?
- What reflections give birth to a sound history of theology and of theologians?
- Have you met high-ranking members of the Church in person, popes, cardinals, etc.? What impressions remain with you of these encounters?
- Doesn't first-hand knowledge of people often influence the opinions that we may have of their writings or the positions that they take as reported in the press or the media in general?

## On the Fast Track in His Ecclesiastical Career (1835-1839)

**E**mmanuel d'Alzon's first stay in Rome came to an end on Tuesday, May 19, 1835. He returned to France slowly, visiting Tuscany and Lombardy along the way. We know that he was back at Lavagnac on July 6 where he enjoyed some free time and celebrated Mass in the family chapel. Before he left Rome, at his mother's insistence, he was bent on being received by Pope Gregory XVI. He also foresaw to request a meeting with his bishop, Msgr. de Chaffoy, in Nîmes, so that he could share with him some of his apostolic plans, especially that of the conversion of Protestants, the foundation of a Carmelite convent in this town of 43,000 inhabitants, and the opening of a prep school. The bishop proved to be unfavorable to these particular

plans, but gave d'Alzon freedom to organize his time.

After spending some vacation time with his family, Fr. d'Alzon settled in Nîmes the morning of November 14, 1835, temporarily taking up residence at 16 Rue Aspic, with his maternal great-uncle, Canon Daniel-Xavier Liron d'Airolles (1752-1838), Vicar General and director of the work of the Dames de la Miséricorde. Without any doubt his family ties played a role in the regard shown to the young priest; Bishop Chaffoy named the young priest an honorary canon and honorary vicar general (November 8, 1835), with the option of attending the diocesan council. Nepotism, favoritism? One of the priests stationed at the cathedral, a rather touchy fellow, couldn't hold himself back from lashing

out at him from the pulpit, “*the scandal of ambitious men who invade the sanctuary and usurp ecclesiastical honors!*” D’Alzon wasn’t insensitive to this remark which he called, “*a shot at point blank.*” Yet it would be difficult, without other proof, to accuse him of personal ambition or careerist intrigue, especially since, after all, just nine years later, in Turin, he would vow to renounce all ecclesiastical honors and still later refused to become bishop on a number of occasions. No doubt, at first, there was the temptation to take advantage of his family ties; however, it was by virtue of his own merits and personal qualities that one bishop after another took notice of Fr. d’Alzon and

showed their appreciation. On November 9, 1835, Bishop Chaffoy had his first stroke; after his third stroke on September 26, 1837, he died three days later. Though Fr. d’Alzon was sounded out to be the Vicar Capitular, this task was given to Rev. Sibour, the future archbishop of Paris; it fell to Fr. d’Alzon to deliver the funeral eulogy for the bishop on October 6. It was Msgr. Cart, nominated as bishop of Nîmes on December 22, 1837, who gave the post of Titular Vicar General to Fr. d’Alzon, his uncle Rev. Liron d’Aiolles having the grace to die on December 9, 1838. Fr. d’Alzon was in the saddle for forty years carrying out this service.

*....After this preamble, I will tell you that I found your letter a delight: you have made me love white roses madly. I pray you, since you know how to paint flowers<sup>1</sup>, to paint a white rose on vellum for me, which, I promise, I will place in my breviary, in the Office for Virgins, while waiting for you to send me your portrait<sup>2</sup>. My God! I don’t dare say that you’re completely right, but that’s the truth. Don’t get too caught up in this business because I know that you love white roses and appreciate how much they’re worth. I must admit, dear little sister, that if I never spoke to you so frankly, it’s because I was afraid that you disliked reproducing white roses more than you liked being one. But now that I see my mistake, I’m delighted to know what you think.*

*The whole city finally knows that I am the Vicar General<sup>3</sup>, and I am permitted to no longer keep it a secret, though the documents have not yet arrived. I am receiving compliments from everywhere. I think the*

*right people are pleased with it, that it is a victory for them; people in general see it that way as well; only Protestants and five or six priests are unhappy about it<sup>4</sup>. We know for sure that the document of approbation will be published forthwith. The Ministry will certainly not ask for better than this, from what I have been told, and I am delighted because, if they see it as a good move, I am relieved from having to express any feelings of gratitude....*

E. d'Alzon to his sister, Augustine, Nîmes, March 6, 1839, *Letters*, according to the Siméon Vailhé edition, B.P., 1925, vol. B, p. 30-31

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<sup>1</sup> **Augustine d'Alzon**, in effect, had an artistic temperament; she cultivated the arts of painting and singing.

<sup>2</sup> If this portrait was ever completed, we have never had it in our possession at Assumption.

<sup>3</sup> There was first of all, according to the stipulations of the Concordat, the presentation of a list of candidates, those sounded out or those recommended for the post. After the Ministry of Cults studied it, there was the acceptance and official act of nomination by the King. This process took time. In 1855, at the time of the death of Bishop Cart and the nomination of Bishop Plantier, there was a rather long delay in the re-nomination of Fr. d'Alzon to the post of Vicar General. In 1839, the King's signature on the document approving Fr. d'Alzon once again for the post of Vicar General is dated January 29.

<sup>4</sup> This list carefully distinguishes the camp of those satisfied (the "right people," that is, the town notables and the high society of Nîmes and people in general) and the camp of the dissatisfied ("the Protestants," whose hostility is not surprising in this situation, and a small group of the clergy of Nîmes). The cleavage did not appear to be social, but of a confessional nature. In 1875 a real cabal of clergy strongly opposed Fr. d'Alzon's nomination as Vicar Capitular before the election of Bishop Besson. The latter pressured him to accept the post of Vicar General once again. Fr. d'Alzon finally resigned in 1878.

## For Further Reflection and Research

**On the city of Nîmes and the official appointments of Fr. d'Alzon**

- Adolphe Peyre de Boussuges, *Histoire de la ville de Nîmes depuis 1830 à nos jours*, Nîmes, Catelan, three volumes, 1886-1887 (updated version: Nîmes, Lacour, 1994, 3 volumes).
- Félix-Adrien Couderc de Latour-Lisside, *Vie de Mgr. de Chaffoy*, Nîmes, 2 volumes, 1856-1857
- Abbé Pierre Azaïs, *Vie de Mgr. Jean-François Cart*, Nîmes, 1857
- François Laplace, *Les sciences religieuses* in the collection *Dictionnaire du monde religieux dans la France contemporaine*, p. 538-539 (entry on Bishop Plantier).
- For Msgr. Besson, *Dictionnaire de Biographie française*, vol. VI, column 331.

**On the relations between Church and State under the July Monarchy,** one can consult the works of Charles Pouthas, in particular:

- *L'Eglise et les questions religieuses sous la monarchie constitutionnelle*, C.D.U., 1948, as well as that of Brigitte Basdevant-Gaudemet, *Le jeu concordataire dans la France du XIXème siècle*, Paris, P.U.F., 1988, 298 p.

## For a Personalized Reading

- How are the appointments to important positions among the clergy in your country made?
- If you were consulted, what are the qualities that seem to you important in recommending a priest to be a bishop or to hold an administrative position in your diocese?
- Are nepotism and favoritism still in vogue in Church circles?
- In your opinion, was it a blessing or not for the diocese of Nîmes that Fr. d'Alzon served as Vicar General from 1839 to 1878?

## In a Land Where Christian Brothers Were Enemies (1837)

It would be an understatement to say the Cévennes mountain region of southern France experienced long-lasting fractures as a result of the confessional conflicts of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, that were reinforced by the terrible confrontations that followed the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685) and that history records under the names “Dragonnades”<sup>\*</sup> and the “War of the Camisards”<sup>\*\*</sup> (1702-1710). If you don’t believe it, all you have to do is to visit the Museum of the Desert created in 1910 near Anduze (Le Mas Soubeyrand, Maillet: *Histoire des Huguenots et des Camisards des Cévennes*). The religious mentalities of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had certainly taken note of what had taken place since the Revolution and the setting up of the Empire: the Edict of Tolerance (1787), the establishment of the civil register

under the Constituent Assembly of 1787, and the recognition of religious pluralism by the State, recorded in the Concordat of 1801. But these signs of calm and public reconciliation did not mean that religious authorities and their faithful would automatically be reconciled. In the south, the confessional split, mostly Calvinist on the Protestant side, resurfaced with a vengeance each time political feelings ran high. Political events such as the “White Terror”<sup>\*\*\*</sup> of 1815, the Revolution of July 1830, the Revolution of 1848, and the coup d’état of Napoleon III easily took on confessional tones in the south. Again in 1870, the Franco-Prussian War was interpreted differently by various camps, particularly in the region of the Vauxnage<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup> in the Gard. Rare were ecumenical voices or voca-

tions in these parts; “ecumenical” wasn’t a part of their vocabulary. “Huguenot,” “heretic,” “papist”: these were some of the popular, polemical nicknames that were bandied about. In addition to the political arena, other areas of confrontation and competition abounded: elementary and prep schools which, until the laws of 1881-1883, were not public, hospitals and hospices where consciences were in conflict right up to the entrances of cemeteries that were also separate (among which there is the Protestant cemetery of Nîmes, established along the Alès road in 1822), orphanages and homes for unwed mothers, where an instinct for charity did not rule out all thoughts of proselytism. Public manifestations of piety were controlled by law, but processions, pilgrimages, or illuminations did not always hide the stench of their demonstrative and competitive statements. The area of controversy, par ex-

cellence, was preaching, supported by Biblical publications and commentaries. In this domain, Fr. d’Alzon was not outdone despite his bishops’ instructions of moderation and restraint. Protestant pastors were in the audiences who came to hear him in the churches of Nîmes. But it is doubtful that their listening to him was always accompanied by direct, friendly discussions, even though they were not systematically ruled out on occasion. For men in private may allow themselves mutually to acknowledge real qualities of esteem in each other that in their role as ministers they would not be permitted to express. Fr. d’Alzon was anti-Protestant, and quite harshly so, from the point of view of doctrine and dogma. This was not, unfortunately, his strong suit; but it is always encouraging to find in his writings or in the chronicles of the period regarding this subject glimmers of tolerance or inter-denominational fellowship.

*Mr. Editor,*

*For some time now, a new edition of the Bible has been available in bookstores and is said to be in conformity with Sacy’s translation<sup>1</sup>. In order to encourage the greatest number of people to subscribe to this edition, they are presented a list on which figure the names of the bishop of Montpellier and his Vicars General<sup>2</sup>. I am authorized by this prelate to declare that neither he nor the members of his Council have*



*subscribed to any works of this sort and that, having been consulted by a member of his diocesan flock, he compared various passages of this edition<sup>3</sup> and found that some of the texts, questioned by the heretics<sup>4</sup>, had been falsified.*

*If in Nîmes the name of the bishop of Montpellier was subject to disrespect, would it not be possible to use the name of the bishop of Nîmes in the same way in a neighboring city? I am also authorized to declare that the bishop and his Vicars General have refused to subscribe to this edition, that one might call a work of Catholic propaganda, and in which error is taught in the name of the Holy Spirit.*

*Sincerely,*

*Rev. d'Alzon*

**E. d'Alzon to the Editor of the Gazette of Bas-Languedoc<sup>5</sup>, May 25, 1837.**

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<sup>1</sup>A policy, commonly called in French "**dragonnades**", was instituted by Louis XIV in 1681 in order to intimidate Huguenot families into either leaving France or reconverting to Roman Catholicism. This policy involved billeting particularly obnoxious and difficult soldiers known as *dragons* (dragoons) within the Protestant households where they were encouraged to wreak havoc.

<sup>2</sup> **Camisards** were French Protestants (Huguenots) of the rugged and isolated Cévennes region of south-central France, who raised an insurrection against the persecutions which followed the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. The revolt by the Camisards broke out in 1702, with the worst of the fighting through 1704, then scattered fighting until 1710 and a final peace by 1715. The name *camisard* in the Occitan language is variously attributed to a type of linen smock or shirt, known as *camisa*, peasant wear in lieu of any sort of uniform; *camisada*, in the sense of "night attack", is derived from a feature of their tactics.

<sup>3</sup>In general, the term **White Terror** refers to acts of violence carried out by reactionary (usually monarchist or conservative) groups as part of a counter-revolution. In 1815, following the return of King Louis XVIII of France to power, people suspected of having ties with the governments of the French Revolution or of Napoleon suffered arrest and execution.

<sup>4</sup>An attractive region west of Nîmes, the Vaucluse was a Protestant area made up of small farms with stone houses run by independent and self-reliant farmers.

<sup>5</sup> The New Testament of the Bible called **de Sacy** (Antoine and Isaac Lemaître de Sacy) was first printed in Amsterdam in 1667, under the name of a bookseller of Mons. Under the direction of **Louis-Isaac Lemaître de Sacy**, a number of writers, including Pascal, Robert Arnauld d'Andilly, Pierre Nicole, Pierre Thomas du Fossé, participated in the translation known as "of Port-Royal," a Jansenist abbey in Paris. The translation was made between 1657 and 1696. It preceded that of the Oratorian priest, Richard Simon (1702).

<sup>6</sup> In 1837 the bishop was **Msgr. Charles-Thomas Thibault** (1791-1861). His first Vicars General were Rev. **François-Xavier Coustou** (1760-1844) and Rev. **Jean-François-Xavier de Lunaret** (1755-1837); later, from 1849 to 1861, he appointed Rev. **Pierre-Aphrodise-Ferdinand Bouisset** (1806-1865).

<sup>3</sup> We have tried to enumerate the translations of the Bible into French between 1830 and 1880 and we have come up with this chronological list: 1831, *La Bible. Traduction Nouvelle* by **Samuel Cahen** (Jewish Bible, Hebrew-French bilingual edition); 1843, *Sainte Bible*, translated by **Jacques Bourassé** and **Pierre-Désiré Janvier**, also called the *Bible de Tours*, translated from the Vulgate; 1845, *Sainte Bible*, translated by **Antoine-Etienne Genoud** (de Genoud), printed by Méquignon-Havard; 1847, *Ancien Testament*, translated by **H.-A. Perret-Gentil**, from the Hebrew text; 1855, *Révision de la Sainte Bible* by **David Martin**; 1859, *La Sainte Bible* by **John Nelson Darby**; 1860, *Ancien Testament* translated by **Lazare de Wogüe** with **Ben Baruk de Crehange** or **B. Mosse d'Avignon**; 1872, *Le Nouveau Testament* by **Jean-Hughes Oltramare** (with the variants of the **Nestlé-Aland** Greek edition); 1872, *L'Ancien Testament*, **Pierre Vigouroux** (from the Vulgate text); 1874, *L'Ancien Testament*, translated by **Louis Segond** from the Hebrew text; 1877, *Le Nouveau Testament selon la Vulgate*, with notes by Rev. **Jean-Baptiste Glaire**, **P. Didot**; 1880, *Le Nouveau Testament et la Bible* by **Louis Segond**.

<sup>4</sup> "Heretic" is a classic term used in Catholic Church circles; from the Greek *airesis*, "heretic" means separation and was used to designate the members of the Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. "Schismatic" was the term applied to members of the Orthodox Church.

<sup>5</sup> **La Gazette de Bas-Languedoc** was a Legitimist paper which appeared from 1833 to 1852, competing with the **Courrier du Gard**, a paper of the bourgeoisie who supported the right to succession of the Orleans family (it was printed from 1831 to 1873).

## For Further Reflection and Research

### On the denominational rivalries of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

- Robert Sauzet, *Les Cévennes catholiques. Histoire d'une fidélité XVIe-XXe siècles*, Paris, Perrin editions, 2002, 415 p.
- Patrick Cabanel, *Itinéraires protestants en Languedoc, XVIe-XXe siècles*, vol. 1, *Cévennes*, Presses du Languedoc, Cahors, 1998, 480 p.
- Daniel Olivier, *Le P. d'Alzon et l'oecuménisme*, in the collection *Série du centenaire d'Alzon 1980*, #7, Rome, 79 p, and *Actes du Colloque d'histoire, Le. P. d'Alzon et la crise du protestantisme au XIXème siècle*, op. cit., p. 165-179.
- Pierre Petit, *Une métropole protestante en Languedoc*, Nîmes, Lacour editions, 1989, 117 p.

### In English

- Soltau, Roger Henry. *French Political Thought in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*. Russell & Russell: New York, 1959, 500 pages.

## For a Personalized Reading

- In your opinion, how can the barrier of dogmas and of beliefs be enlightened by Christian fellowship in ecumenical dialogue?
- What are the best fields for common activity for Christians of different denominations?
- Do you live in a country where ecumenical involvement is a Church priority?
- Did not Pope John Paul II, in inviting Catholics to forms of repentance, seek to engage the spiritual energies of believers in a new vision of ecumenism?

## A Religious Dynamo in the City of Nîmes (1843)

**W**ithout a doubt the period between 1835 and 1845 in the apostolic life of Fr. d'Alzon is the one about which we know the least. Many documents have not been found, were not preserved, or simply were destroyed. Although he was reined in a bit by Bishop de Chaffoy who tried to channel his energies, the activities of the young Vicar General were significant from the word go; catechism classes, youth clubs, schools, orphanages, support of religious communities, preaching, charitable works, conferences, and the like kept him going 24/7. In 1837 the young priest spearheaded the foundation of the "Refuge," entrusted to an institute of religious sisters known as the Sisters of Marie-Thérèse, or more precisely, the Sister Servants of Jesus

Christ, dedicated to a social ministry with young women who lived in great misery and often ended up in prostitution. He also kept up an inspiring correspondence with the founder of this institute, Mother Marie de Jésus, née Brochet de la Rochetière (1776-1842).

Fr. d'Alzon's customary public knew no boundaries, not of age: children, young adults, senior citizens; nor of class: aristocracy, bourgeoisie, or the working class; nor of socio-professional categories. He even tried to attract Protestants and, even if the means were unequal to the task, this preoccupation to be in contact with them, highly unusual in those days, certainly reveals a soul on fire. Here was a pastor "for all seasons," skilful and practiced in a generalized minis-

try that was undaunted in the face of prejudice, inexperience, convention or the weight of inertia often accompanying tradition. Some of his initiatives were considered audacious, even in the eyes of the bishops he served. Fr. d'Alzon did not take easily to the closed environment that can sometimes destroy the best parishes. He introduced supra-parochial structures of pastoral ministry that extended even beyond diocesan boundaries in having the Propagation of the Faith, for example, work with the Association of the Heart of Mary and the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Later he supported

the foundation of a Conference of St. Vincent de Paul, the second in France, the first having been established in Paris. What we might say above all else is that Fr. d'Alzon was poles apart from that kind of secular clergy characterized more by their desire for a peaceful routine than feverish initiative. He had every intention of leaving the Merovingian ox-cart behind and entering the age of the steam engine. So it was that in 1843 he announced in a letter to his sister the approaching foundation of a Carmelite convent as if it were a victory wrested from the hands of Bishop Cart.

*...Right now I am very busy with a Carmelite convent that we will be setting up next week<sup>1</sup>. These holy women are giving me not a little grief with their grilles and turnstiles. Just imagine, coming from Aix where they were a numerous community, they felt obliged to bring twenty pounds of sugar!*

*I must find a plot of land for the "Refuge," which cannot remain where it is<sup>2</sup> because that property will be used for a boarding school that I have purchased together with another priest<sup>3</sup>; but that's not yet overly pressing. Finally, I am pushing for the opening of a new "Providence" (orphanage for boys)<sup>4</sup>; we are in the middle of negotiating the purchase of a house today. That's everything that's on my plate at the moment. If you add to that the sick that I have to visit and my regular activities, you'll see that I have plenty of work to keep me out of trouble.*

*I will try to distract you from your quiet monotony by recommending a few books, as long as you don't display any prejudice toward them before you read them. I wouldn't be upset to see Fr. Vernières in*

*Castries<sup>5</sup>; he'd be a bit closer to Nîmes and I could visit him a little more often. I'm delighted to hear that the wine supply is on the rise. I can assure you that, to my mind, that's perfect; I am entirely ready to rejoice with my father on this.*

*Goodbye, dear little sister. I forgot to tell you that we have the perfect preacher at the moment, Fr. Charles Deplace<sup>6</sup>....*

E. d'Alzon to his sister Augustine, Nîmes, December 14, 1843, *Letters*,  
Siméon Vailhé edition, B.P., 1925,  
vol. B., p. 113.

<sup>1</sup> Fr. d'Alzon had been dreaming of founding a Carmelite convent since 1835 but Bishop **de Chaffoy** did not give him permission and Bishop **Cart**, named in 1838, had a lot of hesitations and delayed the project. The foundation finally took place in December 1843, at first in a building situated on Rue de la Servie, a part of which would become the Collège de l'Assomption known as the **Paradan** house.

<sup>2</sup> The Carmelite convent was established in Nîmes on December 20, 1843, under the leadership of **Mother Marie-Elisabeth de la Croix Eyssautier** (1801-1861) about whom the future **Cardinal de Cabrières** wrote a beautiful biographical sketch. The Carmelites of Nîmes remained in the Paradan house five years. They then bought, at the end of Rue Avignon, the enormous building of a former scarf factory that had belonged to the family of Alphonse Daudet. They moved there in July 1848. In March 1850, work began on the construction of a large chapel which was finished in 1851 and blessed by Bishop **Cart** on January 10, 1852, with the participation of **Fr. d'Alzon**, but it was Bishop **Plantier** who consecrated the building on October 25, 1865, finished by the architect **Jacques-François Chapot**. The entire monastery was destroyed by Allied bombardments in 1944.

<sup>3</sup> This priest is none other than **Vital-Gustave Goubier**, a personal friend of **Fr. d'Alzon** and, at the time, pastor of St. Perpetua Church, who had bought, in his name and that of his friend, the Pension **Vermot**, which would become the Collège de l'Assomption.

<sup>4</sup> We know that there was one "Providence" in Nîmes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, run by the Brothers of the Christian Schools, who had settled on Rue Reboul in 1817. Fr. d'Alzon was directly involved in the establishment of an orphanage for boys on Cours-neuf in 1841 with the help of **Jules Monnier** and **Philippe Eyssette**, and with the support of the St. Vincent de Paul Conference. It was later transferred in 1844 to the former cemetery on Rue Uzès.

<sup>5</sup> Fr. **Jacques Vernière** or **Vernières** (1797-1863) was a diocesan priest from Montpellier, former director of the major seminary where Emmanuel got to know and appreciate him. He was not named to Castries but to Capeatang. One of his brothers, Fr. **Jérôme Vernière**, was for a time a postulant and novice with the Assumptionists.

<sup>6</sup> **Charles Deplace** (18808-1871) was the Advent preacher in Nîmes in 1843. At the time he was a Jesuit, a Parisian acquaintance of **Mother Marie-Eugénie de Jésus**. He joined the diocesan clergy in about 1849.

## For Further Reflection and Research

On the city of Nîmes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Carmelites in France

- Les cahiers d'histoire. *Nîmes au XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle. Textes et documents*, George Mathon, on the Internet.
- Adolphe Pieyre de Boussuges, *Histoire de la Ville de Nîmes depuis 1830 à nos jours*, 3 volumes, 1886-1887.
- *Carmes et Carmélites en France du XVII<sup>ème</sup> siècle à nos jours*, Actes du Colloque de Lyon (1997), collated by Bernard Hours, Paris, Cerf, 2001, 477 p.
- Jean-Paul Périer-Muzet, *Le P. d'Alzon figure du Carmel*, in *A Travers la Province* (news bulletin of the Province of France, Assumptionists), February 1996, #122, p. 19-23.

## For a Personalized Reading

- Are you familiar with the great refounders of the Carmelite Reform (St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross) and their major writings? Did you know that it has been proven that Fr. d'Alzon, despite certain unfounded affirmations to the contrary, did read the works of St. John of the Cross?
- Have you yourself ever visited a Carmelite monastery or met with Carmelite men or women in your region, in your country? Do you know their history?
- What original initiatives could Assumptionists develop in parish ministry?
- Does not Fr. d'Alzon's interest in apostolic works accomplished side by side with lay-people find its origin in an interior life on fire and in a broad conception of the grace of baptism?

# PART II

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## An Exemplary and Foundational Lay- Religious Alliance, Germer Durand (1838)

**T**he name of this professor remains engraved in the memory of Fr. d'Alzon's prep school and in that of the city of Nîmes. Even though his family came from the north of France, in Saint-Riquier, near Abbeville, this preeminent layman and tenured university professor (1837) spent his entire life in the south, once he had completed his studies. At first involved in public education, he taught in the royal collèges of Nîmes and Montpellier. Fr. d'Alzon succeeded in convincing him to join him as well as his friend Monnier in the attempt to refound the Collège de l'Assomption. It can be said that he shared Fr. d'Alzon's dream completely and helped to make it a reality, not only as a teacher and pedagogue, but as a militant

Christian. As early as 1845, he became a member of the Association of the Third Order of Nîmes, while his wife joined its feminine counterpart. He took a keen interest in the magnificent past of Nîmes, both religious and secular, and published the *Cartulaire du Chapitre de Nîmes* in 1868 and the *Inscriptions antiques de Nîmes*, which was re-edited in 1893. Germer-Durand's name is listed as the director of a publication launched by Fr. d'Alzon in 1848, *La Liberté pour tous*, and not only did he contribute articles to *La Revue de l'Enseignement chrétien*, but he also provided it with its literary and pedagogical orientation and its editorial policy. To his passion for study, Mr. Germer-Durand added an interest in archeological and biographical

research, all of which earned him membership in the Académie de Nîmes (where his portrait is preserved) and on the Committee for Christian Art and led to his selection as librarian of the city. He was also decorated with distinguished honors as an officer of the Académie and with the cross of the Legion of Honor.

It was with joy that this couple welcomed the news that one of their sons, their youngest, Joseph (1845-1917) would become an Assumptionist priest. As director and professor at Notre-Dame de France in Jerusalem, he became renowned in Palestinian Biblical epigraphy. Mr. Germer-Durand was also inspired by the Muses and left a number of poems, some unpublished, filled with the romantic gentleness of family love (*Pages d'Album*). Mrs. Cécile Germer-Durand, his wife (1818-

1886), on becoming a widow in October 1880, entered the Oblates of the Assumption and did not hesitate to go to the Near Eastern Mission in Andrinopolis, before finally returning to spend her last days in France. Their story demonstrates how the entire family was immersed in the infancy of the first Assumption, sharing in its commitments and struggles, revelling in its adventures and memories. The names of the Germer-Durand family deserve a place on the front page of the cohort of lay people who, in every age, worked at offering this "apostolic gesture" of the Assumption Family, and particularly at this time when a new *Lay-Religious Alliance* is taking shape; what happened in Fr. d'Alzon's day represents a reality that preceded texts.

*My dear friend,*

*You have been so influential with Salvandy<sup>1</sup> in helping us to retain a teacher<sup>2</sup> here at the prep school in Nîmes that I am so convinced of your effectiveness that I can let another one go. Here are the facts. Since Faculties of Letters have been established in some cities of France, the Examination Committees have been or will be suppressed. For teachers in the cities where these Committees existed, the result will be a rather considerable loss: in the upper classes, for the examination fees; in the lower classes, for the preparation of baccalaureate candidates. A young man, a friend of mine, Mr. Durand<sup>3</sup>, a teacher of the third form (high school seniors) at the prep school in Nîmes, has*

*just heard that the teacher of Rhetoric(first-year college) at the Collège in Montpellier has applied for a chair at the Faculty of Letters in Toulouse, and since Montpellier has just received a Faculty of Letters, my protégé thinks that, if he could obtain the post of the one who will leave, he would make up for the great benefits that he will lose in Nîmes when the Examination Committee is suppressed.*

*Mr. Durand can make some justifiable claims to this post, first because of the good grades he has always achieved but also because of his genuine talent. At the exams for tenure in 1837, he came out at the very top and normally the top achievers obtain a chair in Rhetoric. A while ago he declined a promotion because he had just married in Nîmes<sup>4</sup> and he preferred to be with his family rather than accepting a more honorable position elsewhere. But today, obliged to ask for a transfer, he would like to be as close as he can to the city where he has lived for such a long time. I urge you to take interest in my request.....*

*Emmanuel*

E. d'Alzon to his friend d'Esgrigny, Nîmes, November 19, 1838, *Letters*,  
Siméon Vailhé edition, B.P.,  
vol. B, p. 28-29.

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<sup>1</sup> **Count Narcisse-Achille de Salvandy** (1795-1856) was a French writer and statesman. Born in Condom (Gers), he became acquainted with Fr. d'Alzon and d'Esgrigny in Paris during their early studies. A member of the Académie (1835), Minister of Public Education (1837-1839, 1845-1848), he contributed to the foundation of the French School of Athens.

<sup>2</sup> This is a reference to the Collège Royal of Nîmes that had its first origins in the Collège des Arts, founded in 1539. It was taken over by the Jesuits from 1644 to 1762. It became the École Centrale in 1795, then the Lycée Impériale in 1802, organized by the scholar, Tédénat. It was renamed Collège Royal from 1815 to 1848. The professor who was retained in Nîmes was **Jules Monnier** (1815-1856).

<sup>3</sup> Such was the original name of **Louis-Eugène, known as Germer-Durand** (1812-1880), tenured university professor, who resigned from university teaching in 1844 to become the director of studies at the Collège de l'Assomption; he was a collaborator and devoted friend of Fr. d'Alzon. In 1838 Fr. d'Alzon tried to obtain a transfer for him from Nîmes to Montpellier.

<sup>4</sup> Eugène Germer –Durand married **Cécile Vignaud** in Nîmes (1818-1886). They had six children: Jean (1839-c1919), Daniel (1841), Michel (1842-1843), François (1843-1906), Joseph (1845-1917), and Elisabeth (1848-1851).

## For Further Reflection and Research

### On the Germer-Durand Family

- T. de Morembert et alii, *Dictionnaire de Biographie française*, vol. XV, column 1334 (Joseph), 1334-1335 (Eugène), 1335 (François and Jean).
- L. Dressaire. *Supplément au Dictionnaire Biblique*, vol. III, column 613-615 (Joseph).
- Jean-Paul Périer-Muzet. *Notices Biographiques*, vol. II, p. 1269-1270 (Joseph).
- Joseph Germer-Durand. *Pages d'Album* of Fr. Joseph Germer-Durand (biographical sketch on Eugène by the novelist Lamothe, the professor's friend, p. IX-XXVIII).
- Siméon Vailhé, A.A. *Lettres à la dispersion*, Paris, 1922, p. 69 and following.
- Emmanuel d'Alzon. *Lettres d'Alzon*, vol. B, p. 14 note, 15 note (Eugène).
- Sr. Marie-Cécile Germer-Durand (1818-1886) *Pages d'Oblation*, vol. I, p. 21-24 (Sr. Cécile Germer-Durand) et *Souvenirs* (1887), # 52, p. 339-341 (Sr. Cécile).
- *Règle de l'Association de l'Assomption*, in *Lettres d'Alzon*, vol. B (Vailhé edition), p. 507-512.
- Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon, *Instructions aux Tertiaires de l'Assomption 1878-1879*, Paris, B.P., 1930, 193 p.
- Claude Savart, *Le P. d'Alzon et la direction des laïques d'après sa correspondance*, in *Emmanuel d'Alzon dans la société du XIXe siècle*, Le Centurion, 1982, p. 259-278.
- *Alliance Laïcs-Religieux, Recueil des Textes*. Paris, Denfert-Rochereau, 2006, 36 p.

## For a Personalized Reading

- In our Assumption Family, what is meant by the Lay-Religious Alliance? Are you aware of the origin and development of this reality?
- How would you define for your part a lay person committed to the Assumption today as an associate volunteer in our apostolic work, all the while respecting the character proper to a lay-person and to a religious?
- In this regard, did Fr. d'Alzon, and later the Assumption Family, act out of pure, practical necessity or did they sense that this was a way for lay-people to live out their full baptismal commitment?
- Has the Church in your country found a way to give lay-people their full place? How? Does the Second Vatican Council's restoration of the permanent diaconate indicate such an awareness to you?

## 12

## A Founder Set Aside, Fr. Combalot (1841)

The reality of the spiritual friendship between Fr. d'Alzon and Mother Marie-Eugénie de Jésus is well-known to members of two of the congregations they founded, the Assumptionists and the Religious of the Assumption. However, without the contribution of Fr. Combalot, a firebrand priest, who personally guided the first four religious, the working of grace may well have taken a different and unknown path. He was the one who, while hearing her confession at St. Eustache Church in Paris in 1837, discerned in the young nineteen-year old Anne-Eugénie Milleret, who had undergone a profound conversion on hearing the sermons of Lacordaire, that she had the right stuff to be the foundation stone of a congregation to be known as the

Assumption. He introduced her to the Benedictines of the Blessed Sacrament in Paris (October 1837-August 1838) and the Sisters of the Visitation on Côte Saint-André (August 1838-April 1839) for her formation and initiation to prayer in the monastic spirit. At the age of 21, Marie-Eugénie de Jésus came to know the young Fr. d'Alzon, aged 28, at the home of Fr. Combalot's mother in Chatenay (Isère). Combalot, an itinerant preacher, was a regular visitor to Lavagnac where he was familiarly called *Papa Combalot*. He showed no reluctance in permitting his directee, who suffered from his absences and whimsical spirit, to confide her conscience as a young foundress to his priest friend from Nîmes (1840). It was only at the Impasse des Vignes

that Fr. d'Alzon would meet Mother Marie-Eugénie in person again. From their discussions and insights as well as from their mutual desire to found a full and modern form of religious life, there would be born both the convergences and the particularities that would, for a long time, characterize the "two-fold Assumption."

All contrary affirmations notwithstanding, Fr. d'Alzon was not the founder of the Religious of the Assumption; he willingly gave Marie-Eugénie the title "Mother" for her congregation. Moreover, Fr. d'Alzon did not take the place of Fr. Combalot; he accepted a role that the foundress herself entrusted to him with Fr. Combalot's accord. He did not envisage at all extending his role to the whole of her religious family. In this regard he proved himself to be much more constant and even more restrained than she, seeking inter-

personal relations of friendship more than formal direction of the sisters or a union of the two families. When, in 1841, there occurred what Marie-Eugénie had sensed from the beginning, a formal rupture with Fr. Combalot, she suffered long and hard, to the point of being told once again by Fr. d'Alzon in March 1844, "You hit the nail on the head when you say that in your relationship with Fr. Combalot you were too taken up with your own wound. That only served to create two. Charity heals all." With time, it is true, everything heals. In this regard, as in others, material or spiritual, this word of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, "We do not inherit the land from our parents; we borrow it from our children," seems to hold a profound truth when we speak of founders or of foundations. What would the families of the Assumption be without the vocations of today and of tomorrow?

*....How stunning! He (Fr. Combalot)<sup>1</sup> wanted to write to the archbishop<sup>2</sup> to place us in his hands and recommend us to him. His letter was perfect; he asked the archbishop to take us as his daughters and praised us most highly.*

*Nevertheless, our hearts were very heavy because of this breakup; it was not in this way that we would have wanted to separate. If the relationship as superior was no longer possible, we wanted to maintain a relationship as friends. Mother and I were very attached to Fr. Com-*

*balot; it was through him that we had come to know the will of God and we considered him to be a father. The very next day<sup>3</sup> we went to his home, but he refused to see us<sup>4</sup> ---- something which greatly weighed Mother down. We returned home very sad, but neither discouraged at all nor fearing for the future. Still, on a human level, at least apparently, the situation seemed hopeless for us: we were no more than six young girls<sup>5</sup>, without the least protection, who had not yet made their vows. We were aware that the clergy had only negative views of us because Fr. Combalot was not particularly appreciated in Paris. How was it that we felt so secure? It seems to be that in this situation, more than in any other, God showed us that he was the one at work and that he alone wanted to do it.*

An Account by Sr. Marie-Thérèse de Commarque,  
from *Les Origines de l'Assomption*,  
Tours, Mame, vol. I, 1908, p. 401-405.

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<sup>1</sup> **Fr. Théodore Combalot** (1797-1873) was a French Ultramontane priest, writer, apostolic preacher, and friend of Fr. d'Alzon and his family. He is the original founder of the Religious of the Assumption. At the time he lived at Rue 47 Vaugirard in Paris.

<sup>2</sup> **Msgr. Denis-Auguste Affre** (1793-1848) was named Archbishop of Paris on May 26, 1840. He was a Gallican who accepted the Religious of the Assumption in his diocese and, according to tradition, chose the color of their habit. Fr. d'Alzon met him personally.

<sup>3</sup> The breakup took place on the morning of May 3, 1841.

<sup>4</sup> The foundation of the Religious of the Assumption took place in Paris, on Rue Férou, in a rented apartment (formerly #15, now #9); after spending a summer in Meudon, the sisters moved to 108 Rue Vaugirard (October 1840-March 1842), next to the convent of the Visitation (#110). At the time Fr. Combalot also had a residence on Rue Vaugirard, #47.

<sup>5</sup> At that time, there were in fact five choir sisters: Mother Marie-Eugénie de Jésus (1817-1898), Sr. Marie-Augustine Bévier (1816-1895), Sr. Thérèse-Emmanuel O'Neill (1817-1888), Sr. Marie-Thérèse de Commarque (1811-1882), Sr. Marie-Josèphe Hallez (1819-1843), and Sr. Marie-Gonzaque Saint-Julien (1822-1907), not to mention two lay sisters: Sr. Marie-Cathéine Saint-Martin (1816-1853) and Sr. Anne-Marie Carrère (1822-1875).

## For Further Research and Reflection

### On the Religious of the Assumption

- *Les origines de l'Assomption - Souvenirs de famille*, Tours, Mame, vol. I and II (1898), vol. III (1900), vol. IV (1902).
- Gaëtan Bernoville, *Les Religieuses de l'Assomption*, Grasset, vol. I (1948), vol. II (1951).
- *Les Origines de la Famille de l'Assomption*, Inter-Assumption Colloquium (2004), Paris, Bayard, 2005, 472 p, in the collection *Recherches Assomption*, #3.
- Sr. Thérèse-Maylis Toujouse, R.A., *Marie-Eugénie et le Père d'Alzon. Intuitions communes, influences réciproques?* in *Etudes d'Archives*, #4, Paris, 1988.

### On Fr. Combalot

- See the biography written by Antoine Ricard, *L'abbé Combalot, missionnaire apostolique*, Paris, Gaume et Cie, 1892, 656 pages.
- *Textes fondateurs R.A.*, Paris-Auteuil, edit. Rome, 1991, 563 p.
- Marie-Eugénie de Jésus, *Notes Intimes*, Ecrits, vol. II, Paris-Auteuil, 1997, 423 p.

## For a Personalized Reading

- Do you know of any other similar situations when the founder of a religious congregation withdrew or was set aside?
- In your opinion, what determines fidelity to a charism in a congregation?
- Why can Mother Marie-Eugénie de Jésus be legitimately honored as the true foundress of the Religious of the Assumption?
- Are there any religious congregations without founders?



## 13

## The Desire to Found a Congregation (1844)

**F**r. d'Alzon had plenty of resources, spiritual and apostolic, to be at the head of two religious congregations (Assumptionists in 1845; Oblates of the Assumption in 1865). Already in 1835, there surfaced in his correspondence a desire for religious life; later it became a question of waiting for the moment of actually becoming a founder which external circumstances might favor or impede. He shared this desire on various occasions with his earliest confidante, Mother Marie-Eugénie de Jésus. We are aware of some of the aspects of this path of faith within his heart and life of prayer before the adventure actually began: his preference for St. Augustine as patron and for a “modern” form of religious life, his full attachment and utter devotion to

the Church, which would avoid the pitfalls of the past, his choice to serve the Church at the grassroots and not within the hierarchy (a vow of priestly humility), his concern for seeking perfection in his personal behavior, and his desire to share apostolic life on the road of fraternal communion. In this area, his faults, which he would often examine mercilessly, were but the reverse side of his qualities, and not contradictions. They were an ineradicable part of a rich and perfectible humanity, the path of holiness which the Church, for its part, recognized in proclaiming Fr. d'Alzon Venerable (December 1991). This man, who was a priest by the grace of God, desired to become a religious out of religious fervor, for apostolic service, as well as out of a divine call. In accepting and

welcoming this gift of religious life, Fr. d'Alzon did not intend to avoid any of his ecclesiastical and priestly duties as Msgr. Cart, his bishop, apparently feared to the point of putting stumbling-blocks in his way. Fr. d'Alzon did not withdraw from the world and close himself up in a cloister. He wished to assume this choice of life as a further carrying out of his baptismal vocation as Christian, priest, and apostle.

It was said of Fr. d'Alzon that he was erratic, impulsive, a preaching machine, an Ultramontane knight of the Cévennes, and many other more or less flowery epithets, that sought to offend him or to temper the passions of his character, to no avail. But he himself never hid the fact that, in some of his initiatives that had the savor of adventurousness, he was "crazy" to jump into them or to send his companions into them. Yet he felt neither remorse nor shame, even in his moments of disillusionment, because he

knew how to see his adventure and that of his congregations as a way of folly for the Gospel, with nothing personal at stake, without engaging in any vainglorious calculation for his posterity, and without expecting any reward in the way of gratitude. Fr. d'Alzon was definitely one of those "useless servants" of which the Gospel speaks, one who expected in return for a life of taking risks in apostolic service neither medals, honors, nor promotions. He took his marching orders from the needs of the Church and the disquiet of a restless conscience; he counted first of all on the spirit of faith and of sacrifice among his companions whom he came to love deeply. Thus, he had no victory proclamations to make because his next-to-impossible battles had no other approval than the "silence of God" and his apostolic trials no other reward than the "steady journey" of a soul towards God.

*...I can't hide from you the fact that I have been taken up with the idea of becoming a religious for quite some time, although I have never felt attracted to any of the orders which exist today<sup>1</sup>, and if I thought that God absolutely wanted me somewhere, as I knew he wanted me to be a priest, I wouldn't hesitate for a minute<sup>2</sup>. But I can assure you, I do not see any clear indication within me, at least in the present state of my soul. I must wait, therefore, for God to act, praying*

*that he make of me what would please him and making the effort to conform myself to his plans, whatever my role may be.*

*Here is how I judge myself. It seems to me that there are a few things I would have to pursue in order to do what you would like<sup>3</sup>. I lack many qualities: I am not persevering enough; I often allow myself to be overly attracted by the thought of a good to be done without calculating, as I should, the kind of good to accomplish; I do not practice regularity enough. This last trait is particularly determined by my temperament; but it is no less true that I overcome many natural obstacles with supernatural action. For a while now, it seems to me that I have been practicing both more regularity and more perseverance; but it hasn't arrived at the point, it seems to me, where it might serve as an example to others.*

*Then I have to consider certain material facts. Among the works which I take care of, there are three that I simply can't leave before making sure they're all set: the Refuge, the Carmelites, and the prep school or boarding school I have begun. The Refuge will be self-sustaining soon. On their part, the Carmelites, it seems to me, will need support for at least another two or three years. The boarding school weighs more on me. To withdraw now would be terrible, because of the clergy's position vis-à-vis the University, and I foresee that I will have to invest quite a bit of money myself. Sometimes I would like to live there<sup>4</sup>, just in order to observe for myself the people or characters God would send or would send me<sup>5</sup>, for if I could find someone who could make a go of the thing, I would gladly turn it over to him.*

*Going to Paris wouldn't bother me. But understand that for me Paris is not as essential as it is for you and that is why I would have less difficulty beginning in the south, with the possibility of moving elsewhere later. The south, it should be said, has been quite good for the Orders. St. Francis, St. Dominic, St. Benedict, St. Ignatius and so many others worked in the south, and, although at the moment the action is in the north, perhaps where we are now could prove to be a plus. But that's an incidental consideration. Let me come back to what's essential... The moral basis that I would want to give to a new congregation<sup>6</sup> would be: 1) the acceptance of everything Catholic; 2) truthfulness<sup>\*</sup>; 3) freedom. You see that I have nothing to say about*

*what is necessary for an Order to be an Order. I'm only pointing out what should distinguish a modern Congregation from those that already exist. Let me summarize: I know of nothing that kills selfishness and pride more than the acceptance of everything that is good outside of oneself; I know of nothing that wins over people today more than truthfulness and I know of nothing stronger to fight the present enemies of the Church than freedom...*

E. d'Alzon to Mother Marie-Eugénie de Jésus,  
Nîmes, August 16, 1844, *Letters*, Siméon Vailhé edition, B.P., 1925,  
vol. B, p. 183-184.

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\* *franchise* in French includes a number of qualities: honesty, guilelessness, transparency, openness.

<sup>1</sup> As far as vocabulary is concerned, Fr. d'Alzon goes back and forth between Order and Congregation, with a marked preference for the former. By using the phrase "existing Order" he clearly places himself in the optic of post-Revolutionary France. In the year 1844, in France, despite the birth of many religious families, the prevailing attitude was one of restoring or creating orders based on the previous model.

<sup>2</sup> D'Alzon was a priest who was moving towards religious life and not vice versa; this reality formed his vision of the Church, from apostolic service to interiority of spirit. For him, whether as priest or as religious, God was the source of the inspiration. A vocation is first of all a response to the grace of a call.

<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to notice here the movement that is at work in this exercise of spiritual introspection: first there is the call or the sign given by the Lord, and then the action of Mother Marie-Eugénie and the Religious of the Assumption. Doing God's will in everything may also be discerned or prompted by some human stimulus.

<sup>4</sup> Fr. d'Alzon always resisted his bishop's invitation to live at the bishop's residence (episcopal palace) next to the cathedral. As of 1839, he had left his less than sparkling residence on Rue Arc-du-Gras to rent an apartment on Rue des Lombards (Hôtel Grandgent). On April 10, 1835, he made a decision that as of the feast of St. Michael (September 29) he would no longer live there and would move to the Collège de l'Assomption.

<sup>5</sup> Clearly, the prep school was the cradle for the foundation of the Congregation and was to be seen as the place where religious vocations in the future might mature.

<sup>6</sup> Before he even gave the Congregation to be founded a name, he presents his idea of it in this clearly articulated affirmation which is all Lamennais: to be rooted in the past, yes, but above all open to modernity. Assumption would regard tradition only in relation to the future so as to be present and active in today's world. The moral foundation is crystal clear: to be fully Catholic and to live in truthfulness and freedom. Lamennais' legacy was not forgotten.

## For Further Research and Reflection

### On the roots and genesis of the Assumptionist Congregation

- *Identité religieuse et vie assumptionniste*, session in Nîmes, 1995, 151 pages, published in the collection *Rencontres assumptionnistes*, #3.
- Gérard Cholvy, *Aux origines de la Congrégation*, in *Deux siècles de l'Assomption, le regard des historiens* (2001), in the collection *Rencontres assumptionnistes*, #7, Paris, 2003, p. 9-23.
- Acts of the Historical Colloquium of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Congregation of the Augustinians of the Assumption 2000 (Lyon-Valpré), *L'Aventure missionnaire assumptionniste*, Bayard editions, 2005, 751 pages, in the collection *Recherches Assomption*, #1.
- *Les origines de la famille de l'Assomption, Fondateurs et Fondatrices, Fondations, Intuitions et Différends*: Acts of the Inter-Assumption Colloquium, Paris, 2004, Bayard editions, 2005, 472 pages, in the collection *Recherches Assomption*, #3.

## For a Personalized Reading

- What are the recognized qualities needed in a founder of a congregation? In this regard, how does Fr. d'Alzon paint his own portrait?
- How was the example of the Religious of the Assumption an inspiration for Fr. d'Alzon in this area?
- What are the criteria that the Church has established to recognize the charism of a foundation of a congregation? What are the procedures for it to be recognized?
- In your opinion, what is the originality of the Assumption Family in the context of the flowering of forms of religious life in the 19<sup>th</sup> century?



## The Adventure of a Prep School (1845)

The Assumption of Fr. d'Alzon was born in 1845 in the framework of a prep school that was being re-organized, the former Vermot boarding school which already bore the name "Assumption." The least we can say is that the founder of the Assumptionists wanted to place this decision in the context of a national cause that was being hotly debated, namely, freedom of education in France. It is well known that Lacordaire and Montalembert encountered many hurdles at the hands of the government when, in the first days of the July Monarchy, they tried to open a private elementary school in Paris. In theory the new Charter certainly proclaimed this freedom among others, but the government at the time refused to allow the monopoly created under Napoleon I to the benefit of the State University and public education to

come to an end. A certain number of private boarding schools or prep schools were allowed to operate, but that was a privilege or an exception that the constitutional monarchy did not want to extend to all Catholics. A first concession came to Catholics by way of the Guizot Law, which in 1833 organized elementary education under the principle of this freedom with the possibility that local governments could seek the help of the clergy or religious congregations.

Secondary education, at the time restricted to the elite social classes, remained the preserve of public education alone, even if members of the clergy, who possessed the required qualifications or titles, could, on their own, teach in public colleges and secondary schools; there was an exception for minor and major seminaries established for the re-

cruitment and training of priests. Under certain conditions expressly written into the law, boarding schools and other private prep schools, it is true, retained the right to exist but only in places and situations where it was judged they would avoid competition with state schools and, above all, without the authority to grant degrees.

A strong surge of liberal\* Catholicism forced the July Monarchy to envision softening or modifying this legislation. One government cabinet after another proposed compromise laws, but, from Villemain to Salvandy, they were unable to get them passed because of the opposition of anticlerical and Voltairian bourgeois circles, proponents of “*laïcité*”\*\*. In 1845 Fr. d’Alzon obtained from Salvandy in Paris a measure considered “pure middle ground,” the partial freedom of education, but in 1848 he managed to wrest from Freslon complete freedom of education for his prep school two years before the passage of the

Falloux law (1850), which, by recognizing freedom of education on the secondary level, extended its benefits to all schools of a similar kind.

For Fr. d’Alzon this political battle occurred at the same time that he bore the heavy task of running a school: forming a motivated corps of teachers, recruiting highly qualified students equal to those entering the most prestigious academies in the south of France, organizing educational programs that were competitive and attractive to a very select audience, launching a review to publicize on a national level the singular ideas from his institution in Nîmes, participating in the debates that engaged the clergy with regard to education, and outlining the creation of St. Augustine University. It was at the center of this buzzing beehive called Collège de l’Assomption that his congregation was born, made up at the beginning by religious who taught or religious destined for teaching.

*Your Excellency,*

*Though I do not have the honor of being known by you, I cannot resist the pleasure of offering you the homage of my admiration for the zeal and the talent with which you are defending the cause of the Church in its battle against the University\*\*\*. I might not have dared, perhaps, to present you with the expression of the sentiments of a*



priest unknown to you, if I had not been encouraged by your secretaries<sup>1</sup> whom I met recently at the residence of the bishop of Nîmes. Oh, how we need a number of bishops who, like you, are not afraid to step up to the plate and to hold the standard high and straight<sup>2</sup>. As for us here in the south, we are stirring things up in our own way. So it is that we are forming committees to prepare as many petitions as possible to appeal for freedom<sup>3</sup>. This way of doing things is slow, but sooner or later it will produce results and I am convinced that because of the Catholic protests which will become more numerous from year to year, the government will be forced to do something for the freedom of the Church.

For my part, I have tried other means. In cooperation with a pastor here in Nîmes, I have worked to establish a boarding school, in which the teaching is provided by teachers who are excellent Catholics, who have been certified by the University, and whom I snatched away from their alma mater<sup>4</sup>. This measure on my part has created despair and fury in University circles. They understood that in seizing what is not...<sup>5</sup>

E. d'Alzon to Bishop Parisi, Lavagnac, end of February 1845, *Letters*, Siméon Vailhé edition, B.P., 1925, vol. B, p. 233-234.

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\* "liberal" in the sense of this period of 19<sup>th</sup> century French history, i.e. greater freedom(s) for the Church.

\*\* *laïcité* is the peculiar form of Church-State separation present in France. The concept of *laïcité* can be defined as the neutrality of the state towards religious beliefs, and the complete isolation of religious and public spheres.

\*\*\* University --- From the time of the French Revolution the State held a monopoly on higher education.

**Bishop Pierre-Louis Parisi** was a French Churchman, born in Orleans, Ultramontane bishop of Langres, appointed there in 1834 and transferred to Arras in 1851. He spearheaded the cause of freedom of education in France in the years which preceded the Falloux Law (1850)

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps one of them is **Rev. Pierre Favrel** (1797-1855), who had become Vicar General and was transferred to Assas as was Bishop Parisi in 1851. At the beginning of his episcopacy a certain Rev. Carré was Bishop Parisi's secretary.

<sup>2</sup> "Step up to the plate" and "Hold the standard high and straight" were expressions typical of Fr. d'Alzon. On December 24, 1844, Bishop Parisi published a pamphlet entitled, "Freedom of Education. An Examination of the Question from the Constitutional and Social Point of View." Another ten were published in 1845.

<sup>3</sup> In Nîmes Fr. d'Alzon was the chief correspondent and the delegate to the Central Committee that Count de Montalembert founded in Paris for the defense of freedom of education. Petition campaigns were organized throughout France to make the government bend on the question and to put pressure on the Chamber of Deputies to apply effectively one of the principles of the Charter, namely, freedom of

education. Much was expected from the renewal of Parliament as a result of the legislative general elections of August 1846. We know that the question went off-course in an anti-Jesuit campaign in May 1845 that resulted in the temporary expulsion of the Company of Jesus from France.

<sup>4</sup> Both the facts and the people are known: the boarding school is the former Vermot boarding school, already called "Assumption," refounded as the Collège de l'Assomption (elementary and junior high, at first). The pastor of Nîmes was Fr. Goubier. The two certified teachers were Germer-Durand and Monnier. The 'alma mater' was the University, that is, the public and state educational establishment organized in the Empire of Napoleon I.

<sup>5</sup> The draft ends here.

## For Further Research and Reflection

### On the Question of Education in France

- Antoine Prost, *Histoire de l'enseignement en France (1800-1967)*, Armand Colin, 1968, 524 pages.
- Paul Gerbod, *La vie quotidienne dans les lycées et collèges du XIXe siècle*, Hachette, 1968, 272 pages.
- Louis Secondy, *L'enseignement secondaire libre dans l'Académie de Montpellier (1854-1924)*, 1974 and *Aux origines de la maison de l'Assomption à Nîmes (1844-1853)*, in Emmanuel d'Alzon dans la société et l'Eglise du XIXe siècle, Le Centurion, 1982, p. 233-258.
- *Dictionnaire historique de l'éducation chrétienne d'expression française*, Don Bosco editions, 2001, 745 pages.
- Louis Grimaud, *Histoire de la liberté de l'enseignement en France*, 1944, 6 volumes.
- Pierre Pierrard, *Le Père d'Alzon et la liberté de l'enseignement en France*, in Emmanuel d'Alzon dans la société et l'Eglise du XIXe siècle, Le Centurion, 1982, p. 109-118.

## For a Personalized Reading

- What is the situation of education in your country? Are there Catholic schools, subsidized by the State, and other public agencies or not?
- Freedom of education is one of the touchstones of the basic rights of citizens in a country, in general written into the Constitution. How are these rights exercised in your country? Did the work of Fr. d'Alzon in this regard present something original for his age?
- What are the legal conditions for opening, creating, and operating an academic institution (public, private, or religious) at the elementary, secondary, or university level? What rights can the Church assert in this domain on behalf of Christian parents?
- Has there been in your country with regard to education a kind of "institutional warfare" between Church and State? What solutions were found in the past? What problems persist to this day?

## The Trial of New Beginnings: Where to Find Support (1845)

It was Christmas 1845 when “Abbé” d’Alzon, now Fr. d’Alzon\*, having already set in place the Third Order, began his novitiate with a few companions from the Collège de l’Assomption, ready to begin the spiritual adventure that Bishop Cart *allowed to go forward without official approbation*. Among the candidates there were, apart from the founder, Fr. Henri, Fr. Surrel, Fr. Tissot, Fr. Laurent, as well as a young layman, Eugène or René Cusse. This novitiate, which ended up being improvised more or less, was constantly being interrupted by the needs of the school and would last five years with many ups and downs: on the one hand, departures, defiance of the director, grumbling and disapproval, and changes of place; on the other hand, more constructive moments, common prayer, re-

treats, the arrival of new candidates like Fr. Blanchet, Fr. Everlange, Victor Cardenne (May 1846), Hippolyte Saugrain (August 1846), Henri Brun (September 1847), and Etienne Pernet (1849). In the early years Mother Marie-Eugénie de Jésus provided the most solid candidates to Fr. d’Alzon. It should be said, in return, that there were a number of young women from Nîmes high society who went from Nîmes to Paris to be received at the novitiate of the Religious of the Assumption both at Rue Vaugirard and the Impasse des Vignes.

Worrying about vocations and seeking them continually tormented Fr. d’Alzon and became an ever-present cross. He often blamed himself for having been too lazy in recruiting candidates and not around enough for their formation because of his many re-

sponsibilities and travels. What resulted were misunderstandings, orders and counter-orders, irregularities, or untimely initiatives that sorely tried Fr. d'Alzon's nerves more than once. Of course, his strong faith led him to count, first of all and above all, on the Spirit of God to guide his small flock on the way to perfection. He took the time to read a number of Rules and Constitutions before patiently writing, chapter by chapter, those of his little "Association," which he submitted to all his fellow members for their comments. For a man who was readily judged to be in a hurry, not to say always on the run, Fr. d'Alzon took his time, studied, meditated, and discussed before fixing in writing a spirit that necessarily goes beyond words. Interiorly he allowed himself to be questioned and at times reproached by Mother Marie-Eugénie who did not spare her advice and knew how, as a friend,

to reverse the way he was going spiritually. It would be an injustice to Fr. d'Alzon not to recognize, beyond his being bossy and high-strung, his profound capacity to discern, to judge, and to direct as well as his enormous patience, tried by contact with contrasting characters and temperaments. One could fear him; one could not stop loving him. He let his doubts and questionings surface, but he never allowed himself to submit to discouragement. That is to say, that well before Foch<sup>\*\*</sup>, he would have been able to assert, for his religious foundations, that to accept the idea of defeat was to be vanquished already. So it was that he gladly entered the daily fray, sometimes claimed victory prematurely, but never remained passive before detrimental, and even apparently insurmountable, forces, even if he was humiliated in the firestorm of trials.

*....Shall I speak to you of our Congregation? The Third Order<sup>1</sup> is going fairly well, except for the fact that, since our meetings are held in the evening and most of our members get up very early in the morning, they usually fall asleep while I am speaking. It has been suggested that we meet in the morning; but there was a loud outcry of opposition and I gave no opinion because I am hoping that in a little while I will be able to gather our young people for something else on Sunday morning. I want to speak about those who will be part of the definitive Order. So far, I have only three who will definitely come: Fr. Henri<sup>2</sup>,*

a young priest, who serves as treasurer and prefect of discipline; Mr. Laurent<sup>3</sup>, who will be ordained a priest at Christmas, and is currently a teacher of the fourth form; and Mr. Cusse<sup>4</sup>, teacher of French. This young man does not know Latin but he is so zealous in the class he is taking at the School of Commerce that I am convinced that he will make an excellent religious. Cardenne<sup>5</sup> will join us, but I am not sure if he will do so immediately. Fr. Tissot<sup>6</sup> will also be an excellent monk, but we have to forgive him many things like sloppiness, and I doubt that at his age he can correct that. Our chaplain is also very good; he would be even better if we didn't have to be constantly on his back to get him to act<sup>7</sup>.

Here I have one man on whom I can count---- and yet! The others are good, pious, devout, but don't yet understand what it means to be dutiful. I continually ask God for someone on whom I can count. Fr. Tesson is still at home and we are not quite opposites, but quite different. Fr. Goubier takes care of the details quite well, but is useless in helping me when it comes to taking action. Certainly there are a lot of opinions about what dedication consists in, but have nothing to do with mine. I must, therefore, know how to use these men without relying on any of them. It is a difficult situation and yet, after all, perhaps very useful since that way we are certain to count on God alone. In the end, you see where I'm at.

There remains a question to be asked: "What am I to do? Must I form the nucleus of a Congregation by Christmas or begin right away with the elements that I have just pointed out to you? Let me know what you think...

E. d'Alzon

E. d'Alzon to Mother Marie Eugénie de Jésus, Nîmes, November 8, 1845, *Letters*, Siméon Vailhé edition, B.P., 1925, vol. B, p.358-359.

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\* In France, diocesan priests are usually addressed with the name "Abbé," while priests in religious communities are simply called "Father."

\*\* **Ferdinand Foch** was a French soldier, military theorist, and writer and served as general in the French army during World War I. Foch was chosen as supreme commander of the Allied Armies, a position that he held until November 11, 1918, when he accepted the German request for an armistice.

<sup>1</sup> According to the logic of his original thinking, Fr. d'Alzon planned to set up the Assumption along the lines of a monastic order: 1) the masculine Order in Nîmes; 2) the feminine Order already founded in Paris by the Religious of the Assumption; 3) the various Third Orders: priests, laymen and laywomen.

<sup>2</sup> **Rev. Eugène-Louis Henri** (1815-1874), ordained in 1840, was a novice in the Assumption only from 1845 to 1846. He returned to the life of a secular priest and was named pastor at Remoulins.

<sup>3</sup> **Charles Laurent** (1821-1895), a native of Uzès, made his first profession in the Assumption in March 1851 and his perpetual profession in March 1852. He was a teacher and later a preacher.

<sup>4</sup> **René Cusse** (1822-1866) remained an Assumptionist from 1855 to 1862; he was sent to the Australian mission in 1860. While there he was dismissed from the Congregation.

<sup>5</sup> **Victor Cardenne** (1831-1851) was a teaching brother who made his first profession in 1850.

<sup>6</sup> **Paul-Elphège Tissot** (1801-1895), a priest from Lyons, ordained in 1825, was an aide to Fr. Vermot, the assistant director of the prep school. He later taught in Paris (1851) and at Clichy before starting a missionary life in Australia (1860-1875).

<sup>7</sup> The chaplain was without a doubt Fr. Goubier, d'Alzon's co-director at the Collège de l'Assomption.

## For Further Research and Reflection

### On the Formation of the First Religious

- *Constitutions de 1855* in *Premières Constitutions des Augustins de l'Assomption 1855-1865*, edition presented and annotated by Fathers Athanase Sage and Pierre Touveneraud, Rome, 1966, p. 13-90 (English translation: *Assumptionist Constitutions* in *Foundational Documents*, translated by Fr. Richard Richards, A.A., Milton, Massachusetts, p. 5-71).
- *Directoire des Augustins de l'Assomption* in *Ecrits spirituels du P. Emmanuel d'Alzon*, Rome, 1956, p. 17-124 (English translation: *Directory of the Augustinians of the Assumption*, translated by Fr. Patrick Croghan, A.A. and revised by Fathers Joseph Grenier, A.A., and Aimé Deschamps, A.A., New York, 1969, 108 pages).
- *Quatre Lettres au Maître des novices* in *Ecrits spirituels du P. Emmanuel d'Alzon*, Rome, 1956, p. 147-172 (English edition: *Four Letters to the Master of Novices* in *Foundational Documents*, translated by Fr. Richard Richards, A.A., Milton, Massachusetts, p.95-119).
- Emmanuel d'Alzon, *Circulaires aux Religieux de l'Assomption*, Paris, B.P., 1912, 212 pages (English translation: *Circular Letters*, translated by Fr. Robert Fortin, A.A., Worcester, Massachusetts, 1981, 103 pages).
- Jean-Paul Périer-Muzet, A.A., *Genèse d'une fondation* in *A Travers la Province*, August 1998, #144, p. 15-21.

## For a Personalized Reading

- Discerning and fostering vocations is a difficult art. How did Fr. d'Alzon go about it?
- Forming individuals to be community-minded, dynamic and enterprising, yet working together is a real challenge for superiors. How successful was Fr. d'Alzon in doing that? Did he name any Master of Novices during his tenure as General?
- Fr. d'Alzon was Vicar General, Superior General, Master of Novices, and director of a prep school. Wasn't this a little too much for one man? Did Fr. d'Alzon know how to delegate?
- Was Fr. d'Alzon able to find religious whose hearts were set on God and collaborators who shared his ideas and methods?

## A Moving Conversion, Newman (1846)

**W**hen in Rome Fr. d'Alzon frequented a few members of the English College (major seminary), reorganized by Fr. (later Cardinal) Wiseman in 1818. A friend of Charles MacCarthy, he kept up to date through him with trends alive in the Christian life in England. It is well-known that, after the Reformation, Catholicism was almost outlawed and the entire country became a land of martyrs, especially in Ireland, the colony that was brutally repressed at the time of the Adventurers' Act\*. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, the mass of Catholics, represented in Parliament by Daniel O'Connell, founder of the Catholic Association (1823), organizer of imposing public meetings, succeeded in getting Wellington\*\* to back off. O'Connell was triumphantly elected M.P. in 1828 (even

though Catholics were officially ineligible to hold office). In 1829 Ireland obtained the bill of emancipation for Catholics (Catholic Relief Act) with the support of the Home Minister, Sir Robert Peel. This event marked the beginning of a movement that led the country to independence with the treaty of 1921, with the exception of the six counties of Ulster which remained an integral part of the United Kingdom and were separated from the 26 counties that formed Eire. The country suffered terribly from a famine between 1845-1847 caused by the potato blight, from brutal British colonial exploitation, and from rural overpopulation, all of which contributed to losses in the millions. Many emigrated to the United States, land of welcome and tolerance.

Anglicanism, the official religion of England, underwent profound

changes. Many French priests, forced into exile by the French Revolution, had emigrated to England and become familiar with the new religious milieu. The Oxford Movement, also known as the Tractarian Movement<sup>\*\*\*</sup>, was composed of clergymen and intellectuals who wanted to reform the Anglican Church and pry it loose from State control. History retains the names of John Keble, who wrote a famous sermon in 1833 on "The National Apostasy." Edward Pusey and John Henry Newman wrote the majority of the *Tracts for the Times* which expressed tendencies approaching Catholicism. In 1845, Fr. Dominic Barbieri, an Italian Passionist, received Newman's retraction. His conversion did not, however, bring with it that of the principal leaders of the movement, but it did have a dramatic effect in England and elsewhere.

Still, the Anglican Church did restore many practices formerly deemed to be papist: frequent Communion, oral confession, the cult of the Blessed Virgin, and the saints, and vestments, all of which contributed to stemming the tide of the Catholic renewal. In 1850, when Pius IX reestablished the Catholic hierarchy in England, it ignited a firestorm of hatred. Newman failed in his effort to establish a Catholic university in Dublin (1851-1858) and faced many difficulties from Catholic extremists, especially Manning<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup>. Leo XIII wanted to reward Newman, this long-suffering man, by making him a cardinal in 1878. We know that, in the summer of 1845, Fr. d'Alzon empathized with two Anglican priests in Paris, C. Marriott and T.W. Allies<sup>\*\*\*\*\*</sup> (the latter becoming a Catholic in 1850) and was their guide at the religious sites of the capital.

*...Interrupted four or five times, as usual, this letter must still be finished; and what shall I tell you, my daughter, if not that I'm not sure where I am at, or rather that at present the storm has ended by a few tears that the account of Rev. Newman's conversion caused me to shed<sup>1</sup>. I see my vocation more clearly than ever before me and it has something to do with the obligation to strive for the more perfect<sup>2</sup>. But what is there in common between me and the more perfect, between the man who still feels at the bottom of his heart all the weight of pride and vengeance for insults received four years ago<sup>3</sup> and perfec-*



tion? And I am not telling you everything. For the storm resulted not simply from stupidities, but also from trials in which I find myself so small that I don't have any idea how I can come to believe myself obliged to strive to acquire those great divine virtues, that bring me close to Jesus, my model and all my love..... Since yesterday I am in the cell where I shall live definitively. I still have a few comforts<sup>4</sup> but they'll have to stay because of the situation with the servants and because of the space. The floors are made of stone. I am afraid my feet will get cold and so I have a sheepskin at my feet; but I think I will remove it if I do not write in my room. I am loath to write my Constitutions in my office which is wall-papered and quite neat, since I use it as a parlor<sup>5</sup>. In my cell I have something on which to hang my habits because we do not have a vestry; the others will have a chest of drawers. Temporarily I am using a night table like those you showed me for your students. I use the lower shelves for my clothes. I have only one chair in my cell; I don't believe you have more than that. I don't have drapes, but I do have Venetian blinds. That is indispensable down here in the south, when there are no shutters. If you want to know the shape of my cell, here it is. I have sketched it here in my letter. I may do less poorly if I put it on a separate piece of paper.....

E. d'Alzon to Mother Marie-Eugénie de Jésus, Nîmes, January 4, 1846, *Letters*, Siméon Vailhé edition, B.P., 1926, p. 6-8.

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<sup>\*</sup>The Adventurers' Act was passed by the Long Parliament on March 19, 1642 as a way of raising funds to suppress the Irish Rebellion of 1641. The adventurers were so called because they lent or adventured money to Parliament to raise an army.

<sup>\*\*</sup>Field Marshal **Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington**, was an Anglo-Irish soldier and statesman, who oversaw the passage of the Catholic Relief Act 1829.

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> The Tractarian Movement after its series of publications, *Tracts for the Times* (1833–1841).

<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup> **Henry Edward Manning** (July 15, 1808 - January 14, 1892) was an ordained Anglican priest who converted and became a Roman Catholic Archbishop and Cardinal. He was very influential in setting the direction of the modern Roman Catholic Church.

<sup>\*\*\*\*\*</sup> **Thomas William Allies** (1813 – 1903) was an English historical writer specializing in religious subjects; he was one of the ablest of the English churchmen who joined the Catholic Church in the early period of the Oxford Movement. **Charles Marriott** (1811–1858) was an Anglican priest, and a member of the Oxford Movement. After Newman's conversion, he remained an Anglican and tried to steady his fellow Anglican adherents shaken by Newman's departure.

<sup>1</sup> **John Henry Cardinal Newman** (1801-1890), an Anglican professor, who became a Catholic in 1845, was ordained a priest in the Roman Catholic Church in 1847 and created a cardinal by Leo XIII in 1878. He authored many books.

<sup>2</sup> The vow of perfection was a constant preoccupation of Fr. d'Alzon. When did he make this vow?

<sup>3</sup> What were the insults that Fr. d'Alzon experienced in 1842? We do not know, especially since his correspondence with Mother Marie-Eugénie de Jésus between 1841 and 1843 was destroyed.

<sup>4</sup> When we read the description given by Fr. d'Alzon closely, the term can appear to be somewhat excessive, even some 200 years away. At that time, the novitiate was located in the annex of the collège, called Noah's Ark.

<sup>5</sup> As director of the school, Fr. d'Alzon would receive many people.

## For Further Research and Reflection

### On Newman:

- For selections on Newman's writings, see Geoffrey Tillotson, ed., *Newman, Prose and Poetry* (1957), and *Catholic Sermons* (1957); J. Collins, ed., *Philosophical Readings* (1961). Major writings: *Tracts for the Times* (1833-1841), *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845), *Idea of a University* (1852 and 1858), *Apologia Pro Vita Sua, An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (1870). The definitive biography is that of W.P. Ward (1927). The standard biographical works are Anne Mozely, ed., *Letters and Correspondence of John Henry Newman during His Life in the English Church, with a Brief Autobiography* (2 vols., 1891), and Wilfrid Ward, *The Life of John Henry, Cardinal Newman* (2 vols., 1912). The best introduction to Newman's work as a whole is Charles F. Harrold, *John Henry Newman: An Expository and Critical Study of His Mind, Thought, and Art* (1945). An excellent introduction to Newman's theory of education is A. Dwight Culler, *The Imperial Intellect* (1955).

### On the Oxford Movement

- Michael Chandler, *An Introduction to the Oxford Movement*, New York, Church Publishing, 2003, 137 pages.  
- Christopher Dawson, *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement*, London, St. Austin Press, 2001, 153 pages.  
- Fr. d'Alzon wrote a certain number of articles on religious movements and Protestantism in England, published in *Bulletin de l'oeuvre de Saint-François de Sales*, 1866-1867.

## For a Personalized Reading

- In your opinion, why was Fr. d'Alzon so sensitive to Newman's conversion? Was it not for him a sign from heaven supporting his own passionate, at times "in-your-face" agenda?
- How are we to understand the idea of perfection in the religious mentality of Fr. d'Alzon? Was it a sort of divine violence?
- What do you understand and grasp concretely about the vow of poverty in community in Assumptionist religious life? What is a "modest and simple life" as described in the Rule of Life (#28)? In relationship to whom and to what in your circumstances?
- Fr. d'Alzon desired to go from a well-to-do family lifestyle to a spare religious lifestyle. What did this look like in reality in his life?

## The Election of Pius IX (1846)

**T**he figure of Pope Pius IX provoked intense passions in his admirers as well as his detractors. It is true that many of his personality traits, not to mention his actions, remain enigmatic. Born Mastai Ferretti, he was refused admission to the Noble Guard\* for reasons of health (he was subject to epilepsy, a sickness which at the time was an impediment to priesthood); he was nevertheless ordained a priest in 1819, having received a miraculous cure attributed to the protection of Pius VII. In 1823 he was sent to Chile as auditor of the Apostolic Nuncio, Msgr. Muzi. On his return in 1825, Pope Leo XII named him a Canon of St. Mary in Via Lata and director of the San Michele Hospital. Previously he had been the spiritual director of a Roman orphanage called Tata Giovanni to which he personally remained

very attached. His ecclesiastical career reveals a meteoric rise: Archbishop of Spoleto in 1827, at the age of 35, cardinal in 1840 at 48, and in 1846, at 54, upon the death of the Gregory XVI, elected pope as the liberal candidate against Luigi Lambruschini, the voice of the conservatives, the favorite on the early ballots, and supported by Austria-Hungary. But because Karl Cardinal Kajetan Graf von Gaysruck of Milan arrived too late with the veto of Emperor Ferdinand I of Austria against Mastai Ferretti, he was elected at the conclave which took place at the Quirinal Palace, accepted the tiara, and took the name Pius IX to honor his protector, Pius VII. At the beginning he enjoyed enormous popularity, especially in the Romagna region that Gregory XVI and his Secretary of State Lambruschini had alienated because

of their brutal forms of repression. Between 1846 and 1848, Pius IX even granted the Papal States modern reforms that had been denigrated by his predecessors as “the devil’s ways.”

As proof of the early favor that Pius IX enjoyed at the start, one might cite the lively praise given to him by Victor Hugo in the Chamber of Peers (Chambre des Pairs) on January 13, 1848, “*This man who holds in his hands the keys to the thoughts of so many men could have closed their minds; he opened them. He placed the ideas of emancipation and freedom on the highest peak where light shines.....those principles of reciprocal duties that fifty years ago, had, for a moment, appeared to the world, always great of course, but savage, formidable, and terrible under the red hat.....He has just shown them to the universe radiating gentleness, kind, and venerable under the tiara...Pius IX is demonstrating a road that is good and sure to kings, peoples, statesmen, philosophers, everyone.*”

Everything came tumbling down in 1848: Pius IX, the hope of Italian patriots, took an anti-liberal, conservative turn with his exile to Gaeta<sup>\*\*</sup>, replaced on his throne by the army in Rome; the un-

thinkable and inevitable loss of the Papal States; unbridled, absolute condemnation of any modern ideas; the loss of Rome in 1871; and the violence against Catholicism in Switzerland and Germany (Kulturkampf<sup>\*\*\*</sup>). Even his burial in St. Paul outside the Walls had to be carried out in secret to avoid troubles and disorders in the city, that had become Piedmontese.

For his part Fr. d’Alzon was a friend and an enthusiastic, even unconditional, admirer of Pius IX, whom he met several times in Rome, because, on the one hand, he embodied the flame of Ultramontanism which had been strikingly affirmed by the dogma of papal infallibility in 1870, and, on the other hand, because the misfortunes of the papacy themselves painted a picture of a new “pope-martyr,” a perfect replica under Napoleon III of Pius VII persecuted under Napoleon I. Finally, on a personal level, Pius IX, quite simple in his ordinary manner, revealed the undeniable qualities of heart and courage that attracted the admiration of people as passionate as he was. Even before his death, Pius IX was credited with performing miracles that Fr. d’Alzon gladly echoed.

*On June 16 [1846], on the third day of the conclave, Cardinal Mastai, whose turn it was in fact to count the ballots, was obliged to proclaim himself the truth of this call and he fell to his knees crushed by the weight that overcame him as the votes were tallied. When Mastai got up, the Sacred College prostrated themselves before him and asked him what name he would take. The new Pope, whose martyrdom would supersede that of Pius VI<sup>2</sup> and of Pius VII<sup>3</sup>, answered that he would be called Pius like the one who took him aside and told him, "Be a priest." Soon the crowd shouted, "Long live Pius IX!" The dove got things right.*

*Nothing can describe the ecstasy of Rome on this occasion; only in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday just before Our Lord's Passion could one rediscover such enthusiasm. Each day a thousand moving events heightened this popularity. On one occasion a poor man pushed his way in to request an old horse from the Pope since his own, indispensable for his small business, had died. Pius IX recommended that two gold coins be added to the gift of the horse in order to help his business that the Pope supposed was in dire straits. If such had not been the case, would he have come to ask for a horse at the Quirinal (Palace)? Another time a young boy, whose shouts were a nuisance, was being shooed away from the door where he was to pass; as the Good Master had done, he was heard to say, "Let him approach." "Holy Father, they have just put my father in debtors' prison because he owes 12 crowns<sup>4</sup>." Pius IX, who, upon his election, had paid off the debts of all such prisoners, asked to borrow the sum. Since his retinue did not have it on them, he went back home and brought it back himself.*

*Another time, in the middle of the day, he came and surprised people who had gathered to hear Fr. Ventura preach and he himself gave a sermon on blasphemy. He was adored; this was a kiss on the right cheek. It would soon be time to receive a Judas kiss on the left cheek and such kisses would not be lacking...*

**Excerpt from Le Pèlerin, February 16, 1878, #59, p. 106-115;  
A Rapid History of the Most Loved and Most Betrayed Pope.**

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\*The **Noble Guard** (Italian: *Guardia Nobile*) was one of the guard units of the Vatican. It was formed by Pope Pius VII in 1801 as a regiment of heavy cavalry. Initially, the regiment was tasked with providing escort for the Pope and other senior Princes of the Church and missions within the Papal States at the behest of the pope. One of their first major duties was to escort Pius VII to Paris for the coronation of Napoleon Bonaparte. Members of the Guard were usually drawn from noble families.

\*\* After his flight from the Roman Republic, Pope Pius IX took refuge at Gaeta in November 1848. He remained in Gaeta until September 4, 1849. **Gaeta** is a city and *comune* in the province of Latina, in Lazio, central Italy. Set on a promontory stretching towards the Gulf of Gaeta, it is 120 km from Rome and 80 km from Naples.

\*\*\* The German term **Kulturkampf** (literally, "culture struggle") refers to German policies in relation to secularity and the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, enacted from 1871 to 1878 by the Chancellor of the German Empire, Otto von Bismarck. It is generally accepted amongst historians that the Kulturkampf measures targeted the Catholic Church under Pope Pius IX with discriminatory sanctions.

(This unsigned article could easily be attributed either to Fr. d'Alzon or Fr. Picard, who were both in Rome at the time, if we interpret a previous passage correctly, "*Here is an anecdote that we have had the consolation to write to Le Pèlerin at the very moment of Pius IX's death last week.*" The article was written with the help of the book by Alexandre Denis Huot de Longchamp Saint-Albin, *Histoire de Pie IX et de son pontificat*, published by Palmé, Paris, 1870, 2 vol.).

<sup>1</sup> **Giovanni Mastai Ferretti** was the ninth son of Count Girolamo and Catherine Solazzi, born on May 13, 1792, at Senigallia, elected pope at the age of 54 on June 16, 1846, on the fourth ballot (on the third day of the conclave), receiving 36 of the 50 votes, died at the Vatican in February 1878. John Paul II beatified him in 2000. He had been liberal at the outset but became conservative and reactionary (exiled to Gaeta in 1849), author of the Syllabus (1864), and promoter of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception (1854) and of the First Vatican Council that voted in favor of papal infallibility in 1871. There are real contrasting images of this pope and of the longest pontificate in history (1846-1878: 32 years). His unshakable confidence in his Secretary of State, Antonelli, a more than questionable ecclesiastical figure, brought him many problems. The pontificate of Pius IX was also brightened by great joys: the apparitions at La Salette in the year of his election (1846), the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception (1854), the apparitions at Lourdes (1858), the canonization of the Japanese martyrs (1862), and Vatican I (1869-1871).

<sup>2</sup> **Pius VI** (1717-1799), born Giannangeli Braschi, pope from 1775 to 1799, had to confront Josephism (a reference to the ecclesiastical policies of Joseph II, Emperor of Austria, in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century) and the beginnings of the French Revolution. He died a prisoner in France in Valence.

<sup>3</sup> **Pius VII** (1742-1823), born Gregorio Luigi Barnaba Chiaramonti, suffered all the insults of Napoleonic imperialism in Europe. This pope, who signed the Concordat in 1801, attended the coronation of the emperor in 1804, saw Rome occupied by the army of de Molis in 1808 and the Papal States annexed to the Empire. He was held prisoner at Fontainebleau from 1812 to 1814. After the fall of the Empire, Pius VII received the mother of the fallen emperor in Rome.

<sup>4</sup> a crown (*écu*) was an ancient coin worth five francs.

## For Further Research and Reflection

### On the pontificate and person of Pius IX

- Philippe Levillain, *Dictionnaire historique de la papauté*, Fayard, 1994, p. 1343-1349.
- Aubert in the encyclopedia, *Catholicisme*, vol. XI, columns 271-279.
- The Roman journal, *Pio IX*, since 1972.
- Pio IX anno II, studi e ricerche sulla vita della chiesa dal settecento ad oggi. Editrice la postulazione .Vol. II. Città del Vaticano 1972-1998 (also in review, "La voce di Pio IX," Rome, 1954-1970).
- Giacomo Martina, *Pie IX*, in *Dictionnaire historique de la papauté*, Fayard, 1994, p. 1343-1349.
- Giacomo Martina, *Pio IX*, Roma, Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1974-1990, 3 volumes.

in English:

- Barwig, Regis N. (1978). *More Than a Prophet: Day By Day With Pius IX*. Altadena: Benziger Sisters.
- Chadwick, Owen. *A History of the Popes: 1830-1914*. Oxford History of the Christian Church series. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003, 624 pages.
- de Mattei, Roberto (trans. John Laughland), *Blessed Pius IX*, Gracewing, 2004, 224 pages.

## For a Personalized Reading

- What do you know about the way in which the election of the last three popes John Paul I, John II, and Benedict XVI took place?
- What was your reaction to the news of the beatification of Pius IX on September 3, 200, in tandem with that of Pope John XXIII?
- How does the pontificate of Pius IX run counter to the evolution of society in the 20th century and mark the closing off of the Church to the contemporary world?
- In hindsight, how can history appreciate the greatness and holiness of a pontiff who was, at one and the same time, a victim of events, psychologically and doctrinally intolerant, and anti-Semitic in practice, and yet the bearer of seeds of hope?





## Planning Notes for the Constitutions (1846-1850)

**W**e have in our possession evidence of the initial thinking of the founder concerning the organization and direction of the Congregation, thanks to the different drafts he made of the first *Constitutions*. Because he did not want to rush into anything, he set about studying the great *Rules* that gave inspiration to religious life in the West, taking notes, comparing texts and traditions, exchanging his ideas with others, and submitting his successive articulations to various plenary meetings of his religious (known as “chapters”). For him the choice of St. Augustine as patron was self-evident because in his eyes it implied the happy alliance of a legacy of sound monastic traditions and an option for a clear apostolic form of life. We see in an abundance

of tasty morsels the jostling of intuitive flashes and borrowed ideas, more or less corrected. The overarching structure of his thought was framed by the major Christian beliefs: the Trinity, to be sure, but understood in the theological tradition of the West (i.e. Christocentric); the mystery of faith concerning Mary which the Church had systematized and deepened (Mariology) but without devotional inflation; and, finally, the mystery of the Church (ecclesiology), the latter two mysteries considered dependent on the primary axis which is Christ. To these cornerstones, faithful as he was to the great theological traditions of the West, he joined the three theological and baptismal virtues of faith, hope, and charity which, in turn, he coupled with the three vows of

religion (poverty, chastity, and obedience). It was a masterful piece of architecture, well organized, its elements harmoniously tied together, perhaps without distinctive originality, but, notably, without a particularism that was maverick or unnatural.

Fr. d'Alzon yearned ardently to give the Assumption the distinctive note of a fourth vow that would express its apostolic aim, both in its mystical dimension (ad intra) and in its specific mission (ad extra). He had discovered this fourth vow in the Constitutions of the Soeurs Servantes de Jésus-Christ, also known as the Soeurs de Marie-Thérèse; he found there as well the motto taken from the "Our Father," *Adveniat Regnum Tuum*. But the Church, in its concern to control the proliferation of various types of religious life, put a halt to such efforts. The Constitutions of 1855 were submitted to a canon lawyer, Chaillot, in 1865 and, according to Fr. d'Alzon, bore the torture, if not the guillotine, of at least some *chaillotades*, that is to say, the amputation by Chaillot of some of the most beautiful flourishes. The choice of a habit (religious garb) was not a problem for him. The religious in Paris had copied

that of Lacordaire (robe, hooded cape, and leather cincture). For a while it was used by Fr. d'Alzon as a house robe while watching over students in the dormitory! In Nîmes, the community chose the Roman liturgical proper for the Divine Office, recited in choir. The novitiate lasted two years; vows were renewable once, with simple profession at the end of the first canonical year of novitiate and perpetual vows at the end of the second year, a year which could be spent in an apostolic community. The first organizational chapters were held periodically (1850, 1852, 1855, 1858, and 1862) before adopting the customary rhythm of every six years. Slowly there came signs from Rome of encouragement and official approval; likewise, in Nîmes, it took Bishop Cart five years (1845-1850) to overcome his apprehensions. On December 25, 1850, the Assumption had five religious make simple profession (d'Alzon, Brun, Cardenne, Pernet, Saugrain). On December 25, 1851 there were four who made their perpetual profession (all but Cardenne who had died) and one who made simple profession (Picard). The ship had left port.

### *1. The Goal of the Order*

*The goal of our Order is clearly expressed by the fourth vow <sup>1</sup> to work with all our strength to extend the reign of Jesus Christ in souls: in ours first, then those of our brothers and of all Christians. Therefore, the spirit of the Order is a spirit of zeal and of apostolic activity<sup>2</sup>. We will particularly stick to our goal by allowing to prevail in us and around us:*

*1) Faith --- by our spirit of submission to Church teaching and the spirit of that teaching; by our love of Church unity and our filial dependence on its head; by our respect for the truth, which is reflected in our dedication to study and in allowing ourselves to be penetrated by the importance of our vocation to become truth's defenders and soldiers and thereby the very soldiers of Jesus Christ, Word, God, eternal Truth; by our spirit of obedience, always placing ourselves under the hand of our superiors as under the hand of God himself<sup>3</sup>.*

*2) Hope --- by a detachment from things of the earth, which we will pursue by our practice of evangelical poverty and the love of supernatural realities; by humility, that is to say, having no regard for created things [ and] even for ourselves; by prayer, that is to say, asking for grace and its gifts, and the desire for God, the origin and end of man<sup>4</sup>;*

*3) Charity ---a) by love of God whom we shall love in a thoroughly singular fashion; by chastity, that is to say, the renunciation of the pleasures of the senses; by mortification, the guardian of the senses and the means by which we can unite some expiatory suffering to that of Jesus Christ; b) by the love of Our Lord that we will demonstrate especially by imitating the virtues of which he is the perfect model; c) by the love of the Blessed Virgin, his mother and our special protector; d) by the love of the Church, his spouse; by zeal for the salvation of souls, which will be manifested by works of education in the broadest sense of the term, in pagan missions, and in the propagation of works of charity --- in which we can be helped by the Brothers of the Third Order<sup>5</sup>.*

*Our spirit must be one of simplicity, of uprightness in the faith, of prayer so as to draw ever closer to Our Lord, of humility in our studies, and of zeal for the triumph of the Church.*

*Goal of the Order: to work for one's own perfection while extending the reign of Jesus Christ in souls. No income. They (sic) will own*

*rural houses and urban ones. But they will have no farmers. No monies invested with State guarantees<sup>\*</sup>. St. Ignatius allows for a certain amount of income for novitiates<sup>6</sup>.*

*E. d'Alzon*

**E. d'Alzon, Constitutions, n. 1 and n. 2, *Letters*, from the Siméon Vailhé edition, B.P., 1923, vol. C, p. 700-702.**

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<sup>\*</sup> any kind of financial investment that brought interest with it backed by the State (the background is the whole Church debate on usury).

<sup>1</sup> The principle of a fourth vow, the formulation of which varied at times and which is found in a number of religious families, was dear to Fr. d'Alzon and to the first Assumption. However, Rome did not approve it.

<sup>2</sup> This phrase makes it quite clear that the Congregation is to be defined primarily by its apostolic character.

<sup>3</sup> Here we see the doctrinal facet of the Assumption spirit which expresses, under the theological crown of faith and its Christological articulation, its religious and moral aspects: the virtue of obedience sealed by religious vow, commitment to Ultramontanism, and militant ecumenism. The thought of Fr. d'Alzon, presented in the same triple fashion in the Directory, is catechetical in style: truths to believe, virtues to practice, means to implement.

<sup>4</sup> Here is another classic, thematic sequence: the vow of poverty practiced through detachment, humility, and confidence in God sought in prayer; these are spiritual columns the foundations of which are the love of God and desire for God.

<sup>5</sup> The virtue of charity is spelled out in its turn in a formulation which has become classic at the Assumption: the love of Our Lord, of Mary his Mother, and of the Church his spouse. The addition of the Third Order, in the context of this possibility, is made in a unique perspective: that of the apostolate to be lived in the light of fraternity. One clearly senses that it is the mission which is in command within the unique imperative of charity, internal and external.

<sup>6</sup> This little note steers the way between the ideal of evangelical poverty which proscribes all forms of acquisitiveness (an offense to Divine Providence) and the necessities of economic life which comes from the right to own property. The question always remains: how can we live only from the fruits of labor and service? The literalness of this text raises an observation concerning an apparent flagrant contradiction between the first affirmation, "No income," and the final Ignatian concession, "a certain amount of income" (for novitiates). The Franciscan tradition had already debated this dilemma congenital to all forms of religious life. The ideal of a radical evangelical poverty is perhaps possible in an angelic manner for a hermit; it becomes untenable without certain arrangements for a collectivity more or less institutionalized and organized.

## For Further Research and Reflection

**On the first constitutional texts of the Assumptionists and the life of the early Assumption**

- *Constitutions de 1855* in *Premières Constitutions des Augustins de l'Assomption, 1855-1865*, edited and annotated by Fr. Athanase Sage and

- Fr. Pierre Touveneraud, Rome, 1966, p. 13-90 (English edition, *Assumptionist Constitutions, 1855*, in *Foundational Documents*, translated by Fr. Richard Richards, A.A., Milton, Massachusetts, p. 5-71).
- *Les douze premières années de la Congrégation de l'Assomption (1846-1857)* in *Dossier sur la vie et les vertus*, part II, vol. I, p. 347-443.
  - *L'Esprit de l'Assomption d'après Emmanuel d'Alzon*, Rome, 1993, 101 p. (*The Assumptionist Spirit according to Emmanuel d'Alzon*, Rome, 1993, 98 p.).
  - *Identité religieuse et vie assomptionniste*, session in Nîmes, 1985, 151 p., published in the collection *Rencontres Assomptionnistes*, #3.
  - Gérard Cholvy, *Aux Origines de la Congrégation (1845)*, in *Deux siècles d'Assomption, le regard des historiens (2001)* in the collection *Rencontres Assomptionnistes*, #7, Paris, p. 9-23.
  - Actes du Colloque d'Histoire du 150ème anniversaire de la Congrégation des Augustins de l'Assomption 2000 (Valpré), *L'Aventure missionnaire assomptionniste*, Bayard edition, 2005, 482 p. in the collection *Recherches Assomption*, #1.
  - *Les origines de la Famille de l'Assomption, Fondateurs et Fondatrices, Fondations, Intuitions et Différends*, Actes du Colloque Inter-Assomption, Paris, ed. Fr. Bernard Holzer, A.A., 2004, Bayard edition, 2005, 751 p. in the collection *Recherches Assomption*, #3 (English edition: *Origins of the Assumption Family, Founders and Foundresses, Foundations, Intuitions, Relations and Disagreements*, Acts of the Inter-Assumption Colloquium, Paris, January 6-10, ed. Fr. Robert Fortin, A.A., Bayard edition, 2007, 484 p.).

## For a Personalized Reading

- The spirit of the Assumption, or its charism, has its origins or takes root in the spirit of its founder, Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon. In your opinion, what are the major texts he studied and drew upon to express it?
- A living spirit is not frozen in a text, however idealized and elaborate it may be. How has the Assumption been able to develop and transmit this original charism from generation to generation and to adapt it continually while guaranteeing a "creative fidelity"?
- There shouldn't be a contradiction between the founder's charism and that of his Congregation. What guarantees exist to safeguard this consistency and what criteria should be used for interpretation? Has the Church ever intervened? Why?
- Legislation is one of the tasks of general chapters. What differences do you see between Constitutions, a Rule of Life, Ordinances, Recommendations, and Customaries?



## A Palace Revolution in Paris (1848)

Between 1830 and 1848, France had a kind of second Restoration\*, unquestionably more democratic than the first, of liberal persuasion, opting for the dynastic line of Orleans and rejecting that of the Bourbons. Three days of revolution in the Paris of July 1830, called the Glorious Days\*, were sufficient to overturn this dynastic legerdemain which choked off every republican aspiration and impulse of the insurgents. However, despite all its intentions, this new royal regime, characterized by a laicization of institutions, an undeniable parliamentary practice, and rapid economic development in the country, never succeeded in installing a true democracy. Once brought to power, the citizen-king Louis-Philippe I, with a Jacobin past that was more symbolic than actual, acquired a taste for this

power and intended not only to rule but to govern thanks to divided, consenting, or flip-flopping ministers. The government failed to increase the electoral base enough (250,000 electors in 1848, that is to say, one elector for every 170 inhabitants, instead of 90,000 in 1830); in reality, it limited the right to vote to the bourgeois class alone and proclaimed freedoms in the revised Charter that, despite the demands of commoners frenzied by socialist doctrines, was not submitted for a referendum and did not make these freedoms truly effective. Without the support of the Legitimist aristocracy, power was seized by the industrial, commercial, and banking bourgeois minority that, despite its façade, was not a participatory democracy. Very quickly, the party of the movement favorable to reforms capitulated before the

party of resistance to reforms and it hardened into an immobile oligarchy. Louis-Philippe, who considered himself a modern man, was, in fact, only “an enlightened despot” in the style of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Confronted with incessant subversion by the Legitimists (e.g. the attempt by the Duchess de Berry<sup>\*\*</sup> in 1832), by the masses of disappointed and impoverished workers (the cholera epidemic of 1832; the uprising of silk workers in Lyons in 1831 and 1834), by the Bonapartists (the uprising of Strasbourg garrison in 1836 and of Boulogne in 1840) and by the regicides or conspiracies of every stripe (the Fieschi<sup>\*\*</sup> assassination attempt in 1835, the one by Alibaud<sup>\*\*</sup> in 1836, the Barbès-Blanqui<sup>\*\*</sup> insurrection in May 1839), the government staggered in the wake of the economic downturn of 1846-1847 together with the obstinate refusal to enlarge the voters’ lists and with patronage scandals (e.g. the Teste-Cubières<sup>\*\*</sup> affair in 1847). The government was swept out of office as rapidly as it had come to power eighteen years earlier.

In just three days (February 22-24, 1848), Paris was blanketed with barricades, and riots turned into a bloody insurrection that overthrew a do-nothing government. The king abdicated in favor of his grandson, the Count of Paris, and went into exile in England as had Charles X in 1830, and another provisional government, victorious at the Tuileries, at the Bourbon Palace, and at City Hall, organized a Constituent Assembly with universal suffrage. Political agitation of a socialist bent persisted until the brutal repression of the rebellious days of June 23-26. The peaceful Second Republic, which had planted liberty trees, eventually sank into violence only to be strangled by a coup d’état in 1851. Fr. d’Alzon, who was in Paris from January to March 1848 to meet Guizot<sup>\*\*\*</sup>, his compatriot and president of the Cabinet, and to obtain full freedom of teaching for the Collège de l’Assomption, experienced this time calmly, all the while participating in new projects linked to the press and the organization of elections favorable to his views.



*My dear friend,*

*Your enthusiasm delights me. I fully support the idea of a newspaper<sup>1</sup>; only you must move quickly. Ask Mr. Aillaud<sup>2</sup> not to announce the conferences I wanted to give at St. Charles, 1) because for the last week I have been suffering from a sore throat to the point that I cannot recite my breviary; 2) because, if necessary, I prefer to help you with your newspaper than to preach.*

*Did Mr. Goubier tell you that I was proposing to him the formation of a club? For now, I prefer the newspaper. You may publish it any time you see fit. Don't send it to me, for I will be in Nîmes, I hope, before it gets printed. If my throat permits, I'll leave Friday night; if not, Sunday night. So, I will be in Nîmes either Tuesday morning or Wednesday at the latest, please God<sup>3</sup>. Well, there is one essential thing for us to make in order to foster interest in the newspaper; to begin with, we have to raise the issue of electing Montalembert. Now don't have any illusions. The present republicans dream of one thing only: to centralize everything and, therefore, to destroy all freedom; that is why we must fight against them in demanding freedom as in the United States. Likewise, we shouldn't be too anti-Protestant. We can show them that they can have, if they wish, their part in this freedom<sup>4</sup>.*

*As far as I'm concerned, people have singularly exaggerated things or completely made them up. The only thing that I have done fairly well has been never to take my cassock off (I was practically the only one). In any case, the watchword was to respect priests everywhere. There were some seen contributing to the pillage of the Tuileries and nothing was said to them. As far as caring for the wounded, I would have gone if I believed it was worth it; but things were going so quickly in the field and the hospitals were so full of the ladies of the faubourg Saint-Germain that the idea of joining them never occurred to me. One thing is sure: no wounded person refused the sacraments, at least those who died in the hospitals.*

*Here there is a lot of excitement about publishing newspapers. Fr. Lacordaire<sup>5</sup> would like to have one, Montalembert another. With the Univers that would make three. That's absurd. I promised to help raise funds for Lacordaire, but there is no hope even for the least success; they don't want to publish for another six weeks and in six weeks the elections will be over. It is bitter stupidity.*

*I am feeling a bit tired, so I will stop here. Goodbye. Talk all this over with Mr. Goubier. I wish you all the best.*

*E, d'Alzon*

E. d'Alzon to Eugène Germer-Durand,  
Paris, March 6, 1848, *Letters*, Siméon Vailhé edition,  
B.P., 1923, vol. C, p. 323-324.

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<sup>1</sup>Following the ouster of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1814, the Bourbon Dynasty was restored to the French throne. The period of their reigns is called in French the **Restauration**: Louis XVIII 1814-1824, Charles X 1824-1830, Louis-Philippe I, the Citizen King 1830-1848. Louis-Philippe ascended to the throne during the July Revolution; some historians treat the resulting July Monarchy as a separate period in French history. After a long ministerial, then parliamentary crisis, Charles X executed a constitutional takeover on 25th July 1830, turning the people of Paris against him. On 27th, 28th and 29th July 1830, known as the "**Three Glorious Days**", the rioters erected barricades in the streets and confronted the army in bloody combat, resulting in more than one thousand dead.

**"Marie-Caroline de Bourbon-Sicile, Duchess de Berry**, daughter of Francis I of the Two Sicilies, in 1832 staged a brief rebellion in western France against the king, Louis-Philippe, in a vain attempt to gain the crown for her son, Henri Dieudonné, comte de Chambord. Her husband, the Duc de Berry, a son of Charles X of France, had been assassinated in 1820. **Giuseppe Fieschi**, 1790-1836, French conspirator, b. Corsica. He was a soldier in the Napoleonic army. A radical, he attempted in July, 1835, to assassinate King Louis Philippe. He rigged up an arrangement of several guns that fired together, killing approximately 18 people. He was executed. His attempted assassination resulted in increased repression by the government. On June 25, 1836, as Louis-Philippe was leaving the Palace of the Tuileries, **Louis Alibaud**, an anarchist and former non-commissioned officer, took a shot at him with his rifle and barely missed his target. He was captured and sentenced to death. A paramilitary group, dominated by workers and led by Louis-Auguste Blanqui, Armand Barbès and Martin-Bernard, staged a failed insurrection on 12 May 1839. **Teste-Cubières Affair**- After leaving the army, general **Despans-Cubières** was compromised in the Teste-Cubières affair, one of the worst scandals of the July Monarchy, which also implicated the minister for public works, **Jean-Baptiste Teste**; it involved bribery in the acquisition of rock salt concessions between 1840 and 1847.

**\*\*\* François Pierre Guillaume Guizot** (1787-1874) was a French historian, orator, and statesman. Guizot was a dominant figure in French politics prior to the Revolution of 1848, actively opposing as a liberal the reactionary King Charles X before his overthrow in the July Revolution of 1830, then in government service to the "citizen king" Louis Philippe, as the Minister of Education, 1832 –1837, ambassador to London, Foreign Minister 1840 –1847, and finally Prime Minister of France from 19 September 1847 to 23 February 1848.

<sup>1</sup> The newspaper in question was *La Liberté pour tous*, a title preferred to the first one chosen, *La Démocratie catholique*. It was first published on Tuesday, March 21, after Fr. d'Alzon had returned to Nîmes. It was a four-page newspaper published three times a week. An annual subscription cost 20 francs. It was published until December 31, 1848. Germer-Durand was the director, Hippolyte Saugrain the managing editor, and Fr. d'Alzon the inspiration and financial backer. It supported the candidacy campaign of Cavaignac in December 1848, not that of the Prince-President Napoleon.

<sup>2</sup> **Canon François-Hippolyte Aillaud** (1803-1872) was the pastor of St. Charles parish in Nîmes from 1844 to 1850. His friend, Fr. d'Alzon, entrusted the directorship of the Providence orphanage to him in 1851.

<sup>3</sup> In fact, Fr. d'Alzon only arrived back in Nîmes on March 17. It took two full days for the trip, combining stagecoach, train, and, undoubtedly, river boat as well.

<sup>4</sup> With the establishment of the principle of universal male suffrage, the situation had changed. In Nîmes, the majority had become clearly favorable to the Catholic population. Fr. d'Alzon lived through the first phase of the political revolution of February 1848 in the capital, a rather sympathetic witness to the events: the abdication and exile of Louis-Philippe and the formation of a provisional republican government. The general elections for a Constitutional Convention, chosen by universal suffrage, were set for April 9 and 23, 1848, municipal elections for August, and the presidency of a republican government for December. A conciliatory Fr. d'Alzon proposed lists to split the party votes in Nîmes, but the time was not ripe for compromises and his advice for moderation was not heeded.

<sup>5</sup> **Henri-Dominique Lacordaire** (1802-1861), a preacher and restorer of the Dominican Order in France, was elected deputy in the Second Republic. He was a republican and a firm liberal while **Montalembert** was a liberal, House of Orleans monarchist, in political matters only, a conservative opportunist, partisan of order, who repented quickly after supporting the candidacy of the Prince-President Louis-Napoléon in the presidential elections.

<sup>6</sup> There were three Catholic standard-bearers with three distinct tendencies: *L'Univers*, conservative and clerical even before the arrival of Louis Veuillot in 1843; *L'Ere nouvelle*, launched on April 15, 1848, a republican and liberal newspaper with Lacordaire, Maret, and Ozanam, before dying out as Legitimist; *L'élection populaire*, a conservative sheet of the Central Committee for the Defense of Religion, sponsored by Montalembert, not to mention the liberal and Gallican *Ami de la religion*, sponsored by Dupanloup, and the *Voix de la vérité*.

## For Further Research and Reflection

### On the July Monarchy and the 1848 Revolution

- André Castelot, *Louis-Philippe, le méconnu*, Perrin, 1994, 421 pages, and Guy Antonetti, *Louis-Philippe*, Paris, Fayard, 1994, 1,000 pages.
- Hervé Robert, *La Monarchie de Juillet*, P.U.F., 2000, *Que sais-je?* collection.
- *Le Père d'Alzon et le journalisme en 1848* in *Dossier sur la vie et les vertus*, vol. II, part I, p. 522-535.
- André Pezziardi, *Un journal catholique et démocrate, La liberté pour tous*, Montpellier, 1977, 101 pages.
- Anne Claude Ambroise Rendu, *Les journaux du printemps 1848: une révolution médiatique en trompe-l'oeil* in *Revue d'histoire du XIXe siècle*, 1999-19.
- Jean-Marie Mayeur, *Les idées politiques du P. d'Alzon*, in *Emmanuel d'Alzon dans la société et l'Eglise du XIXe siècle*, Le Centurion, 1982, p. 144-164.
- Paul Christophe, *Les choix du clergé dans les Révolutions de 1789, 1830, et 1848*, vol. I and II, Lille, 1975 and 1976.
- José Cabanis, *Lacordaire et quelques autres*, Politique et religion, Gallimard, 1982.
- Jean Watelet, *Bibliographie de la Presse politique et d'information générale*, Gard 30, Paris (B.N.), 1985, 125 pages.

## For a Personalized Reading

- Was the political instability of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a reflection of the long birth process of a democratic society? In this regard, where is your own country in this process today?
- Why was Fr. d'Alzon interested in politics? Is clergy participation in the politics of the day a good thing in itself? What does the Church recommend in this regard?
- The revolution of 1848 was respectful of the clergy. Why, in the history of Christian societies, do revolutionaries, in general or habitually, attack the Church and clergy? What is the origin of anti-clericalism?
- What fundamental attitudes does the Church recommend for Christians in the civic arena and before public authorities?

## A Voice at the Council of Avignon (1849)

**T**he Concordat and Organic Articles of 1801 made scant provision for institutional cooperation between 19<sup>th</sup> century bishops, on the one hand, who thus became used to behaving like “religious prefects”<sup>\*</sup> in their dioceses, that is to say, as local autocrats directly or vertically linked to the Pope or to the Apostolic Nuncio and, on the other hand, the Ministry of Cults. Of course, there were still the regulations of Canon Law foreseen by the Church in questions of jurisdiction between the Metropolitan Bishop and his suffragan bishops, albeit relatively tenuous. From the Second Republic on, bishops excused themselves from requesting from civil authorities permission to meet freely in provincial councils. In imitation of others held previously

(such as Rennes in November 1849 and Lyons in 1850), the metropolitan region of Avignon held its first meetings in December 1849. In his capacity as vicar general of Nîmes, Fr. d’Alzon participated as a member of various commissions and wrote different documents that he submitted to the commission, according to the working method that had been adopted. This kind of assembly allowed him to test the supposed Gallican or Ultramontane dispositions of the upper clergy of his ecclesiastical province, dispositions that were particularly sensitive in the area of liturgy. In fact, in those days, a great number of French dioceses used their own proper missal and breviary (in use in Nîmes, those that had already been redacted at the time of Bishop de Chaffoy).

At the time of Napoleon I, the Empire had published its famous *national catechism* that established a strong emphasis on the duties of the faithful vis-à-vis the person of the sovereign. Civil legislation did not hesitate to encroach on the rights of religion and to impose by force or supremacy its imperial viewpoint. The State relegated religion to a matter of secondary importance; civil marriage was required before any celebration of religious marriage, and divorce was introduced into French law. Cemeteries, places of worship, the erection of crosses in public places, processions and other religious manifestations in public were subject to the administrative control of the State and of public agencies. Lamennais had emphatically denounced this modern enslavement of the Churches under the yoke of the State and had boldly declared himself in favor of their separation, despite the few financial advantages of the Concordat connected to religious status. The publication of the Montalembert manifesto, *L'Eglise libre dans l'Etat libre* (*A Free Church in a Free State*), in 1863, after the Congress of Malines<sup>\*\*</sup>, came like a bombshell. The mentality in

Europe in 1850-1860 was not ready for the situation that already existed in the United States, although many praised its effectiveness, especially those countries which often had a minority Catholic population: Belgium, Holland, Ireland, and certain Swiss cantons. The proponents of a militant "*laïcité*"<sup>\*\*\*</sup> (secularism) sought their recruits mostly in the camp of the declared adversaries of the Catholic tradition: Freemasons, freethinkers, socialists, rationalist and secularist intellectuals, non-Catholic religious minorities, all of whom were tainted by more or less firm anticlerical grievances. The papacy and the episcopacy on the whole, whatever their particular persuasion may have been, still preferred to deal with the recognized inconveniences of the Concordat rather than with such a leap into the unknown. Fr. d'Alzon, an erstwhile or future republican, who possessed not a trace of a liberal temperament in the philosophical or political sense, wanted to have the Church benefit from the maximum of rights that regimes in power, changing like a revolving door, authorized, or allowed to exist.

*My dear friend,*

*Our council<sup>1</sup> is going quite well; it'll probably be over before Christmas. The proposition on the liturgy will be passed<sup>2</sup>. I am sending you a draft of the decree, as I redacted it. With the exception of one word that I have not yet seen, everything was approved by the particular commission of which I am a member. I am sending it to you so that you can show it to the Nuncio<sup>3</sup>. At first I had composed it using passages from the bulls of Clement VIII<sup>4</sup> on the missal and the breviary. Imagine that one bishop found the Latin quite good! Tell the Nuncio, if you have a chance, that the bishop of Montpellier is moving in the right direction. The bishop of Valence, though he poses as a Gallican, will adopt the Roman (liturgy); the bishop of Viviers, though Ultramontane, still wants a national breviary; the bishop of Nîmes is always insisting that I weaken whatever smacks of too much affection for Rome and he is Roman.*

*Imagine that the bishop of Valence had placed in a decree that the bishops in their dioceses had all the rights which the pope has in the Church! Tell the Nuncio as well that there is a proposed decree, adopted by a particular commission, which expresses the desire to restore the right of solemn vows to the Orders of women who had it before the Revolution.*

*The bishop of Montpellier was put in charge of writing a declaration of the bishops' filial respect for the Pope. It seems that, when he read it to his colleagues, he broke into tears. The archbishop of Avignon held him in his arms for fifteen minutes.*

*You had promised to write to me; you haven't done so. Adieu, dear friend. My very best to the Veuillots and to Taconet<sup>5</sup>! Tell de Jouenne how sad I was to have to leave without giving him a hug. All the very best to you as well!*

*E. d'Alzon*

*N.B. They have taken the proposed decree; I will not get it back. We are preparing one on the Blessed Virgin that will please the Pope<sup>6</sup>. I am trying to get passed the proposition in which the bishops will solicit from the government greater freedom in the area of marriage. It has to do, you know, with diriment impediments<sup>7</sup>.*

**E. d'Alzon to Melchior Du Lac, Avignon, December 14, 1849, Letters, Siméon Vailhé edition, B.P., 1923, vol. C, p. 516-517.**

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[**Jean-Melchior Du Lac et d'Aure** (1806-1872) was a friend of Fr. d'Alzon from his youth. He was an ex-seminarian, a Benedictine postulant at Solesmes, and a journalist at *L'Univers*.]

\* A prefect was the head of a department, the basic political division in France.

\*\* At a Congress of Belgian Catholics at Malines in 1863, Montalembert delivered two speeches. The first, on, "A Free Church in a Free State," urged the independence of Church and State. The second, on "Liberty of Conscience," rejected the principles of religious intolerance and condemned persecution in all its forms. These speeches were Montalembert's boldest expression of Liberal Catholic principles.

\*\*\**laïcité* is the peculiar form of Church-State separation present in France. The concept of *laïcité* can be defined as the neutrality of the state towards religious beliefs, and the complete isolation of religious and public spheres.

<sup>1</sup> The Provincial Council of Avignon took place from December 7 to 23, 1849. Under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Avignon, **Jean-Marie-Mathias Debelay** from 1848 to 1863. The metropolitan area grouped the dioceses of Montpellier (Bishop Thibault), Nîmes (Bishop Cart), Valence (Bishop Chautrousse), and Viviers (Bishop Guibert).

<sup>2</sup> The issue at hand here dealt with a wish by these dioceses to adopt the Roman liturgy at a time when a local diocesan proper was still in place.

<sup>3</sup> The Nuncio in Paris, from 1842 to 1850, was **Bishop Raffaele Fornari** (1788-1854); he was made a cardinal in 1850.

<sup>4</sup> **Clement VIII** (1536-1605) was pope from 1592 to 1605. He had a revised edition of the Vulgate published (1592), reconciled Henri IV of France to the Catholic faith (1595), but disapproved of the Edict of Nantes (1598).

<sup>5</sup> **Louis Veuillot (1813-1883)** became the editor of *L'Univers* in 1843. Fr. d'Alzon knew the whole family: the couple (Louis and his wife Mathilde, nee Mercier, 1824-1852) and their daughters; Louis' brother, Eugène (1818-1905) and his wife, nee d'Aquin (+1906); their sister Elise (1825-1911) who raised her brother's family after Mathilde's death: Marie (1846-1855), Agnès (1847-1945), Gertrude (1849-1855), Lucie or Luce (1850-1892), Thérèse (1851-1852), Madeleine (1852-1855). **Eugène Taconet** (+1884) was a businessman and industrialist from Le Havre, who took over *L'Univers* shut down by imperial decree in 1860 and who founded *Le Monde*.

<sup>6</sup> D'Alzon was referring to his encouragement of the cult of the Blessed Virgin in line with the imminent definition of her Immaculate Conception.

<sup>7</sup> Diriment impediment (canon law): an impediment that invalidates a marriage (such as the existence of a prior marriage).



## For Further Research and Reflection

### On the Council of Avignon

- Marie-Augustin Carron, *Relation sur le Concile d'Avignon de 1849*, Avignon, 1851.
- Brigitte Basdevant-Gaudemet, *Le jeu concordataire dans la France du XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle*, Paris, P.U.F., 1988, 298 p.

## For a Personalized Reading

- In your opinion, what system or structure in your own country replaces the concept of a “provincial council” for the spiritual animation of the Church? How are the bishops of a country brought to work together nowadays?
- What general (universal) elements of Christian prayer exist today and what national or local elements are there?
- How much do you understand questions and problems of jurisdiction in the Church: at the central level of the papacy, at the level of the bishops of a country, at the metropolitan level of an ecclesiastical province, at the diocesan level?
- In 19<sup>th</sup> century France, why was it that a bishop could only come together with his neighbor bishops on an exceptional basis?



# PART III

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## In the Halls of the Superior Council of Public Education (1850)

The nomination of Fr. d'Alzon to the Superior Council of Public Education came as a result of the influence of a Catholic and political figure of the first rank at the time of the Second Republic and the first days of the Second Empire, named Montalembert. We know that the Founder was not keen to be part of it and even tried to avoid it. Besides, his candidacy was not universally accepted in political circles; the minister, de Parieu\*, for example, was not in favor of it and it took all the stubbornness of Montalembert, who met with Falloux\* and the future Napoleon III, to force the hand of d'Alzon, who would have preferred ceding his place to his friend Germer-Durand. Without giving his express acceptance, d'Alzon, who had even

sent Montalembert a clear refusal by telegram, saw his name published on the list of appointed members in the *Moniteur universel*, the journal created by Panckoucke\*\* in 1789 and that had become the official journal of the state between 1799 and 1868.

In December 1848 d'Alzon had obtained full freedom for his prep school in Nîmes from the Minister of Education, Freslon\*\*\*. On March 15, 1850, de Parieu had the law on education which his friend Falloux had prepared and that bears his name passed. This law established freedom of education at the elementary and secondary levels, a persistent demand of Catholics during the July Monarchy\*\*\*\*. Even if this law did not satisfy legitimist Catholics and extremists in political and episcopal spheres, it facili-

tated the development of Catholic educational institutions, especially because it eased the way for the naming of teachers and the providing of letters of obedience for men and women religious which vouched for their capacity to teach. In the same spirit of political pseudo-consensus of the period which brought together most Catholic political powers in the *Parti de l'Ordre* (in spite of the many internal divisions reflected in the labels and nuances of their representatives in the Chamber of Deputies: conservatives, liberals, republicans, legitimists, orleanists, bonapartists), the law passed. The Superior Council of Public Education, which met on Rue Grenelle, was the successor of the former Imperial University Council; it was reformed and adapted to include bishops and representative members of the clergy in education. So, it was in this context that Fr. d'Alzon was nominated. He was preferred to his friend Germer-Durand whom Thiers considered too little known.

However, Fr. d'Alzon, who in 1848 had reluctantly tasted (to the point of being completely disgusted!) the pliancy of politics and politicians, did not want to offer his services to these repre-

sentatives who maintained completely conflicting intentions. In Nîmes, his reputation as a *republican of yesterday, today and tomorrow* during the legislative and municipal elections had, for a time, alienated the support of the legitimist camp; even in his own family it had created serious difficulties in recruiting students for his school and triggered criticisms all the more hurtful because of his affection for his family. Fr. d'Alzon's sister herself, Mrs. de Puységur, thought it best to take her daughter Alix out of the school run by the Religious of the Assumption, because it was tainted, in her mind, with the republican spirit that held sway at Chaillot, this spirit of the day attributed to the contagious influence of the Mother Superior on her brother, Fr. d'Alzon. In Nîmes, did not even his longtime friend, the poet Reboul, reproach him, in private, for having entered an unnatural alliance, going so far as to write, "the Church had nothing to gain from the caresses it felt it had to make to the Revolution"? One can easily understand that Fr. d'Alzon was not about to let himself be misled, at least not without taking precautions, in the halls of politics and officials.

... I have just had a seat reserved for a week from now. I shall be (but don't say anything yet) in Nîmes sometime Thursday<sup>1</sup>. What do you think of the obsessions people have of making me a member of the Superior Council of Public Education<sup>2</sup>? When I say that I am being subjected to "obsessions," I am referring to Montalembert, whom I haven't seen yet, and to Mr. Michel<sup>3</sup> who will be a member and, from what it appears, wants to have me as a colleague; and there are a few others as well. And yet I don't feel the least desire to enter those halls where I foresee lots of problems and few advantages. However, don't say anything about this around you. I would appear to be putting on an air of importance --- which, for all the world, I want to avoid.

I was counting on bringing Cabrières<sup>4</sup> with me, but his superiors are opposed to it. This morning I received a most satisfying letter from Mr. Tissot. Please tell him that I will not be answering him today, since I had already begun my letter to you yesterday, even though I am finishing it today, July 15. Parisians are prodigiously amused to see a man on a horse lifted up in the air by a balloon; it's their big entertainment for 15 minutes.

Goodbye, my dear friend. In a week I'll be on my way back to Nîmes and I assure you that I can hardly wait.

E. d'Alzon

E. d'Alzon to Eugène Germer-Durand, Paris, July 15, 1850,  
Letters, Siméon Vailhé edition, B.P., 1923, volume C, p. 588-589.

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\* **Félix Marie Louis Pierre Esquirou de Parieu** (1815 - 1893) was a French statesman. He was notably Minister of Education and Public Worship from 1849 to 1851, and headed the French Council of State in 1870. **Frédéric-Alfred-Pierre, comte de Falloux** (1811-1886), was a French politician and author who secured the passage of the *Loi Falloux* (March 15, 1850) for the organization of primary and secondary education. This law provided that the clergy and members of ecclesiastical orders, male and female, might exercise the profession of teaching without producing any further qualification. This exemption was extended even to priests who taught in secondary schools, where a university degree was exacted from lay teachers.

\*\* **Charles-Joseph Panckoucke** (1736-1798) was a French writer and publisher, notable for the *Encyclopédie Méthodique*.

\*\*\* **Alexandre Pierre Freslon** (1808-1867) was a lawyer and French political figure. He was Minister of Education and Public Worship in 1848.

\*\*\*\* The **July Monarchy** (1830-1848) was a period of liberal monarchy rule under Louis-Philippe and was the result of the overthrow of the French Bourbon Monarchy in the July 1830 Revolution.

## IN THE HALLS OF THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL OF PUBLIC EDUCATION (1850)

<sup>1</sup> He was supposed to arrive on July 24, 1850. In fact, Fr. d'Alzon didn't leave Paris till the 23<sup>rd</sup> and arrived on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> The Superior Council of Public Education was a department of the Ministry of Education. It was created in 1808, but after the passage of the Falloux Law in 1850, it was reorganized and enlarged to include 24 "outside" members (clergy, the State Council, representatives of private education) with the eight University members. Fr. d'Alzon was a member from 1850 to 1852. It gave its opinion on projected reforms and educational policy, and played the role of a supreme tribunal in disciplinary matters.

<sup>3</sup> **Mr. Claude-Louis-Michel** (1795-1874). The young d'Alzon knew him and held him in high regard at the Collège Stanislas. He was a professor of public education, author of works on pedagogy. Mother Marie-Eugénie also knew him well. He ended his career as the Director of Agricultural Studies at the Agricultural Institute in Versailles and professor of French at the municipal school of Turgot in Paris.

<sup>4</sup> **Fr. Anatole de Cabrières** (1830-1921), a former student of the Collège de l'Assomption, was still only a seminarian at St-Sulpice in Paris in 1850. Ordained a priest in 1853, assistant to Fr. d'Alzon at the Collège from 1855 to 1857, he then became the secretary of Msgr. Plantier, was named Vicar General of Nîmes in 1863, and promoted to bishop of Montpellier in 1873. He became a cardinal in 1911.

<sup>5</sup> The invention of the hot air balloon (*mongolfière*) dates back to 1782 to two brothers from l'Ardèche, **Joseph** (1740-1810) and **Etienne** (1745-1799) **de Mongolfier**. Also called balloon or aerostat, the *mongolfière* had a military usage at Fleurus (1794), but, at the time Fr. d'Alzon writes, it was used as a public attraction and spectacle.

## For Further Reflection and Research

### On the era of the Second Republic

- Karl Marx, from 1851 to 1862, published seven articles that he put together with the title, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte". He describes, as they happened, the events that brought about the coup d'état of December 2, 1851 and places them in their social and economic contexts.
- Alexis Clérel de Tocqueville, *Souvenirs de 1848*, text put together by Luc Monnier, Paris, Gallimard, 1964 (in the *Folio* collection, #991).
- Inès Murat, *La IIe République (1848-1851)*, Paris, Fayard, 1987, 533 p.
- *Le P. d'Alzon membre du Conseil supérieur de l'Instruction publique (1850-1852)* in *Dossier sur la vie et les vertus*, vol. II, p. 536-550.
- In English: David Baguley. *Napoleon III and His regime. An Extravaganza*. Louisiana State University Press (2000); MFEM Bierman. *Napoleon III and His Carnival Empire*. St. Martin's Press, New York, 1988.

## For a Personalized Reading

- What feelings does Fr. d'Alzon express about his eventual membership in the Council?
- Does it seem appropriate to you for a member of the clergy who does not want to allow himself to be caught up in or used by politics to participate in an official governmental structure?
- As a member of this Council, did Fr. d'Alzon meet important and influential figures?
- In your opinion, what are the advantages of holding a national post?



## 22

## Family and Spiritual Ties of d'Alzon with St. Francis de Sales and his Influence (1851)

Families of repute always seem to be connected somehow; so it was between the d'Alzons and the de Sales by way of the de Roussys, also from the Cévennes region. Actually, both in Fr. d'Alzon's paternal and maternal ancestry such connections can be found: Jean Daudé d'Alzon married Madeleine de Roussy, and a daughter of Pierre de Roussy, Marguérite, married Jacques de Faventine. These family ties, established in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, already rather distant by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, were re-established during a d'Alzon family stay in Turin in 1844, at the bedside of Anatole de Puysegur\*, at the home of the de Roussy de Sales, great grand nephews of the bishop of Geneva. Through the good services of the

Marchioness de Barolo, Fr. d'Alzon, while in Turin, was made aware of the social work of three holy priests: Don Cafasso\*\*, spiritual director of the marchioness, Don Cottolengo\*\*, and, undoubtedly, Don Bosco, all three destined to be canonized and all three fervent admirers of the spirit of faith and the piety of St. Francis de Sales. We also find in Fr. d'Alzon the same Salesian traits: simplicity, straightforwardness, frankness, dedication, and a sense of duty.

Another major trait unites the figures of Francis de Sales and Fr. d'Alzon: their work for unity with Protestants. The "Apostle of the Chablais" kicked off the first days of his priesthood in this field and it is known that the young Fr. d'Alzon had no other objective than this in coming to Nîmes. It

was surely to do battle against Protestant influence that led the founder of the Assumptionists to create parish libraries in his diocese and to support the work known as Bons Livres (Good Books) founded by Canon Bernard in Avignon, both of which he placed under the patronage of St. Francis de Sales, who himself had published pamphlets and booklets and, as a result, was promoted as the patron saint of journalists. Inspired by this interest of St. Francis de Sales, d'Alzon also founded a work he called "L'Oeuvre de Saint-François de Sales," an association of prayer and action conceived on the model of the Propagation of the Faith, in view of combating Protestant influence. We know that he later placed the association in the hands of Msgr. Gaston de Ségur\*\*\*.

Fr. d'Alzon deepened this Salesian inspiration by pilgrimages to Thorens, the birthplace of the saint. He was unable to do so in 1835 (*Letters*, vol. A, p. 846), but did so, according to his own testimony, in 1854 (*Letters*, vol. I, p. 459) and again in 1871 from Notre Dame des Châteaux (*Letters*, vol. IX, p. 168). The idea of attracting a community of Visitation nuns (Order of the Visitation) to Nîmes seemed to have

appealed to him in 1852; the well-known Sr. Marie-Aimée Féval\*\*\*\* who was responsible for the project wasn't able to convince Bishop Cart of the appropriateness of such a contemplative foundation. Later on, Fr. d'Alzon preferred to channel his energies to a foundation of the Religious of the Assumption, which had been in the works for several years and was finally realized in September 1855; Bishop Cart's death, it must be said, made this outcome easier. Nevertheless, the life of the Daughters of St. Francis de Chantal was dear to him: was it not said in his family that he owed his birth to the fervent prayer of one of his relatives who was a Visitation nun in Paris? Did he himself not become a vocation recruiter for the nearby Visitation convent in Tarascon? Did he not go to their convent in Le Mans to preach a retreat in 1868? These signs and many others, no doubt (such as the fact that journalists pay homage to St. Francis de Sales as the patron saint of the Catholic press), point to Fr. d'Alzon's debt to St. Francis. He admired the doctor of love and of evangelical kindness and infused Assumptionist spirituality with an authentic Salesian spirit.

*My dear daughter,*

*For a month already I have been ill or on retreat. At this very moment, I should be shut up at the seminary<sup>1</sup>, but, since I am just leaving Valbonne<sup>2</sup>, I think it would suffice that I go and listen to two retreat talks a day to bring about my conversion, if that's possible. That's why I can write you a few words today to thank you for your two letters which I have just re-read. You sent them so long ago that I dare not mention them. You said in your last letter that your father<sup>3</sup> was suffering from the "sweating sickness"<sup>4</sup>, but I hope that he has completely recovered. None of your brothers mentioned it to me and Mrs. de Sales<sup>6</sup>, who left to help Mr. de Roussy care for your sisters<sup>7</sup>, knew of nothing that might have upset her at the moment of her departure.*

*As for you, I admire all the treasures of patience you are amassing and there are so many more if you would take advantage of all the opportunities God offers you. So many thwarted plans, so many days saddened by some suffering ---- what merits for heaven! But for this it will take the patience of an angel and I am sure, even if you have it, you would not be angry if from time to time someone reminds you to think of God's will. Actually there is nothing like this divine will that disposes of everything for our greater good, as long as we bring everything back to it. But there are times when nothing seems to satisfy this poor human nature. During these times we would like to moan and hide, but God shuts our mouth, lest we lose the fruit of all our suffering.*

*Where are you with your communions now? And your meditations--are you doing them somewhat seriously? Good-bye, my dear daughter. If you would like to write to me here, around October 10, I'd be able to reply rather easily.*

*All the best to you in Our Lord.*

*E. d'Alzon*

Emmanuel d'Alzon to Mrs. Louis de Giry, Nîmes, September 19, 1851,  
*Letters*, Pierre Tournemire edition, Rome, 1978, volume I, p. 85-86.

## FAMILY AND SPIRITUAL TIES OF D'ALZON WITH ST. FRANCIS DE SALES AND HIS INFLUENCE (1851)

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\* **Count Anatole de Chastenet de Puységur** (1813-1851) was Fr. d'Alzon's brother-in-law; he married d'Alzon's sister Marie. He became seriously ill in Turin.

\*\***St. Joseph Cafasso** was born into a wealthy peasant family in 1811 in Asti. Ordained in 1833, he became a professor of moral theology at the ecclesiastical college at Turin in 1836 and eventually superior of the college from 1846 to 1860. He was a friend and advisor to Saint John Bosco, who wrote a biography about him. He worked to reform prisons and prisoners, and to improve prison conditions in Turin. **Saint Joseph Benedict Cottolengo** was born in 1786 at Bra in Piedmont, Italy. As a secular priest in Turin, he showed a special concern for the sick poor, receiving them into a small house. This "Little House of Divine Providence", the *Piccola Casa*, as he called it, was the beginning of an entire city of more than 7,000 poor persons, orphans, sick and lame, retarded, penitents, served by several religious orders he founded. He died in 1842.

\*\*\* **Msgr. Gaston de Ségur** (1820-1881) was a French prelate and apologist of noble birth and substantial means. After his ordination he dedicated himself to the evangelization of the people of Paris: children, the poor, and imprisoned soldiers --- by preaching, teaching, writing, and organizing various activities.

\*\*\*\***Sr. Marie-Aimée Féval** (1818-1868) came from a well-known literary family in France. Her brother Paul Henri Corentin Féval (1816-1887) was a French novelist and dramatist. He was the author of popular swashbuckler novels such as *Le Loup Blanc* (1843) and the perennial best-seller *Le Bossu* (1857). Féval's greatest claim to fame, however, is as one of the fathers of modern crime fiction.

**Mrs. de Giry**, wife of Louis (1812-1896), was born Constance de Roussy de Sales; she was a distant cousin of Emmanuel d'Alzon. Their only son, **Maurice** (1847-1880), student at the Collège de l'Assomption in Nîmes, died in Rome in September 1870 at the battle of Porta Pia.

<sup>1</sup> The annual pastoral retreat and a diocesan synod were held at the major seminary of Nîmes from September 15 to 23.

<sup>2</sup> The Chartreuse (Carthusian monastery) of Valbonne (Gard), founded in 1204, closed in 1792 and was reestablished in 1836 until 1903. It was a place that Fr. d'Alzon loved to visit for spiritual renewal and recollection and where he liked to bring students and teachers from the prep school. Théodore Defrance, a former member of the Carthusian monastery of Valbonne, became an Assumptionist in 1880, while another Assumptionist, Fr. Athanase Malassigné, entered that monastery.

<sup>3</sup> **Jean-Eugène de Roussy de Sales** (1787-?) was married in 1823 to Amandine de Castillon de Saint-Victor with whom he had ten children. He is not to be confused with **Eugène de Roussy de Sales** (1822-1915).

<sup>4</sup> The "suettes" is a mild form of malaria which was still quite common in southern France in the 19<sup>th</sup> century while smallpox was a real scourge that was slowly eradicated by the use of the vaccine discovered by Jenner in 1796. It became obligatory in Great Britain in 1867 and in France only in 1902.

<sup>5</sup> The brothers of Constance were named: Emmanuel, René, Henri, and Joseph.

<sup>6</sup> **Ms. Pauline de Sales** (1796-1852), the last descendant with the family name of the holy bishop of Geneva, in 1813 married **Félix-Léonard**, who became Marquis de Roussy in 1821 (1785-1857) and had a long career in administration: under-prefect of Annecy during the First Empire; the prefect of the Ardennes, of Vendée, of Deux-Sèvres, and the Hautes-Alpes under the Restoration. In 1857 they obtained permission to keep the name de Sales and to link to de Roussy. The family lived in the château of Thonens in Haute-Savoie, restored by Alexandrine de Sales. It resulted that there was linking of de Roussy and de Sales families; the d'Alzons were related to the de Roussy.

<sup>7</sup> The sisters of Constance were named: Nathalie, Elisabeth, Thérèse, and Gabrielle.

## For Further Reflection and Research

On Fr. d'Alzon, the Roussy de Sales family, and the Salesian influence

- The family archives of the de Roussy de Sales.
- Jean-Paul Périet-Muzet, A.A., "Le Père d'Alzon et la Visitation," *A Travers la Province*, February 1998, #140, p. 10-15.
- Athanase Sage, *Présence de saint-François de Sales dans la spiritualité assumptionniste*, in *L'Assomption et ses oeuvres*, summer 1967, #550, p. 20-21.
- A newsletter of the Oeuvre St. François de Sales did exist in which Fr. d'Alzon published a few articles. On the work itself Fr. d'Alzon wrote a circular letter addressed to the bishops of France.

## For a Personalized Reading

- What are the family roots that link the d'Alzon and Roussy de Sales families?
- In his life how did d'Alzon show his attachment to the Salesian heritage?
- Are you aware of Salesian traits in the Assumptionist spirituality?
- What traditional Assumptionist apostolates have a spiritual relationship with what you know about the life and activities of St. Francis de Sales? Which Assumptionist scholasticate had the patronage of St. Francis de Sales?



## An Ultramontane and Irrepressible Opponent of the Second Empire (1852)

**F**r. d'Alzon was in Paris in December 1851 for meetings of the Superior Council of Public Education. Once again he was the involuntary spectator of political events that took place in the capital during the coup d'état of December 2, 1851. He certainly felt little regret for the fallen regime, the Second Republic, which was hardly "republican" anyway since it was controlled by conservatives. For the presidential election of December 1848, he had voted and urged others to vote for the moderate republican candidate, General Cavaignac\*. With 4,454,000 votes, the Prince-President (Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte) won easily, but Cavaignac, with 1,448,000 votes, especially in the departments of the Gard and Hérault, obtained more

than respectable results. The name of Napoleon was less than pleasing to the ears of Fr. d'Alzon. What would be the attitude of this relative of the former emperor toward the Church which his uncle had persecuted? It was also known that this nephew was not attached to Catholic traditions and even if he was considered "an easily manipulated idiot," the future was obscure.

The deal changed in 1852 with the proclamation of the Empire. Having always been a legitimist at heart, d'Alzon, ousted without explanation from the Superior Council of Public Education in January 1853, took care not to appear to approve the new regime and its political personnel. This stance had already become even more obvious on September 30, 1852, when the Prince-President

came to Nîmes to lay the cornerstone of the new St. Perpetua Church. His trip to this provincial region did not hide his true goal, i.e. to prepare public opinion for the restoration of the Empire. Fr. d'Alzon, at the time on a trip to Paris, did not feel that it was necessary for him to hasten back, and his absence, duly noted in high places, apparently cost him the Legion of Honor. Nor is it surprising that the re-nomination of Fr. d'Alzon as vicar general by Msgr. Plantier in 1855 took a long time to get through the government offices and was accompanied with unwelcome warnings. But from 1859 on, with the Emperor's Italian policy that brought about the amputation of the Papal States, Fr. d'Alzon, a first-line ultramontane, openly displayed his hostility toward Napoléon III, for religious reasons, to be sure, but with clear political stands as well: petitions, demonstrations, running for cantonal elections in the Hérault against the official candidate, Marès (1861), offensive sermons delivered in Nîmes which provoked judicial proceedings, recruitment of volunteers to serve the papal troops, vigorous support for the actions of Msgr. Plantier who had been denounced

by official propaganda as the "roisterer of Nîmes." In 1863, Napoléon initiated a policy of détente with the Church in his search for external support because of the growing republican opposition and the coalition of the liberal union. But the nomination of Victor Drury, avowedly anticlerical, as minister of Public Education as well as the publication of the *Syllabus* in 1864 was not of a nature to reconcile the clergy to the regime.

After 1860, the Emperor's international policy became a disaster: Napoléon III disappointed Italian hopes even after removing French troops from Rome (1864), undertook an insane military expedition to Mexico that ended in a humiliating retreat (1867), allowed Prussia to threaten French borders after Sadowa (1866), failed to obtain from Bismarck territorial compensation on the Rhine, and allowed himself to be surprised by the candidacy of the prince of Hohenzollern to the Spanish throne. An isolated and militarily ill-prepared France declared an infelicitous and lost-in-advance war to an over-armed Prussia. With the Sedan surrender (1870) he lost his last support, the army. His patriotic pride wounded, as was that of the en-



tire country, Fr. d'Alzon turned better future, at least for a less  
to Divine Providence, if not for a bleak present.

*My dear son,*

*All the commotion of the past few days has kept me from answering your letter<sup>1</sup>. The troops fought hard all night, but we don't have any more news. Newspapers are banned and I am not sure if this letter will arrive. I heard from the young de Cetto<sup>2</sup>, who had dinner last night at the house of his uncle, General Lawoestine<sup>3</sup>, that the army is under control. It would appear that they are allowing the situation to develop in order to hit harder. The troops are furious and want revenge for (18)48. The Superior Council will most probably be adjourned. Tomorrow we will know the decision of the minister<sup>4</sup> since we must obey this mighty will. Adieu, let us pray that God may draw something good out of these bleak and sad events.*

*I remain yours in Christ,*

*E. d'Alzon*

*All the representatives have been released<sup>5</sup>.*

**E. d'Alzon to Etienne Pernet, Paris, December 5, 1851,  
Letters, P. Touvereraud edition, Rome, vol. I, 1978, p. 114-115.**

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\*Louis-Eugène Cavaignac (1802-1857), French general was born in Paris. He held various district commands in Algeria up to 1848, when the provisional government appointed him governor-general of the province with the rank of general of division. Later that year, during the June uprising, he was granted full powers by the National Assembly where he had become a delegate, making him France's de facto head of state and dictator. After quelling the rebellion, he relinquished his powers and ran for office unsuccessfully against Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte.

<sup>1</sup> The coup d'état, carefully planned under cover by Saint-Arnaud, Persigny, and Momy, took place on December 2, 1851, a symbolic date since it was the anniversary of the crowning of Napoleon I (1802) and of the victory at Austerlitz (1804); it had originally been planned for November 20.

<sup>2</sup> Contrary to what Fr. Touvereraud says (*Letters*, vol. 1, p. 114, note 1), the young **de Cetto** who studied at the Assumptionist school of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré and whose family was related to that of Polignac, was not the son of the Bavarian ambassador, but rather the son of an employee or attaché of that embassy. History records the name of a Bavarian diplomat de Cetto, who was the artisan of the Rhine Confederation, **Anton Freiherr von Cetto** (1756-1847); see his biography by Neri Daniela, edit. Thornbecke, 1993. However, in 1851, according to the *Almanach National*, the Bavarian ambassador to Paris (Rue 15 d'Aguesse) was Mr. de Wenland.

<sup>3</sup> General **Anatole-Charles-Alexis Becelair, Marquis de la Woestine** (1786-1870), senator in 1852 and Governor of Les Invalides in Paris in 1863, who had married a Frenchwoman, Henriette de Cetto. The couple had no children.

## AN ULTRAMONTANE AND IRREPRESSIBLE OPPONENT OF THE SECOND EMPIRE (1852)

<sup>4</sup> The minister of Public Education and Worship in December 1851 was **Hippolyte Fortoul** (1811-1856).

<sup>5</sup> As of December 2, 216 parliamentarians had been arrested; all of them were released in stages. But the human toll between December 2 and 15 was quite high: 20 members of the army dead and at least 300 civilians, 800 wounded, more than 2,000 arrests, and more than 9,500 deportations. Victor Hugo chose voluntary exile. The reactions to the coup d'état were proportionately more intense in the provinces.

### For Further Research and Reflection

#### On the Coup d'état of December 2, 1851

- Henry Guillemin, *Le coup d'Etat du 2 décembre*, Paris: Gallimard, 1951.
- L. Willette, *Le coup d'État du 2 décembre 1851: La Résistance républicaine au coup d'état*. Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1982.
- J. Goirand, *Documents pour servir à l'histoire de l'insurrection du département du Gard contre le coup d'État du 2 décembre*, Alès, Impr. de l'Union républicaine, 1883, 191 pages.
- J. Maurain, *La politique ecclésiastique au second Empire*, Félix Alcan: Paris, 1930, p. 354-485.
- Pierre Touveneraud, *La participation du P. d'Alzon à la défense des États pontificaux 1859-1863*, in *Pages d'Archives*, II (October 1960), p. 385-410.
- Under the direction of Jean Tulard, *Dictionnaire du Second Empire*, Fayard: Paris, 1995, 1347 pages.
- *Le P. d'Alzon défenseur des droits du Saint-Siège (1859-1870)* in *Dossier sur la vie et les vertus*, volume II, part II, p. 674-692.

### For a Personalized Reading

- What restrictions should apply to members of the clergy with respect to political choices or preferences?
- Do you think that the few political experiences that Fr. d'Alzon had ended happily? Why do you say so?
- What principles/convictions can guide one's political choices? Can the gospel provide some guidance?
- Should not one's commitment to the Church constitute a kind of brake on political passions and on national and patriotic fervor?

## The Background of the Gaume Controversy (1853)

It has not been proven that Fr. d'Alzon met the two Gaume brothers, both priests, Jean-Alexis and Jean-Joseph, but only the former (*Letters*, vol. I, p. 50). However, it is clear that he shared with them a way of thinking bolstered by their common ultramontane fervor. Jean-Joseph became well-known with the publication of his manifesto book, *Le ver rongeur des sociétés modernes ou le paganisme dans l'éducation* (*The Gnawing Worm of Modern Societies or Paganism in Education*). This diatribe led to a noisy quarrel with his bishop, Bishop Dufêtre of Nevers, and with the young bishop of Orléans, Bishop Dupanloup. He found support with Cardinal Grousset of Reims, who made him honorary Vicar General of his diocese, and with Louis Veuillot who backed him wholeheartedly in *L'Univers*. In his

book, he argued that using only pagan authors in a classical education was one of the causes of the decadence of Christian society. He wanted to introduce the use of the Fathers of the Church, both Greek and Latin. As often happens in French ideological battles, those doing the exclusion reversed roles: now what was being promoted in humanities classes was the total substitution of pagan authors by Christian authors. Rome, where the multifaceted presence of Antiquity impregnated all of its history and culture, was asked for an opinion; in the encyclical *Inter multiplices* (1854) it sent back a very measured response encouraging a judicious mixture of both sets of authors.

Fr. d'Alzon, who was passionately interested in all questions dealing with education, would not accept the exclusion of literary con-

tact with the pagan authors in the classical studies at his prep school. Certainly he supported a reform that would include the double heritage and he laid out his plan, in the pages of the *Revue de l'enseignement chrétien*, to publish Christian authors in Nîmes. Jules Monnier was one of the first to produce booklets, in 1851-1852, presenting Latin texts from the Fathers of the Church (Ambrose, Lactantius, and Avit, bishop of Vienne, d. 518). For his part, Germer-Durand prepared a parallel publication of six collections of Greek texts. But the debate over the classics soon moved out of the circle of insiders and scholars to the public arena. A canon from Autun, Rev. Landriot, who had been recommended as bishop of La Rochelle in 1852, published an enormous tome on this same controversy entitled, *Examen critique des Lettres de l'abbé Gaume sur le paganisme dans l'éducation* (*A Critical Examination of the Letters of Rev. Gaume on Paganism in Education*), after having written, in 1851, *Recherches historiques sur les écoles littéraires du*

*Christianisme, suivies d'observations sur le Ver rongeur* (*Historical Research on the Christian Literary Schools, followed by observations on the Gnawing Worm*). With Bishop Dupanloup, another fine scholar in the world of Catholic education, the debate bounced from decrees concerning an academic question to a Church problem. Basing himself on Church tradition, Dupanloup favored a Christian interpretation of pagan authors that had existed since the Council of Trent. Basing themselves on the same texts and on the same authorities, viz., the Fathers of the Church, people could take advantage of the two completely contrary theories until the day when a desirable appeasement took place which imposed on the extremists on both sides a point-of-view that was logically complementary (*Roma locuta causa finita*) a solution filled with a lot of practical common sense. In 1854 Rome put an end to a controversy the excesses of which had ended up becoming harmful to Catholic interests themselves.

*Dear Father,*

*A thousand thanks for the account of your trip to Rome<sup>1</sup> which you kindly sent to me. Now you are avenged beyond what you could have*

*hoped and avenged as a priest of Jesus Christ can be. This letter from the Pope is an event that merits study<sup>2</sup>. I understand that you don't want to give it too much publicity. Nevertheless, something should come of it. Think about it: your efforts will now be legitimized against all the attacks of partisans of the old system.*

*I would surely like to ask you a question, if it is not too indiscreet. Where are you going to pitch your tent? Will you return to Nevers<sup>3</sup>? Will you try to implement those practices of yours which have now proven victorious? Look at what I am allowing myself to ask!*

*Father, please accept my most respectful and devoted wishes.*

*E. d'Alzon*

*And what has become of our plans for a Catholic university<sup>4</sup>?*

**E. d'Alzon to Re. Jean-Joseph Gaume, Nîmes, April 11, 1853, Letters, P. Touveneraud edition, Rome, vol. I, 1978, p. 259-260.**

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**Rev. Jean-Joseph Gaume** (1802-1879) was a priest from the diocese of Besançon, who served in the diocese of Nevers (1827) and became vicar general (1843-1852). Later he moved to Paris where his brother, Rev. Jean-Alexis Gaume, was the vicar general under Bishop Affre and Bishop Sibour (1842-1856). He was the author of many works, among which was the famous *Vers rongeurs des sociétés modernes* that sparked the Gaume controversy.

<sup>1</sup> We no longer have the account of this trip to Rome by Rev. Gaume. In 1843-1844, he had already spent a long time in Rome, had been received by Pope Gregory XVI, and had published a book, *Les Trois Rome*, 4 volumes, 1847.

<sup>2</sup> At the request of Rev. Gaume, Pius IX, through his secretary, Msgr. Fioramonti, had sent him a letter of which we know only indirectly and only from extracts reproduced in the correspondence of the priest, with the Cardinal of Reims, Most Rev. Gousset (March 18, 1853), in which is found only the praise and encouragement of the pope and not his reservations.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. Gaume, having a frosty relationship with Archbishop Sibour of Paris, returned to the capital to work on his numerous editorial projects in the publishing house founded by his brothers, at 4 Rue Cas-sette. In 1872 Rome named him director of the apostolate and conferred on him the title of Protonotary Apostolic.

<sup>4</sup> A project for a Catholic University? Fr. d'Alzon was a resolute believer of the idea. Already in August 1851, he had launched an ambitious project in Nîmes, the foundations for a *Saint Augustine University*, a school of higher literary, scientific, and theological studies, the development of a school to prepare for the great state universities, a teacher training college, and the *Revue de l'enseignement chrétien*. Catholic universities in France would only see the light of day after 1875 with the passage of the Laboulaye Law.

## For Further Reflection and Research

### On the controversy regarding the classic and pagan authors

- The Gaume controversy crossed the Atlantic all the way to the shores of the St. Lawrence River: cf. the works of Alexis Pelletier and Henri-Raymond Casgrain in Quebec.
- Daniel Moulinet, *Les classiques païens dans les collèges catholiques? Le combat de Mgr. Gaume*, Cerf, 1995, 495 p. in the collection *Histoire religieuse de la France*.
- Gérard Cholvy and Nadine-Josette Chaline, *L'enseignement catholique en France aux XIXe et XXe siècles*, Cerf, 1995, 296 p. in the collection *Histoire religieuse de la France*.

## For a Personalized Reading

- Do you understand the differences of opinions, sensitivities, and tendencies in the Church? How much do they appear to be legitimate and beneficial?
- The papacy under Pius IX gave many pledges of support and encouragement to the Ultramontane party in France. How was this shown?
- The Gallican and liberal party, represented especially by Bishop Dupanloup, did not, for its part, remain inactive. In your opinion, what were the real stakes behind the battles of the authors and their appeals to Rome?
- In your opinion, why and how did Fr. d'Alzon, who had been seduced in his youth by the ideas of Lamennais, evolve towards an intransigent, and sometimes aggressive, Ultramontanism?

## The Trial of Illness (1854)

With all due deference to Léon Daudet who described the 19<sup>th</sup> century as “*stupid*,” it was a great century for medicine, in general, and surgery, in particular, the queen of the advances in new experiments in medicine and their applications. The work of Virchow, Darwin, Claude Bernard, Chatin, Pasteur, Pollender, Show, Charcot, and Vulpian, to name but a few among so many, fostered the progress of their disciplines that, until then, had remained quite empirical. Although it would be offensive to say that wars contribute to the moral progress of humanity, still, it could be noted, that all of wars’ bloody battles, which have scarred human history have, in their way, served to introduce improvements with enormous humanitarian consequences. Call to mind the spread of the use of anesthesia in the

United States, practiced during the savagery of the Civil War; recall the nightmares of Solferino\* which lead Henri Dunant to lay the foundations of the Red Cross; think of what Larrey\*\* accomplished on the battlefield during Napoleon’s time.

Like all mortals, Fr. d’Alzon paid his tribute to illness. Though of solid constitution, he spent his health capital early and often, as he says himself, by abusing his body with hurried meals, a lifestyle that brought him here, there and everywhere at top speed, shortened nights of sleep, and an increase in nervous tension for which those around him paid the price. A close reading of his correspondence quickly gives one the impression of a rapid erosion of his health, which included ongoing suffering such as unbearable migraine headaches. His teeth and his stomach were his

Achilles heels, treated or eased with the remedies of the day: ass' milk, opium pills, and herbal teas of every kind; as for other ailments, there were the customary bleeding, leeching, and cupping (*editor's note*: treatment in which a cup is attached to the skin surface, usually on the back, and the air within the cup is evacuated to suck the skin in and increase local blood flow). But in May 1854 he was stricken by a much more serious medical "event," which resulted in paralysis on one side of his body. Fr. d'Alzon was required to follow an extended treatment: additional rest, stays at a spa, generally just taking it easy before he could "mount his steed" once again. It was in these circumstances that he discovered the beneficial effects of the waters at Lamalou-les-Bains, a still little known spa that his friend and private physician, Dr. Privat, was trying to develop. Marie-Eugénie enjoyed going to a spa in

the Pyrenees at Cauterets; d'Alzon frequented ones in Vichy in the Massif Central (1854) and Bagnères de Bigorre in the Pyrenees (1868); but Lamalou was his favorite because of the medicinal effects of the waters. However, the waters at Cauterets in Le Vigan should not be forgotten. There has never been a lack of medical doctors in the Assumption; perhaps, someday, one of them will dedicate himself to undertaking an in-depth clinical study, even retrospectively, of the health of the founder.

In any case, Lamalou was the privileged site at which d'Alzon put the finishing touches to the *Directory* (1859) and from which he sent out his famous letters to the Adorers, a kind of meditation in which the ill man that he was was able to rise above his ailment in order to plumb inexhaustible depths and reflect spiritually on the meaning of suffering.

*My dear Mother,*

*At last I've had it. I'm in bed after a few mini-strokes that are nothing, really, but that I want to make sure don't develop into anything worse. I'm forever dozing off and the little one who is holding the pen<sup>1</sup> stayed up all night like a marmot. They administered quite a treatment of leeches on me and soon will give me some medicine. Let me just say that, whenever I try to get up, I fall to the ground without feeling sick; so, I prefer staying flat on my back.*



*I'm going to try to write a proper note to Miss P[élissier]<sup>2</sup>. Please tell Mrs. de Gastebois<sup>3</sup> that I won't be able to get back to her for a while. Would you be so kind as to inform Mr. Poujoulat<sup>4</sup> why I am unable to write? Mr. Roux-Lavergne<sup>5</sup> will take charge of writing his article. My doctor wants to send me to Vichy. He is absolutely certain that I need a lot of rest and a prolonged absence from my daily activities. I would have many other things to tell you, but my head hurts too much at the moment, so I'll stop here.*

*Good-bye, my dear daughter. I feel quite bad. It's been 30 years since I have felt anything like this<sup>6</sup>.*

*E. d'Alzon*

**E. d'Alzon to Mother Marie-Eugénie de Jésus, Nîmes, May 20, 1854, Letters, P. Touveneraud edition, Rome 1978, vol. I, p. 430.**

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\***Jean Henri Dunant** (1828 – 1910) was a Swiss businessman and social activist who was witness to the aftermath of the Battle of Solferino in modern day Italy. France was fighting on the side of Piedmont-Sardinia against Austria, that had occupied much of today's Italy. On the evening of June 24, 1859, a battle between the two sides occurred in Solferino. Thirty-eight thousand injured, dying and dead, remained on the battlefield, and there appeared to be little attempt to provide care. Shocked, Dunant himself took the initiative to organize the civilian population, especially the women and girls, to provide assistance to the injured and sick soldiers. He recorded his memories and experiences in the book *A Memory of Solferino* which inspired the creation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in 1863.

\*\* **Dominique Jean Larrey** (1766–1842) was surgeon-in-chief of the Napoleonic armies from Italy in 1797 to Waterloo in 1815. During this time, he initiated the modern method of army surgery, field hospitals and the system of army ambulance corps.

<sup>1</sup> This letter was dictated to his occasional secretary, **Brother Marie-Joseph Lévy** (1833-1879).

<sup>2</sup> **Miss Amélie de Péliissier** had Fr. d'Alzon as a spiritual director and in April 1856 became Mrs. Louis-Joseph-Josias de Gaillard d'Escures (+1919). The wedding took place in the chapel of the Religious of the Assumption in Chaillot.

<sup>3</sup> **Mrs. de Gastebois** was a member of the Third Order of the Assumption in Paris. For a time she was the prioress.

<sup>4</sup> **Jean-Joseph-François Poujoulat** (1800-1880) was a writer, a journalist, a deputy in 1848-1849, and an editor of the letters of St. Augustine and of Bossuet in particular. He married Marie Foulon (+1856), a relative of Marie-Eugénie de Jésus.

<sup>5</sup> **Pierre-Célestin Roux-Lavergne** (1802-1874) was a philosopher, a doctor of letters, and author, a deputy in 1848, and editor of *L'Univers*. He became a priest after his wife's death (1855) and taught for a while at the Collège de l'Assomption in Nîmes.

<sup>6</sup> Fr. d'Alzon is alluding to his illness of May 24, 1824, the day on which he was supposed to make his First Communion, but which had to be postponed.

## For Further Research and Reflection

### On Fr. d'Alzon's health and 19<sup>th</sup> century medicine

- André Favard, *Emmanuel d'Alzon à Lamalou. Evocation sonore*, June 1991, 4 pages.
- *Midi libre*, July 7, 1987: "Lamalou-les-Bains. Il y a 130 ans: Emmanuel d'Alzon," an article reproduced in the newsletter of the French province A.T.L.P., 1987, #52, p. 8-9.
- *Nouveau dictionnaire de médecine et de chirurgie pratiques*, directed by Dr. Jacoud, Paris, Baillière editions, published between 1864 and 1886, 40 volumes.
- Dominique Lecourt, *Dictionnaire de la pensée médicale*, Paris, P.U.F., Quadrige, 2004.
- Jean-Charles Sournia, *Histoire de la médecine*, La Découverte, new edition, 2004.
- Louis Dulieu, *La médecine à Montpellier du XII<sup>ème</sup> au XX<sup>ème</sup> siècle*, P.U.F., six volumes, 1988.

in English:

- Ackerknecht, Erwin. *A Short History of Medicine*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982.
- Kennedy, Michael T. *A Brief History of Disease, Science, and Medicine: From the Ice Age to the Genome Project*, Writers' Collective, Cranston, Rhode Island, 2003, 526 pp.
- Porter, R., ed. *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Medicine*. Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, University College, London, 2001, 400 pages.
- Porter, R. *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity from Antiquity to the Present*. Harper Collins, 1997, 831 pages.

## For a Personalized Reading

- What do you think of medicine and the medical arts in the 19<sup>th</sup> century?
- For one who is suffering from partial paralysis, don't you find that Fr. d'Alzon was extremely calm and cogent and was going about his "daily activities" quite vigorously?
- What physical and spiritual benefits did Fr. d'Alzon derive from his visits to the spa at Lamalou-les-Bains? What connections do you make between healing and salvation?
- Throughout his life Fr. d'Alzon availed himself of many medical treatments, even if his relatives and friends may have reproached him for not paying sufficient attention to this health. For an apostolic religious, isn't health but a capital to be spent?

## 26

## A New Bishop for Nîmes, Most Reverend Plantier (1855)

The nomination of Rev. Plantier to the see of Nîmes came as a rude surprise to Fr. d'Alzon who had served as vicar general to his predecessor, Bishop Cart, and as capitular vicar during the interim period. The new bishop's reputation at the time of his episcopal appointment both as a somewhat worldly preacher and as one with Gallican tendencies, which caused reservations on the part of Rome, overshadowed those qualifications of his which had been touted by Bishop Mioland, Cardinal Donnet, and Bishop Lyonnet. Nominated by imperial decree on August 30, 1855 and confirmed on September 28, Bishop Plantier was consecrated the following November 18 in St. John's Cathedral in Lyons by Cardinal de Bonald, the primate of France.

In the letter that Fr. d'Alzon wrote to him on September 18,

1855, brimming with the typical encomiastic phrases, there was a shot sent across the bow that contained a note of reticence, a lesson, and a warning, *"We are already aware, Your Excellency, of the success which God has given to your words, and we consider ourselves fortunate that you will be able to use them with equal blessing in a diocese where your predecessor accustomed us to frequent and apostolic preaching. You will find a diocese where the obedience of the priests to the bishop has been easy because the bishop prided himself on preaching through example by filial submission to every order and intention of the Sovereign Pontiff. Our Catholic faithful are ardent and generous; Protestants are shaken. With a field so well prepared, an apostle like you, Excellency, can arrive with the greatest of hopes."*

Fr. d'Alzon even thought of resigning his position, but he had enough loyalty and patience, before expressing any flamboyant or ill-humored gesture, to verify the reality of his apprehensions and to test them out once he had the opportunity to spend time with the new bishop. The latter, despite all the pressures to the contrary, was firmly committed to keeping Fr. d'Alzon in his post as Vicar General, as if he wanted to openly rally round the Ultramontane cause. The frankness and Catholic sentiment of the two did the rest: they became friends in the service of the local Church of Nîmes, each according to his manner and temperament, but in perfect communion with the Apostolic See, which saw its freedom threatened from 1859 on. In particular, Bishop Plantier distinguished himself by his doctrinal work, which established him as one of the most important bishops of the period; his writings were abundant and rich. His stature was such by 1860 that he could invite the Emperor to modify his policies toward the papa-

cy, reminding him of the unfortunate precedent of Napoleon I and his humbling exile at St. Helena. Nor was he afraid to take up his pen to denounce the measures taken by Persigny\* against the St. Vincent de Paul Society and in 1843 to reply vigorously, in a remarkable instruction, to the rationalist attacks of Renan who had just published his *Vie de Jésus* in the same year. In 1862 he broke with the Empire, a measure that earned him complete ostracism by the public administration until 1869 as well as the nickname (given by the Emperor himself), *the noisemaker of Nîmes*. Rev. Deplace may have tried to denounce the so-called pressures which the Ultramontane party, with d'Alzon as the head, would have been putting on their bishop, but the latter clearly maintained his position: unserved support for Rome and collaboration with the majority of the Council participants in the definition of infallibility. In May 1875, d'Alzon mourned not only the loss of a friend, but a true mentor as well.

*My dear daughter,*

*I was given your letter of yesterday as I was sitting down at table. Your messenger did not want to miss the 12:30 omnibus<sup>1</sup>; that is why I was only able to write you a couple of lines. I did have the time while*

*dining to reflect more and since then I have become convinced that we should just let things happen. The official appointment can be found in the Moniteur. But even if it was not, what is the use of fighting against a fact, no doubt sad, but one from which we might yet be able to extract something positive? Rev. Plantier<sup>2</sup> will not be a little embarrassed if he wishes to opt out from coming here; and if he does come, perhaps he will be able to accomplish some good that an Ultramontane would not be able to. The diocese is too Roman to be disrupted for too long. And then, whoever lives will see what happens. It seems to me that I'm doing quite well, even if I'd prefer being perfectly well. Perhaps God still wants me to suffer in some ways of which I am unaware.*

*Our retreat is going fairly well<sup>3</sup>. I regret that the severe headaches I've been having prevent me from speaking the way I would like. A diocesan priest has approached us to become a religious<sup>4</sup>: I'm quite happy about that. Maybe we will give him the cowl as well as to Mr. Cusse, of whom I have already spoken to you often.*

*The only feeling I have at the moment is that I should love contempt and humiliation, that I should put aside my worries about buildings<sup>5</sup> so that I can focus particularly on building a spiritual edifice. I am celebrating the Mass better than usual, but I am in the midst of a scary period of aridity. Amen!*

*Goodbye, my dear daughter. I have no misgivings whatsoever in saying these things to you. Everyone is trying to see me but I, for my part, go looking for no one.*

*Yours truly in Our Lord,*

*E. d'Alzon*

**Emmanuel d'Alzon to Mother Marie-Eugénie de Jésus, Paris, September 7, 1855, *Letters*, P. Touvernaud edition, Rome, 1978, vol. I, p. 589-590.**

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<sup>2</sup>During the Second Empire, the Society was sometimes seen as an association outside the control of state authority, as is witnessed in the circular letter of Duke Victor Fialin de Persigny, Interior Minister, to the French Prefects, 1861.

<sup>3</sup> Stanislas Baudry introduced a type of stagecoach operation, which proved popular as a means of transportation. This transport service was given the name **omnibus** as a play on words. The city terminus for the service was located adjacent to a hatter by the name of *Omnes*, whose sign read "*Omnes Omnibus*". The term seemed appropriate since *omni* (Latin for all people) could use the service for a fee, regardless of class. These early buses carried up to fourteen passengers. By 1836, there were 16 omnibus operators in Paris, covering 35 routes.

## A NEW BISHOP FOR NIMES, MOST REVEREND PLANTIER (1855)

<sup>2</sup> **Rev. Claude-Henri-Augustin Plantier** (1813-1875), born at Ceyzelieu (Ain), was ordained a priest in 1837, was a member of the Institute of Chartreux already in 1831 (diocesan missionaries of Lyons), and held the chair of Hebrew at the faculty of the theology of Lyons (1838). He was the author of exegetical works, a renowned preacher, vicar general of Lyons (1855), and was nominated for the episcopacy by Bishop Mioland, Cardinal Donnet, and Bishop Lyonnet. He was named bishop of Nîmes on August 30, 1855.

<sup>3</sup> Fr. d'Alzon gave a retreat to his religious at Clichy from September 7-14, 1855.

<sup>4</sup> Without any further precision, d'Alzon may be referring either to Rev. **Ambroise**, who was then a priest postulant, or Rev. **Bagès**, a priest novice in 1854. But couldn't the two designations refer to the same person?

<sup>5</sup> The preoccupation with construction must be a congenital or childhood disease at the Assumption! At the time, they wanted to build in Nîmes and in Clichy, but also at the house of the Religious in Auteuil and soon at the one in Nîmes. But as it is well known: in every age, "whoever builds, suffers" (N.B. in French, the expression contains a rhyme, *qui bâtit, pâtit*, and also has the sense that one who builds will have his share of tribulations).

## For Further Research and Reflection

### On Bishop Plantier and the diocese of Nîmes

- Rev. Jules Clastron, *Mgr. Plantier évêque de Nîmes*, Paris-Poitiers, Oudin editions, 1882.
- Marcel Bruyère, *Mgr. Plantier évêque de Nîmes (1813-1875). L'activité apostolique d'un évêque sous le Second Empire*, Lyon-Paris, 1925.
- Robert Sauzet, *Contre-Réforme et Réforme catholique en Bas-Languedoc. Le diocèse de Nîmes au XVIIIème siècle*, Paris-Louvain, Nauwelaerts, 1979.
- Alexandre-Charles Germain, *Histoire de l'Eglise de Nîmes*, Nîmes, 1882.
- *Le P. d'Alzon vicaire general de Mgr. Plantier (1855-1875)* in *Dossier sur la vie et les vertus*, vol. II, part II, p. 730-757. *Letters of d'Alzon*, vol. II, p. 68, note 1.

## For a Personalized Reading

- If one is going to make a thoughtful judgment of someone, shouldn't he wait to get the facts and not let himself be swayed by rumors and suppositions?
- Does not Fr. d'Alzon's attitude, in spite of the feeling of sadness he expressed at the announcement of this nomination, reveal, in fact, a supernatural abandonment to Divine Providence?
- The facts prove that Fr. d'Alzon knew how to overcome his original apprehensions and to work with confidence with Bishop Plantier. In your opinion, what explains the change of attitude on both their parts?
- How do you learn to overcome your impressions, your feelings, and your ill-humor at the announcement of certain nominations or elections in the Church?

## Never-Ending Worries in Nîmes (1856)

The years 1855-1857 were particularly painful for Fr. d'Alzon. In addition to worries about his failing health, he had to confront head on the serious financial crisis that his school in Nîmes was experiencing. The primary cause of the problem had to do with an unfavorable economic turn of events beginning in 1848. Fr. d'Alzon, who lived on his salary as Vicar General and on an allowance given him by his family (which was carefully entered in the books as an advance on his inheritance), had to face mounting financial needs that his revenues could not meet even with other gifts he received. In order to take over the prep school in Nîmes, he had to borrow money and go into debt. He had taken great care to hide from his family a second Assumptionist foundation in Paris that had been opened under the

name of Fr. Charles Laurent and not under his own, after he came to an understanding with Mother Marie-Eugénie regarding the initial expenses. Their correspondence on this subject resembles notes between business associates more than spiritual consultation! But in the face of this financial stranglehold, he had to turn once again to his family's bankroll; however, this time things had changed. Mrs. d'Alzon, who controlled the family fortune, was no longer disposed to be so generous to him; her son, who had already *cost her more than a pair of wasters*, seemed to her to have been sucked up into a whirlwind of disastrous ventures. Moreover, from a political point of view, he seemed to have deviated clearly from the straight legitimist line which prevailed at Lavagnac. Wasn't this priest, who had put it into his head to found a congre-

gation as well, going to erode the family's nest egg and deprive his sisters of their share of the inheritance? Fr. d'Alzon took these insinuations hard, accompanied as they were with the thinly veiled accusation of his financial ineptitude. In order for her to consent to his new request, Mrs. d'Alzon imposed certain conditions: sale or transfer of the school in Nîmes and the naming of an expert consultant (Mr. Devès) for the liquidation as well as for supervision of the *prodigal son*! Humiliated, Fr. d'Alzon had to back off and compromise. From 1855 to 1857 he explored many solutions: leaving Nîmes for Paris (which was the most heartfelt wish of Mother Marie-Eugénie since she would have her spiritual director at hand); locating his school at Beaucaire; or building a more modest one on the property of the youth club of Nîmes. With all of this in the background, he was able to obtain from his parents the sale of a piece of land in Le Vigan (Anglas) and the appointment of a second financial expert, Rev. Berthomieu, who was more sympathetic to his views. Later, when the situation became untenable (Mrs. d'Alzon threatened to have a bailiff intervene, not to mention

the nuncio!), Fr. d'Alzon, using medical reasons as a pretext, left Nîmes for almost the entire year of 1857 and settled temporarily at Auteuil where the Religious Sisters of the Assumption were building their convent. At least from there he could more calmly keep an eye on the fragile community living at the school in Clichy, organize a novitiate that was more regular than the one in Nîmes which was constantly dragged into the problems of the prep school, and maintain a strong relationship with the sisters who had proved to be so supportive and fraternal. In October 1857, the negotiations (with regard to the school) between his family and the share-holders came to an acceptable conclusion: Fr. d'Alzon was freed of all financial responsibility while he alone assumed moral responsibility there. He returned to live in Nîmes and resumed his duties as vicar general. Bishop Plantier proved to be quite understanding of his prolonged absence. But that was not to be the end of his *financial martyrdom* nor the end of foundations in the Congregation nor of his responsibilities as vicar general. It was at best a pause in a life lived at full tilt.



*The letter which I just received from you, care of Mrs. Durand<sup>1</sup>, gives me, I believe, enormous satisfaction. What a word! I have decided: I won't back down<sup>2</sup>, unless there is one of those acts of Providence, the likes of which one would not hope for. I could leave Fr. Brun<sup>3</sup> here and Fr. Mauviel<sup>4</sup> at the youth center. Well, we'll see; time will tell. The day I made my big resolution, I found an image from Dusseldorf that I probably received from you, depicting the Ecce Homo at the bottom, with the words of St. John, "Ecce rex vester," that they probably got wrong. But no matter. It seems to me that there I can see what I need: the imitation of the weakness, of the humiliation, of the suffering of that king. What makes me suffer the most is that I have such a hard time cultivating these dispositions in the tabernacle of my heart! Please keep our statue of the Holy Virgin for me<sup>5</sup>.*

*Sister Mary Walburge was able to mourn the departure of Sr. Mary Elizabeth, but I assure you that I find her admirable in her self-forgetfulness with regard to all the sisters and in her obedience to you. The fear of disobeying you is a constant worry of hers and that's the thing she talks to me about the most. Since she (Sr. Mary Elizabeth) left, she (Sr. Mary Walburge) seems to me to be bright and good-humored and always with the same sense of integrity. Since, for some time now, she has been opening up to me much more easily, either she has been playing me along or I can assure you that she mourned Sr. Mary Elizabeth's departure in such a way as to lessen her pain. At a distance, one can misread things. In my opinion, Sr. Mary Walburge is trying hard, especially with Sr. Mary Augustine. This morning I had a long conversation with her on the need to pass from theory to practice. I was able to talk to her about her faults; she easily sacrifices her reading time for times of prayer and has promised to work on herself in this matter<sup>6</sup>.*

*Rev. Mermillod<sup>7</sup> wrote to me. He's waiting for me, but I can't make it to Geneva before the 20<sup>th</sup> because of the sale of Anglas. Goodbye. I'm off to the (Divine) Office.*

*E. d'Alzon*

E. d'Alzon to Mother Marie-Eugénie de Jésus, Nîmes, October 30, 1856,  
Letters, P. Touveneraud edition, Rome, 1978,  
vol. II, pages 145-146.

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<sup>1</sup> Cécile Germer-Durand. When in Paris, the Germer-Durands stayed with their relatives in Boulogne-Billancourt.

<sup>2</sup> Since the beginning of the financial crisis of 1848-1849, the situation of the prep school in Nîmes had become quite critical. Fr. d'Alzon's parents agreed to give their son some money, as an advance on his inheritance, by selling a piece of property in Le Vigan, Anglas, but they added draconian conditions that Fr. d'Alzon could not accept, such as withdrawing from the school. The crisis lasted until 1858. Hippolyte Saugrain suggested the creation of a group of shareholders who would become the owners of the school.

<sup>3</sup> **Henri Brun** (1821-1895), one of the first five Assumptionists, made his profession in 1850. He was a professor, a missionary in Australia (1862-1873), and the founder of the Assumption in the United States (1891).

<sup>4</sup> **Prosper Mauviel** (1830-1892), a priest of the diocese of Montauban, was known at the collège in Clichy-la-Garenne. He entered the Assumption in 1857 and returned to his diocese in 1859.

<sup>5</sup> **Fr. Jean Gourbeillon**, O.S.B. (1814-1895), sometimes called Jehan de Solesmes, was ordained in 1844. In 1841, sent to the Parisian priory of St. Germain, he worked in the studio of a certain Mr. Bion where he studied sculpture. Fr. d'Alzon had acquired from him a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary for the school chapel.

<sup>6</sup> The Religious of the Assumption had founded a convent in Nîmes in 1855. According to the rules of the time, Fr. d'Alzon was their ecclesiastical superior. In 1856, there were changes in the community: **Sr. Mary-Elisabeth de Balincourt** (1823-1900) had been called back and replaced by **Sr. Mary-Augustine Bévier** (1816-1895), a remarkable educator but with a difficult character. The superior of the community, then installed on Rue Roussy, remained **Sr. Mary Walburge Howly** (1826-1910).

<sup>7</sup> A Swiss Churchman, **Rev. Gaspard Mermillod** (1824-1892) was then pastor in Geneva. He was named bishop of Hebron in 1864, the auxiliary of Bishop Marilley, apostolic vicar of Geneva in 1873. He was expelled from Switzerland in 1883 and named a cardinal in 1890. At the time there was question of trying to establish an Assumptionist community in Ferney-Voltaire, where the pastor, **Rev. François-Denis Martin** (1814-1877), manifested his intention of joining the congregation.

## For Further Reflection and Research

### On the Religious Sisters of the Assumption

- *Les origines de l'Assomption- Souvenirs de famille*, Tours, Mame, Vol. I and II (1898), vol. III (1900), and vol. IV (1902).
- Gaëtan Bernoville, *Les Religieuses de l'Assomption*, Grasset, vol. I (1948), vol. II (1951).
- *Origins of the Assumption Family*, Acts of the Inter-Assumption Colloquium, Fr. Robert Fortin, A.A., editor (English edition), Paris, Bayard, 2007, 484 pages, volume 3 in *Assumption Research Collection*.
- Sr. Thérèse-Maylis Toujouse, R.A., *Marie-Eugénie et le Père d'Alzon. Intuitions communes, influences réciproques?* In *Etudes d'Archives* #4, Paris 1988.
- *Le P. d'Alzon et les Religieuses de l'Assomption (1845-1855)* in *Dossier sur la vie et les vertus*, Vol. II, part II, p. 608-627.

### On the collège in Nîmes

- Louis Secondy, *L'enseignement secondaire libre dans l'Académie de Montpellier (1854-1924)*, 1974; and *Aux origines de la maison de l'Assomption à Nîmes (1844-1853)*, in *Emmanuel d'Alzon dans la société et l'Eglise du XIXe siècle*, Le Centurion, 1982, p. 233-258.
- *Le P. d'Alzon et la maison de l'Assomption (1846-1857)* in *Dossier sur la vie et les vertus*, Vol. II, part I, p. 467-521.

## For a Personalized Reading

- Wasn't Fr. d'Alzon trying to juggle too many things at once? Didn't the financial crisis of his school in Nîmes have causes other than his alleged inexperience in financial matters and his legendary prodigality?
- How was the Assumption able to establish itself financially? Where could monies be found?
- Did Fr. d'Alzon encounter difficulties being the ecclesiastical superior of the Religious of the Assumption in Nîmes? Why?
- Didn't the Assumption suffer above all because it was trying to do too much with too few men? In your opinion, have things changed today?



## Rome Grants the Assumption a Decree of Praise (1857)

Every Congregation is born diocesan, i.e. concretely speaking with a bishop's approval. It must pass the test of time and staying power in order to receive the status of pontifical right if it wants it and nourishes apostolic ambitions beyond the reach of its place of birth. In order to do so, Rome lays out and prescribes, besides holy patience, the way the "combatant" must follow: obtain a favorable letter of recommendation from at least three bishops of three different dioceses where the Congregation has taken root. Fr. d'Alzon, in spite of his desire to go directly to Pope Pius IX and thanks also to wise canonists who advised him to follow the ordinary hierarchical channels, did not upset the gentle Roman way of doing things. He approached Bishop

Cart, his immediate superior in Nîmes, Archbishop Sibour who had welcomed the community of the collège in the Saint-Honoré neighborhood to his diocese in 1851, and, on the advice of Mother Marie-Eugénie de Jésus, Cardinal Grousset of Rheims, a friend of the Religious of the Assumption, and Bishop de la Bouillerie of Carcassonne (d'Alzon, *Letters*, vol. I, p. 67-68, note 1). In 1854 three of the bishops had completed their letters of recommendation in due form, with their signatures respectfully preserved still today in a file-box at the Roman Congregation for Religious Institutes.

The request reached a successful conclusion on May 1, 1857: The Roman Congregation, then known as the Congregation for Bishops and Regulars, granted

the long-desired *decretum laudis* (“decree of praise”) for which the young François Picard, at Fr. d’Alzon’s bidding, had spared no efforts. Things are the same today when it comes to obtaining a document of importance in high places: one must know how to cool one’s heels in waiting rooms, to honor prelates with friendly visits, and, while never failing to remind them discreetly of one’s request, not to appear to be in too much of a hurry to receive it! As its name clearly indicates, the primary value of this decree is one of encouragement: it simply precedes another step which requires the same finesse, obtaining the *decree of approval or approbation*. So, Fr. d’Alzon, who was said to be in such a hurry, really made haste slowly to obtain this second favor, granted on November 26, 1864. This decision contained a provisional aspect because it did not include

the text of the *Constitutions*, presented as a draft text at the time. And we know that in Rome and elsewhere something that is provisional can last a long time. In fact the Congregation as such was able to present itself as one officially approved, even though the Founder died in 1880 without definitive and final approval of the *Constitutions*. We know that they would undergo, after its most characteristic features had been eliminated, many other changes and amendments before receiving pontifical approval only in 1923. Fr. d’Alzon had died at the age of 70; his Congregation received its baptismal certificate or official consecration at the age of 78. Please God that he might smile upon the Assumption as he did on Melchizedek with long life and, through the approbation of his Holy Church, give her the courage to strike out into the unknown.

*I did not write to you, my dear daughter, because I thought I might be able to give you some news and because only as I was about to leave for the Saintes [Maries]<sup>1</sup> did I receive the enclosed letter. I’ve been back for a few hours, myself saddened by the sadness that Sr. Mary Kostka’s<sup>2</sup> death must have caused you. I must say that I am not sorry that you were not nearby when she breathed her last. Sr. T[hérèse]-Em[manuel] was there to help her and I feel that you, my dear daughter, get run down enough so as not to have to worry when someone tries to help you avoid an excess of fatigue.*

*Here are two letters: one from my mother, in response to the news that I had given to my father about the approbation granted to our little Congregation<sup>3</sup>. (By the way, I let you know about it immediately but you make no mention of it). You will see the response I received. I sent my mother's letter to Mr. Berth[omieu]; you also have my own response.*

*However, I still believe that it would be desirable for us to stay in Nîmes another year. The debacle<sup>\*</sup> facing us at this moment would have dire consequences here in the Midi. While admitting that our thoughts are not God's thoughts and not yet seeing clearly God's will<sup>4</sup>, I think that we must maintain what we have<sup>5</sup>. Eighteen months from now we should have sufficient resources for a turnaround, because of our ability to manage our assets quite usefully. Marseilles is offering us some very nice opportunities<sup>6</sup>. In six months we wouldn't be in a position to accept them; in eighteen months we might, even if it meant closing the house in Nîmes.....*

*E. d'Alzon*

**E. d'Alzon to Mother Marie-Eugénie de Jésus, Nîmes, May 25, 1857,  
Letters, Pierre Tournemine edition, Rome, 1978,  
vol. II, p. 239-240.**

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*\*The possibility of having to leave Nîmes for good because of the financial crisis facing the young congregation, especially the Collège de l'Assomption.*

<sup>1</sup> Fr. d'Alzon had made a promise to the Misses Combié in August 1856 (*Letters*, vol. II, p. 121) to make a pilgrimage to the Saintes-Maries de la Mer in Camargue. This town, located on the Mediterranean coast, was a favorite pilgrimage site because tradition had it that the three Marys who had been at the foot of the cross arrived here (Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Mary Salome). Their relics are still venerated there.

<sup>2</sup> **Sr. Marie-Kostka Furlong** (1833-1857) was a Religious of the Assumption who died prematurely in Nîmes.

<sup>3</sup> *Our little Congregation* is the favorite expression of Fr. d'Alzon when referring to his order. The humility of the expression also reflects the statistical reality: in 1858, the Assumption, in its 13 years of existence, had only 22 professed religious, 13 choir religious, 2 oblates, and 7 lay brothers.

<sup>4</sup> It is quite evident, however, that believers should seek the will of God without pretending to have grasped it or seen it clearly --- "gropingly," the Apostle Paul once said. Providence is more a question of faith than of illusions.

<sup>5</sup> Spiritual intelligence and human wisdom work hand in hand and strengthen one another: "it is better to hang on than to run."

<sup>6</sup> If one wanted to make a list of all foundations of the Assumption under discussion at that time, a tour of the entire country would barely suffice: Beaucaire (Gard, 1847), Narbonne (Aude, 1855), Marseilles

(Bouches-du-Rhône, 1857, La Nouailler (Vienne, 1857), Ferney-Voltaire (Ain, 1858), Montmorillon (Vienne, 1858), not to mention, of course, Rethel (Ardennes, 1858), an endeavor that lasted three months. Without a doubt, in the Assumption we have always liked the genre of “letter to the diaspora” (even before the *Letter* itself came into being; I’m simply referring to the past).

## For Further Research and Reflection

### On the progressive recognition of the Congregation

- *Le P. d’Alzon et la Congrégation (1858-1868)* in *Dossier sur la vie et les vertus*, Vol. II, Part II, p. 644-647.
- *Collectanea*, #2, B, p. 3.
- Aubain Colette, *Pages d’Archives*, April 1958, p. 174-176.

## For a Personalized Reading

- What are the stages of recognition in Rome marking the long road to approbation for a new Congregation? How did this play out at the Assumption?
- In this matter, what do you think of the way that the Church does things? Were there moments of favor and disfavor along this long path?
- Do you have an idea of the mechanisms in the Church that lead to forms of recognition for a congregation, the procedures and methods used to obtain their status? What is the situation today for requests for union, fusion, or absorption among religious institutes?
- The forms of religious life registered by the Roman Congregations do not all receive the promise of eternal life, at least on earth. What are the best conditions or requirements that “assure” the longevity of a Congregation?



## The Ordination of Two Assumptionists at Le Mans (1858)

A clerical congregation like the Assumption is always happy to see members who have been called and prepared to be ordained to the priesthood. Certainly today an ordination ceremony features a considerable contingent of concelebrants and plenty of singing, not to mention a large crowd, including many close family members. In calling to mind the ordinations of the first Assumptionists, it must be remembered that it wasn't always this way. After his monthly retreat with the Jesuits of St. Eusebius, Fr. d'Alzon was ordained in Rome in December 1834 with no one present in the private oratory of Cardinal Odescalchi. So it was for François Picard who was ordained in Rome in May 1856 by Bishop Ligi-Bussi after having made his monthly retreat with the

Vincentians in Montecitorio. As for Fr. Galabert, although he did pronounce his perpetual vows in the hands of his local superior, Fr. Picard, he was ordained a priest so discreetly, on June 7, 1857, that we do not know, even to this day, the name of the bishop who ordained him! On the other hand, as for Fr. Vincent de Paul Bailly, the situation is somewhat clearer: he was ordained a priest on January 1, 1863 in the chapel of the Vice-Regent of Rome by Bishop de Villanova Castellani. His preparatory retreat also took place with the Vincentians at Montecitorio. Other religious were already priests when they entered the Assumption, e.g. Elphège Tissot (1825, at Lyons), Henri Brun (December 1845 at Mende), and Charles Laurent (December 1845

at Nîmes) --- which leads us to believe that their ordinations took place in the cathedral, as often happened, during the Ember Days\* of Advent in their respective dioceses.

On Holy Saturday, April 3, 1858, Etienne Pernet and Hippolyte Saugrain were ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Nanquette of Le Mans in the chapel of the bishop's residence; that brought to nine the number of Assumptionist (perpetually professed) priests at that date, including Fr. O'Donnell (an Irish priest ordained in Charleston, South Carolina, USA in 1824 by Bishop England). On each such occasion, if Fr. d'Alzon could not be physically present, he nevertheless made it a point to be united with them in prayer and to express in writing his good wishes to the young elect. Nothing was dearer to him than experiencing the grace of having new priestly pearls added to the crown of his family so great was his faith in the supernatural power of the

priesthood. Remembering numbers, dates, and statistics mattered little to him and they would sometimes slip his mind; what he never forgot was the spiritual knowledge of the inner person fashioned by God's life. This is quickly grasped on reading the advice and the good wishes he expressed each time: *to work towards the perfection of which a soul is capable and to the extension of the reign of Jesus Christ, to become a priest according to the heart of God, to seek to obtain greater glory for God*, such were his customary thoughts on these occasions. Fr. d'Alzon had a knowledge of the saints and was filled with the urgency to spread the Gospel. To be sure, he did not want to neglect the theological preparation of his sons, which, it must be admitted, was a bit chaotic at times, but he was even more careful to guide authentic and perfectible workers of the Gospel, through the work of the Holy Spirit, to the summit of faith.

*When you receive this letter, my dear child, you will be a priest. I am really delighted to think that you will at last enter the sanctuary which you have desired for such a long time already<sup>1</sup>; what a sacrifice I am imposing upon myself by not attending your first Mass<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, you will celebrate it in family, since you will approach the altar for the first time in the chapel of our sisters, who have been so kind*

*to us<sup>3</sup>. I will offer up to God my being so far away. I would have been extremely happy to lead you to Our Lord in your priestly vestments! But it is very good to be able to offer him something even greater! Foregoing our deepest desires and the thought that we are separated from the ones we love the most at the meaningful moments of their lives in order to offer him greater glory is the best way to prove to him that we love him above all things.*

*I wish you and our good Pernet, to whom you shall give his letter, an immense heart to receive more fully the spirit of the priesthood. It is not everything to have the priestly character<sup>4</sup>; one must acquire all the priestly virtues as well. During this time I will ask God to bestow them on you. I do not ask you to pray for me. I already seem to be feeling the effects of your good wishes.*

*Goodbye, my dear child. May Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin place their throne in your heart forever and may your life be, from now on, devoted entirely to the extension of the reign of Our Lord.*

*E. d'Alzon*

*Read the short note from Mr. Berth[omieu]. I have a serious problem with Fr. Laurent. I miss this good child often, without his realizing it, and this time I have made him aware of it.*

E. d'Alzon to Hippolyte Saugrain, April 1, 1858,  
Letters, from the P. Touvernaud edition, Rome, 1978,  
vol. II, p. 415

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\* **Ember days** are four separate sets of three days within the same week—specifically, the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday—roughly equidistant in the circuit of the year, that were formerly set aside for fasting and prayer. These days set apart for special prayer and fasting were considered especially suitable for the ordination of clergy. The Ember Days are known in Latin as the *quattuor anni tempora* (the "four seasons of the year"), or formerly as the *jejunia quattuor temporum* ("fasts of the four seasons"). The **Ember Weeks**—the weeks in which the Ember Days occur—are the week between the third and fourth Sundays of Advent, between the first and second Sundays of Lent, the week between Pentecost and Trinity Sunday, and the week beginning on the Sunday after Holy Cross Day (September 14), the liturgical Third Week of September.

<sup>1</sup> **Fr. Pernet** and **Fr. Saugrain** were ordained at Le Mans on Holy Saturday, April 3, 1858, by **Bishop Nanquette**, a friend of the Assumption. They were accompanied and presented by Fr. Picard. Good Assumptionists of the period that they were, they had studied theology on their own.

## THE ORDINATION OF TWO ASSUMPTIONISTS AT LE MANS (1858)

<sup>2</sup> Because of circumstances, the first Assumptionists were not surrounded either by their brothers in faith or their family members for their ordination to the priesthood. Fr. d'Alzon himself was alone in Rome on December 26, 1834, as were Frs. Picard, Vincent de Paul Bailly, and Galabert.

<sup>3</sup> Strictly speaking, the first Mass of a young priest is that of his ordination day. However, the expression "first Mass" is often used for the one he celebrates the next day, alone at the altar or surrounded by concelebrants. For Fr. Pernet his "first Mass" took place at Clichy on Easter Sunday, April 4, 1858. For Fr. Saugrain, it took place at Auteuil. "First Mass" can also refer to the Masses said on the following days for the first time in a particular chapel or church.

<sup>4</sup> This is a classic term in the theology of priesthood; the character is the seal, the *sphragis* of the sacrament, received from the bishop.

## For Further Research and Reflection

### On the ordination of the first Assumptionists

- On the ordination of Fr. d'Alzon: *Letters*, vol. A, p. 759-770.
- On the ordination of Fr. Picard, Daniel Stiernon, *Pages d'Archives*, December 1967, p. 611. E. Lacoste (Baudouy), *Le P. François Picard*, 1932, Chap. III (p. 29-45).
- On the ordination of Fr. Vincent de Paul Bailly: Rémi Kokel, *Le P. Vincent de Paul Bailly*, Paris, B.P., 1943, Chap. II, p. 21-30.
- On the ordination of Fr. Pernet, Postulation, *Le P. Etienne Pernet, fondateur des Petites Soeurs de l'Assomption*, Paris, B.P. 1901, Chap. III, p. 22-35.

## For a Personalized Reading

- What can you cull as Fr. d'Alzon's main ideas about the priesthood in this letter?
- Does the spirit of the Assumption seem to you to be clearly delineated in this letter? What expressions of it do you recognize?
- From what you know, did Frs. Pernet and Saugrain fulfill the wishes and prayers of Fr. d'Alzon in becoming priests?
- God "*loved above all things*" --- shouldn't this be the permanent spiritual ideal of every priest?

## Fr. d'Alzon and His Friend, the Poet Jean Reboul (1859)

On March 12, 1859, the city of Nîmes wanted to give a feast at the Félibrige\* by inviting three of its founders: Roumanille, Aubanel, and Mistral. These three poets were received with fanfare at the Collège de l'Assomption by Fr. d'Alzon, Rev. de Cabrières, his right-hand man, Rev. Barnouin, the treasurer of the school, and Mr. Germer-Durand, the dean of studies. To this day a commemorative plaque hangs in the hall of honor at the entrance and serves as a reminder of that historic event; the celebration continued the next day at the city hall in Nîmes. But it was at the prep school that the guests participated in a festive banquet where many glasses were raised in their honor. A description of the events was published in the *Armana provençau* in 1859. The Nîmes poet, Jean Reboul, had

several reasons for being there. The baker-poet was one of Fr. d'Alzon's closest friends; he wrote of Fr. d'Alzon in one of his letters, "*He is a fine and worthy clergyman, very distinguished in his way of doing things, charitable to a fault, and ardent in his ministry.*" The man was already a celebrity in 1838 when, on Tuesday, July 30, he was paid a visit by the illustrious Chateaubriand\*\* who spent a few hours in the city and went to the Reboul home, an event that gave rise to this anecdote by the visitor, "*I found him in his bakery and I spoke to him without knowing to whom I was speaking, unable to distinguish him from his Ceres\*\*\* companions; he took my name and he told me that he would go to see if the person I was seeking was at home. He soon came back and introduced himself. He led*

*me into his storeroom; we went through a labyrinth of flour sacks and climbed a kind of ladder into a small nook as in a room of a windmill. There we sat and chatted. I was as happy as in my attic in London and happier than in my ministerial chair in Paris....."*

One can imagine that Fr. d'Alzon was received in the same way! Certainly there must have been a bit of a cooling off of the friendship in 1848 when the haughty legitimist Reboul reproached the vicar general for his apparent change of heart to Republican ideals. Things quickly returned to normal, however, and it is said that Fr. d'Alzon even received advance copies of some literary productions of the poet, in addition to his loaves of bread. In 1852 the imperial government wanted to give him a decoration that he declined, saying that *he didn't think that he had become a monument yet.*" In May 1864

Reboul, who had once studied law, a career that he had to abandon because of his ever increasing responsibilities, died. The street on which he lived, *rue de la Carreterie*, was changed and named after him. In 1867 a monument was erected in the Lafontaine Garden and Bishop Plantier had a medallion placed on the house where he was born. Not wishing to be outdone, Fr. d'Alzon had a Latin inscription placed above the main door of the house at the intersection of Rue Jean Reboul and Rue Trois Maures, not set back far from the Arena (Roman amphitheater): *Hic Ioan Reboul vixit et obiit 1796-1864.* Those interested in old Nîmes will enjoy leafing through a few pages of the flowery poetry, with its faded charm, of this rather original poet, who may no longer have the savor of his flour but still retains the taste of friendship.

*...The applause of the guests followed the words of the 'félibre' of the Gardens [Roumanille]<sup>1</sup>. In his turn, Aubanel<sup>2</sup> got up and said, "O Muse of the countryside, without being clothed in silk, you are so beautiful, Muse of the Provençaux! From high in the hills where you often run when blows in the oaks, when blows the mistral, come down quickly, come down right here, and offer the guests our warm thanks."*

*The applause of the guests then accompanied the verses of the 'félibre' of the Miourgano (in Provençal, miourgano means pomegranate). Mistral<sup>3</sup> got up and spoke thus to the assembly, "Noble city of*

*Nîmes that welcomes the 'félibres' so well, may your children always be happy and free! May your name rank among the first throughout the centuries! May your crocodile always preserve us from the serpent! May the peace of the good God remain with you and may your palm tree flourish!''<sup>4</sup> Applause accompanied the verses of the 'félibre' of Belle-Vue and the allusion to the coat of arms of Nîmes in the last verses thoroughly pleased the citizens of Nîmes.*

*Finally, the one who had crowned the 'félibres', the venerable and handsome Reboul, arose. Here is what he said, "I drink to the Mireio, the most beautiful mirror in which the Provence has ever been reflected... Mistral, you are going to Paris; remember that in Paris the stairs are made of glass! Do not forget that it was a good Catholic of the parish of St. Paul<sup>5</sup> who placed the crown upon your head!" So spoke Reboul as tears fell from his eyes; joy and emotion filled every heart. One might have concluded that an old prophet was imposing his hands on the head of his disciple and leaving him his mantle and his genius.*

Extract from "L'Assomption et ses oeuvres,"  
Reboul et l'Assomption, June 1, 1876, #35, p. 82-84.

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<sup>4</sup>The Félibrige (more aptly Felibritge in Occitan) was a literary and cultural association founded in the mid-19th century by Frédéric Mistral and other Provençal writers to defend and promote the Occitan language and literature. It was founded on May 21, 1854, in Châteauneuf-de-Gadagne (Vaucluse), by Frédéric Mistral, Joseph Roumanille, Théodore Aubanel, Jean Brunet, Paul Giéra, Anselme Mathieu and Alphonse Tavan. The word *félibrige* is derived from *félibre*, a Provençal word meaning pupil or follower.

<sup>5</sup>François-René, viscount of Chateaubriand (1768-1848), was a French writer, politician and diplomat. He is considered the founder of Romanticism in French literature. In 1802, he won fame with *Génie du christianisme* ("The Genius of Christianity"), an apology for the Christian faith which contributed to the post-revolutionary religious revival in France.

<sup>6</sup>Ceres was the goddess of agriculture and harvesters. "Ceres companions" refers to Reboul's assistants working the wheat of the field into bread.

<sup>1</sup> **Joseph Roumanille** (1818-1891), the "Félibre des Jardins" ('félibre' of the Gardens), was a Provençal writer and printer who published *Les Pâquerettes* in 1847, *Les Songeuses* and *Les Provençales* in 1851, and *Les Oeuvrettes en vers* in 1860. He was also responsible for the *Almanach Provençal* in which *Les Contes provençaux* were published in 1863.

<sup>2</sup> **Théodore Aubanel** (1829-1886) was a writer of Provence, one of the founders of the 'félibriges,' who collaborated on the *Armata Provençau* and published *La Grenade entrouverte* (*Miourgano*) in 1860, *Le Pain du péché* in 1878, and *Les Filles d'Avignon* in 1885, the latter condemned by religious authorities. In 1928 *Le Pâtre* was published and *Le Rapt* in 1944.

<sup>3</sup> **Frédéric Mistral** (1830-1914), the most celebrated of the 'félibrige' writers, began his literary career by writing his epic poem *Mireille* in 1851, a poem that assured his celebrity.

<sup>4</sup> A crocodile and a palm tree are featured on the Nîmes coat of arms, expressions of its foundation by Roman colonists, veteran legionnaires who had served in Egypt.

<sup>5</sup> This church in Nîmes was rebuilt, beginning in 1835, from plans by the architect Charles Quesel. The iron works were attributed to Boulanger builders of Paris, the locks and grills to Martin Nicolas of Nîmes, the stained glass windows to Maréchal, the mosaics to the Mora brothers, the bas-reliefs of the Stations of the Cross to Auguste Bosc, a sculptor of Nîmes, and the pictorial decorations to Flandrin. The principal works were completed in 1845 and the organ was built by Cavallé-Coll in 1848. The solemn consecration took place on November 14, 1849.

## For Further Research and Reflection

### On Jean Reboul and his works

- Jean Reboul, *Poésies de Jean Reboul de Nîmes, précédées d'une notice biographique et littéraire*, Paris, Delloye, 1842.
- Jean Reboul, *Les traditionnelles, nouvelles poésies de Jean Reboul de Nîmes*, Paris-Nîmes, Giraud, 1857.
- Jean Reboul, *Lettres de Jean Reboul de Nîmes, publiées avec une introduction par M. Poujoulat*, Paris, Lévy, 1865.
- Jean Reboul, *Dernières Poésies*, by Rev. de Cabrières, Avignon, Seguin, 1865.
- Eugène Baillet, *Biographies et souvenirs de quelques poètes-ouvriers*, Paris, Labbé, 1898.
- Jean Thomas, *Le Nîmois Jean Reboul, poète chrétien* in *De la Révolution à la Séparation de l'Eglise et l'Etat 1795-1905*, Lacour, 1987, p. 216-229.

## For a Personalized Reading

- What do you know about the 'félibre' movement and the 'Félibrige' in the renaissance of the Provençal language and culture in the 19<sup>th</sup> century?
- How does this attachment to the Provençal culture manifest itself today? What is your opinion of the religious manifestations that still accompany the folklore rituals proper to the 'félibres'?
- In general, did Fr. d'Alzon show interest in the literary expression of his day?
- Art in 19<sup>th</sup> century France preserved many religious expressions, especially biblical ones, before being laicized: in literature, painting, and music. Can you point out any examples?



# PART IV

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## 31

## A Choice Recruit, Vincent de Paul Bailly (1860)

In 1860 and 1861, Fr. d'Alzon, whose active and constant preoccupation with vocations is well known, had the joy of receiving as Assumptionists two sons of the Bailly family of Paris, the elder of the two, Vincent de Paul, and the younger, appropriately named Benjamin, whom he enjoyed calling "Culot".\* Up to this time, Vincent de Paul had been pursuing a professional career. He had three bachelor's degrees (in Letters/Humanities, 1848; in the Sciences, 1853; in Law, 1858) and had been refused admission at Saint-Cyr in 1850 (the foremost French military academy) and at the Polytechnic Institute in 1851 but was later granted admission in 1852; however, he chose to enter the administrative ranks of the Telegraph Company in November 1852 and was sent as station-master to Nîmes in March

1853. He lived at the Collège de l'Assomption where he taught some math courses and savored the company of the Founder, all the while pursuing his professional career at various sites. In 1856 he entered the service of Napoleon III's cabinet at the Tuileries Palace in a position of high confidentiality, the encoding of diplomatic correspondence. He resigned this post in 1857 for a less prestigious one. In 1855 he became a member of the St. Melanie Club and its director in 1857; he also fraternized with the leading citizens of Parisian society who attended the St. Vincent de Paul Conferences to which he had been introduced by his father in 1855; he was elected a member and vice-secretary of the Central Council of the Society (1855). His company in the worldly salons of the capital was much appreciated

because of his qualities of spirit, his distinction, and his good manners as well as his diverse competencies. He loved to attend the theater ---- and managed to maintain his faith. At the beginning of 1860, he told his parents that he had decided to become a priest and obtained a leave of absence from work so that he could begin a preliminary trip (which he said was “for relaxation”) that brought him as far as Notre Dame de la Garde in Marseilles. According to his notes, on April 16, 1860, he felt a calling to join the company of Fr. d’Alzon for whom he had retained a certain nostalgia. He went to Nîmes where he placed himself under his direction in June 1860 and followed a preparatory retreat. On the evening of July 2, 1860, it was decided that he would begin the Assumptionist novitiate. During the remaining summer months he had an opportunity to travel to Switzerland. He resigned from his job with the Telegraph Office on September 30, 1860, and arrived in Nîmes on October 15 after stopping by Notre-Dame du Puy even though he was heart-broken at the thought of leaving his sick father and his reduced family. On October 21, Fr. d’Alzon gave him the Assumptionist habit in the presence of one

of his fellow workers, Mr. Pouget, who was allowed, by exception, to attend the ceremony. Coming into contact with Fr. d’Alzon had inflamed Vincent de Paul with the generous apostolic spirit he discovered at the Assumption. In November he returned to Paris to be at the bedside of his ailing father, who died the following April (April 12, 1861). During this whole time, he placed the direction of his life and of his conscience in the hands of Fr. Picard, who was then the master of novices at Auteuil, Rue La Fontaine, at the residence of the Religious of the Assumption. It was in these circumstances that Vincent de Paul discovered a piece of land for sale at the beginning of December, 1860, at Rue François Ier 8, where, eventually, a thriving, enterprising apostolic community would be established. On September 17, he returned to Nîmes to go on a retreat that ended his novitiate, which had been reduced by a year thanks to a dispensation. On October 31, he made his first, and also his final, vows in the presence of Fr. d’Alzon and by November 7 he was already in Rome for theological studies at the Jesuit College, at the Minerva University of the Dominicans, and at St. Apollinaire Institute (pre-

sently the Pontifical Lateran University), a period of studies that was as hurried as his time of initiation to religious life. On January 1, 1863, he was ordained a priest

in the chapel of Bishop de Villanova Castellani after a 20-day retreat at the house of the Vincentians at Montecitorio.

*I believe, my dear friend, that your trip<sup>1</sup> has come to an end and that here you are now a “complete” man for having seen so many glaciers and experienced the baptism of snow on your hands and knees<sup>2</sup>. Alas, my older sister has also ended her earthly pilgrimage<sup>3</sup>. And you know what it’s like to lose a sister<sup>4</sup>. To be sure, she has left us the greatest of consolations. Her confessor told me that she was a saint of the first order by virtue of her spirit of faith, her enormous charity, and by how delicate her conscience was. Still, the ways of God are unfathomable and one must not pray less for those one loves. I recommend my sister to the prayers of your entire family.*

*I will be in Paris the evening of the 7<sup>th</sup>; and if you would like to drop by Auteuil the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup>, you can be quite sure you’ll find me there.*

*The horizon is getting quite dark over Italy<sup>5</sup> and I am trying to offer the hospitality of Nîmes to a number of professors who might want to come here to teach. Herod’s persecution brought about the dispersion of the apostles and marked the hour that the Gospel was brought to the Gentiles<sup>6</sup>. In the hands of Providence everything becomes an opportunity, even to study Roman theology without going to Rome<sup>7</sup>. You know what Garibaldi is up to<sup>8</sup>.*

*Offer my best wishes to your parents; remember me to Benjamin<sup>9</sup>; and be assured, my dear child, of my most tender friendship.*

*E. d’Alzon*

**E. d’Alzon to Vincent de Paul Bailly, Lavagnac, July 27, 1860, Letters, Désiré Deraedt edition, Rome, 1991, vol. III, p. 266-267.**

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\* “Culot” in French can have two meanings on which Fr. d’Alzon may be playing: first, in familiar terms, it means the “last-born” of a family, as Benjamin was; but, second, it also means “cheeky” or “nervy,” as Benjamin could be.

<sup>1</sup> The young **Vincent de Paul Bailly** (1832-1912), before arriving in Nîmes for his preparatory retreat, had traveled through western France. On July 6, 1860, he left Nîmes and spent a while traveling to

## A CHOICE RECRUIT, VINCENT DE PAUL BAILLY (1860)

Lyons, Interlaken (Switzerland), Luzerne, Einsiedeln, and Strasbourg. It is known that he was back in Paris on July 26.

<sup>2</sup> At the time of Vincent de Paul Bailly, there was no technical equipment for hiking in the mountains. You simply had to use your hands and your feet as you climbed over snow-covered rock formations.

<sup>3</sup> **Augustine d'Alzon** died on July 15, 1860, at Montpellier. She was buried in the family tomb in the cemetery of Montagnac, next to Lavagnac.

<sup>4</sup> Allusion to the death of **Adrienne Bailly** (1831-1854), the first of the Bailly children, who died in Poland.

<sup>5</sup> Following the Treaty of Zurich (November 1859), the unification of the Italian peninsula was underway. The revolutionary movements forced Napoleon III to accept the union of Piedmont to central Italy (1860), which deprived the Pope of all his States, except the Latium that he was able to keep until 1870.

<sup>6</sup> According to Acts 8:1 and 11:19.

<sup>7</sup> Such was not the case for Vincent de Paul since he studied theology in Rome (between November 1861 and 1863) with his brother Benjamin and Augustin Gallois, living with the Polish Resurrectionists at St. Claude des Bourguignons.

<sup>8</sup> In the summer of 1860, Garibaldi was rounding up supporters in favor of Italian unity on the southern part of the Italian peninsula (i.e., anti-royalist patriots, those who desired a republic). He was trying to fill the peoples of Sicily, Calabria, Campania, and Apulia with the hope of a republic. Garibaldi also hoped to get the center of Italy (Latium, the heart of the Papal States) to support his movement. If he succeeded, some thought it would mean the end of the Papal States, the exile of the Pope, and the loss of Church goods and institutions. In the event something like this occurred, as d'Alzon remarks, one might (be forced to) study Roman theology outside of Rome.

<sup>9</sup> Benjamin Bailly, the future Fr. **Emmanuel-Joseph** (1842-1917), a student at the Assumption school in Clichy, received the habit there from Fr. Charles Laurent on May 30, 1861.

## For a Personalized Reading

### On the religious formation of the two Bailly brothers

- Rémi Kokel, *Le Père Vincent de Paul Bailly, journaliste et pèlerin, 1832-1912*, Paris Bonne Presse, 1943, 195 pages.
- Adrien Pépin [Castel], *Chronologie de la vie du P. Vincent de Paul Bailly*, Rome, 1964, p. 125-276, and *Le P. François Picard et le P. Vincent de Paul Bailly et les luttes de presse*, Rome, 1962, 602 pages.
- Siméon Vailhé, *Souvenirs pour un centenaire. Le P. Emmanuel Bailly sup. gen. des A.A.*, Paris Bonne Presse, 1941, 63 pages.

## For Further Research and Reflection

- In your opinion what explains the preferential affection and treatment that Fr. d'Alzon always accorded the future Fr. Vincent de Paul Bailly?
- What can be said of the relative dispatch that characterized the religious and theological formation of Fr. Vincent de Paul Bailly?
- In looking at events in life, how does Fr. d'Alzon read things through the eyes of Providence? Are there certain disadvantages in too quickly drawing moral lessons from the simple conjuncture of events?
- Why did Assumptionist students in Rome seek lodging in other religious communities? What advantages were there for them in doing so?

## The Assumption in Bordeaux (1860)

The city of Bordeaux welcomed the Religious of the Assumption in 1860; Mother Marie-Eugénie de Jésus founded a community there at the end of August at the request of Cardinal Donnet, archbishop of the diocese at the time. The sisters opened their house on *Rue Terre Nègre* (what is now 370 Wilson Boulevard), a precarious venture, as is often the case with new foundations. Fr. d'Alzon came himself to visit them at the beginning of December of that same year and brought the support of his brotherly concern to the one who had been named treasurer-builder in these difficult times. She had even given herself the nickname, *Sister Jeanne of Misery*. The sisters were able to begin the construction of their convent school in 1870, a building which was eventually completed in 1900, following the

plans of the architects Aymar Verdier (1818-1880) and Jean-Jacques Vallon (1841-1916) in a mixed Roman-Gothic style, quite prominent even today on the Bordeaux skyline. Schools established by various congregations were multiplying in the city. The Religious of the Assumption were the first to open one for girls, the counterpart of those for boys run by the Jesuits (*Saint-Joseph de Tivoli* – 40 d'Eysines Avenue) and by the Marianists (*Sainte-Marie Grand Lebrun* – 164 Charles de Gaulle Avenue). Then it was the turn of the future Oblates to discover Bordeaux at the time of the war of 1870. The two Franck sisters, Jewish converts who were receiving spiritual direction from Fr. Picard, moved their Paris orphanage for girls to the outskirts of Bordeaux in the town of Latresne to a property called the *St. Joseph du*

*Rocher Hermitage* (owned by the family of the Count of Bonneval). In 1893 it would move to Bouscat, nearby, to the *Bel-Air* property and would give birth to another academic establishment in the city, St. Anne's Prep. After 1908 this institution was administered by the Augustinian Sisters of the Consolation, a diocesan congregation which rejoined the Oblates in 1991.\*

The Assumptionists did not land in Bordeaux until 1892, well after the death of their founder. But they arrived with fanfare in a bold purchase of a former theater, *the Alhambra* (on Rue d'Alzon), where they organized a number of important social and financial works. This foundation suffered a serious setback in 1901 when the Assumptionists were expelled from France or obliged to maintain themselves in clandestine isolation as diocesan priests, as Fr. Ignace Druart had to do. In

1910, they were asked to take charge of the chapel of *Bolaresque*, which would officially become the parish of *Notre Dame de Salut*, in the Caudéran section of the Mirande estate. In 1923, Bordeaux was chosen as the site of the Assumptionist headquarters for the province of Western France. The provincial house moved several times: 22 Rue Mirande (1923-1951), where a residence was built under the direction of Fr. Arthur Deprez; 97 Rue de la Croix de Seguey (1951-1960); 132 Rue Lacanau (1960-2006) where the religious built St. Monica's Chapel. In the fall of 2006, not without regret, the Assumptionists, forced to close one house after another, were finally obliged to bring their more than a hundred-year old presence in Bordeaux to a close, barely a year after the community of the Little Sisters of the Assumption withdrew.

*My dear daughter, I am going to kill two birds with one stone. Fr. Hippolyte brought your first letter yesterday or the day before; I just received another through the mail today. This letter will be a reply to both.*

*First of all, let me say that I am very happy to hear of all the details you sent about your house<sup>1</sup>. Since you already have 12 students, you can rest assured that you will have many more shortly. And, unless you receive better advice, maintain a certain class of student so that later on you can open a school free of charge and have it said that you*



*evangelize the poor. It would do you well to move in this direction and since you are successful without engaging in any charlatanism, don't resort to any. Your proximity to the Jesuits should be quite helpful to you*<sup>2</sup>.

*Don't worry about me anymore. I'm taken up with ploughs digging up half-meter furrows, with storehouses, with roadways, with farms and farmers, with vineyards, alfalfa, mulberry trees, clover, sheep, cattle, mules, the woods, rye, olives, ditches, mills, floods, wine-cellar, vats and barrels. Is that enough? Well, that's what's keeping me busy, not counting everything else! I have become a landowner*<sup>3</sup>. *I have become quite earthly and I'll end up becoming a worldly Jew. That's where I'm at --- very low, very low.*

*As for you, my child, I think that you should work continually on your character and ask Our Lord to strengthen your will. You know that St. Andrew Avellino made a vow to resist his own will at all times. How hard, but how beautiful! Without making a similar vow, you can still work a little harder to resist your own will.*

*It's quite possible that I'll pay you a little visit at the beginning of December*<sup>4</sup>; *but I can't say so absolutely. Please convey all my best wishes to your Mother Superior, to Sr. Jeanne of Misery, and to all your sisters, and trust me, my child, that I shall rejoice greatly on the day I find out that my daughter has become a saint*<sup>5</sup>. *Your father.*

*E. d'Alzon.*

*Please send my best wishes to Mr. Daguilhan*<sup>6</sup>. *Put off your penances, if you are tired.*

**E. d'Alzon to Sr. Marie-Margu rite MacNamara, Lavagnac, November 11, 1860, Letters, D sir  Deraedt edition, Rome, 1991, vol. III, p. 347.**

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<sup>2</sup>Due to historical circumstances, there was a division among the Oblate Sisters and one group eventually became the Augustinian Sisters of the Consolation (who rejoined the Oblates in 1991).

<sup>1</sup> This initial installation at the property on Rue Terre N gre in the boarding school of the Dominicans of the Third Order was quite provisional.

<sup>2</sup> St. Joseph's School in Tivoli.

<sup>3</sup> Fr. d'Alzon's technical farming vocabulary, which is impressive, comes from his frequent stays at Lavagnac. His mother was the owner of the family's estate and had died in October 1860. Fr. d'Alzon was, with his only living sister, **Mrs. de Puys gur**, heir of this legacy. He gave her the estate of Lavagnac

## THE ASSUMPTION IN BORDEAUX (1860)

that she preferred and he acquired for himself the house at Le Vigan, the surrounding property and the land at Montau, a vast agricultural area in the township of Saint-Pons de Mauchiens; this does not include the cash they split. Mr. d'Alzon, ill and quite diminished, lived until 1864 and enjoyed a generous pension until his death.

<sup>4</sup> The R.A. community in Bordeaux was composed of nine sisters at the beginning: **Sr. Marie-Cathérine Combié** (1828-1870), superior, **Sr. Marie-Thérèse de Commarques** (1811-1882), treasurer, **Sr. Marie-Marguerite MacNamara** (1826-1909), headmistress of the boarding-school after the departure of the Dominicans of the Third Order. These three pillars were accompanied by three young nuns just out of novitiate, **Sr. Jeanne-Marie Pérouse** (1834-1911), **Sr. Marie des Anges Hugues** (1839-1901), **Sr. Marie-Agathe de Laroche** (1838-1878), and three lay sisters, **Sr. Marie-Clémence Roure** (1835-1878), **Sr. Marie-Rémi Perthus** (1839-1921), and **Sr. Marie-Jacqueline Henry** (1832-1894).

<sup>5</sup> On December 16, 2006, a miracle attributed to Mother Marie-Eugénie de Jésus was accepted by Pope Benedict XVI, paving the way for her canonization which took place in Rome on June 3, 2007.

<sup>6</sup> **Mr. and Mrs. Daguilhan** were a couple from Bordeaux, the parents of one of the first twelve students at the R.A. boarding-school. They were also outstanding benefactors for the Religious of the Assumption at the time of their foundation in Bordeaux.

## For Further Reflection And Reserach

**On the Assumptionist families in Bordeaux:**

- Booklet by Francis Faye, *Un siècle de connivence, une architecture originale*, illustrated edition (Couvent des Religieuses)
- Jean-Paul Périer-Muzet, *Cent quatorze ans à Bordeaux* in A.T.L.P. (newsletter of the French province of Assumptionists), 2006, #208, pp. 32-34.
- *Les Origines de l'Assomption*, vol. IV, Tours, Mame, 1902, pp 47-58.

## For a Personalized Reading

- What advice does Fr. d'Alzon give to this new foundation? Do the more personal considerations appear to be well-balanced in relation to the more mundane matters or those of a collective nature?
- What difficulties does a new foundation face? In the present case, were they a stimulus or a hindrance? What support needed to be found?
- Do you know of foundations where Assumptionists and Religious of the Assumption were called upon to help each other?
- Bringing about the birth of the Assumption in a particular place takes time, energy and spiritual vigor. What makes a foundation last, on the one hand, or fail, on the other?

## Women of Holiness, Women of the Church (1861)

**I**t was through the witness of women, the first to receive the light of the Resurrection, that Christianity was born. On that point, history has not changed and Fr. d'Alzon makes allusion to it in this letter to Mrs. de La Prade, which accompanied his reflections following a pilgrimage to *Saintes-Maries de la Mer*. In affection and prayer, the Virgin Mary gathered the apostles in the Upper Room around her. Did not Fr. d'Alzon, always generous with his money, intend in 1861-1862 to acquire in Jerusalem *Mary's Tomb* for the Religious of the Assumption and the *Upper Room* for the Assumptionists? These are two symbolic sites that still speak to people rooted in the faith.

The presence and symbol of woman at the center of the faith

have not had in Christian history all the happy consequences that we might have expected from a clear understanding of the Scriptures, due to interpretations that were more cultural than truly evangelical. Nevertheless, the Church in its fundamental teaching, except for some misguided and even pseudo-theological ecclesiology that was as grave as it was hurtful, has continuously placed great value on the eminently positive role of women in the everyday life of the Christian faith. Women saints, missionaries and martyrs grace many altars. But it is equally true in this regard that the ministerial Church, exclusively masculine in its hierarchical structure, from top to bottom and inversely from bottom to top has always preferred virgins or martyrs, silent and

dried out in their tombs, to women who speak out, to hermits, prophets, visionaries, ecstatic mystics and beneficiaries of apparitions, too human and too alive. It took the Church till the 17<sup>th</sup> century to concede to women religious an apostolic form of life, the Council of Trent having tied feminine religious life to the protection of a strict cloister. Even St. Francis de Sales was not able to free the Visitation nuns, who were forced to live the mystery that their name implied symbolically in the corridors of their cloister! Visiting was certainly the aim of their Rule, but it was a one-way street, from exterior to interior, and behind a grill! It took the sly St. Vincent de Paul, cunning as a son of the peasantry, to found a series of apostolic women of consecrated life in the Daughters of Charity and to give them as their chapel the village church and as their cloister city streets and rural byways. For their dress he gave them the outfit of peasant women from the Champagne region of France, and as a bonus he gave them annual vows since they could not be considered true "consecrated women" according to provisions of Canon Law at the time. And yet the history of Christianity,

from its very outset in the Acts of the Apostles, is teeming with the presence of devoted, generous, apostolic women, missionaries in the primary and non-institutional sense of the word, catechists at home and at school, as they waited for the forms of commitment and recognition of our day: hospital and school chaplains, licensed theologians, directors of movements in the Church, and liturgical ministers. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Protestants resurrected deaconesses. Catholics budged a little as they recognized what was actually happening on the ground in the Church by way of the extraordinary contributions of women pioneers such as Pauline Jaricot\* in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Religious life became for many of them, foundresses and missionaries, an area of freedom and creativity. It was Paul VI who in 1970 declared as Doctors of the Church the first two women, Teresa of Avila and Catherine of Siena. Later John Paul II widened this opening as the first pope in history to write a *Letter to Women* in 1996. Would the religious history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century be complete without the glowing and moving faces of a Mother Teresa of Calcutta, an Edith Stein, a Madeleine Delbrêl\*\*?

What of the 19<sup>th</sup> century without a Bernadette Soubirous, an Anna-Maria Taïgi\*\*\* or a Thérèse of Lisieux, just to mention a few? No, this male-centeredness is not a fruit of the Gospel even if it is hard to eliminate in this Church that has received the promise of

eternal life and so easily leaves to others the task of freeing humanity. We can thank Fr. d'Alzon for his healthy questioning. Yes, *wings spread toward the heavens* will end up returning to touch the earth one day.

*Two days ago I came back from a pilgrimage to Saintes-Maries<sup>1</sup>. Why did God permit it that these women, his companions on the way, his faithful friends during his ignominious treatment on Calvary, who, together with St. John and the Blessed Mother, formed almost completely by themselves the nucleus of the Church when Jesus Christ died and whose love outlived his death, why were they thrown on this shore alone, helpless, without direction, and without apostolic activity? Why this abandonment? Why this apparent severity on the part of the Divine Savior? St. Martha preached the gospel in Tarascon<sup>2</sup>; St. Mary Magdalene is the companion of the angels<sup>3</sup>; tradition accords to the St. Marys nothing but sand, sea, and an unhealthy climate. What happened when one of them died, what went on in the soul of the other? What a trial this abandonment meant, what merits these apparently useless sufferings gained! One of them bore the head of her son, the first apostle to be martyred; the other carried nothing with her except the memory of the cross and resurrection. That was enough for both of them. May your faith be enough for you, my very dear child, and may it help you to spread your wings toward the heavens!*

*Good-bye and a thousand best wishes in Our Lord.*

*E. d'Alzon*

Emmanuel d'Alzon to Mrs. de la Prade, Nîmes, April 19, 1861, *Letters*, from the Désiré Deraedt edition, Rome, 1991, vol. III, p. 447.

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\*Pauline Jaricot (1799-1862) was the foundress of the work of the Catholic Mission, a world-wide organization which funds and supports the work of Catholic missionaries and which gave birth to the Propaganda Fidei (Propagation of the Faith).

\*\*Madeleine Delbr  l (1904-1964) was a French convert and street missionary often compared to Dorothy Day.

\*\*\*Anna-Maria Taigi (1769-1837) was an Italian mystic and Third Order Trinitarian known for her extraordinary charity. She was a wife and mother of seven who was beatified by Pope Benedict XV in 1920.

**Mrs. de La Prade** or Laprade had Fr. d'Alzon as a spiritual director. Her maiden name was de Guiraud and her family was from Limoux, in the Aude department.

<sup>1</sup> The Saintes-Maries de la Mer is a pilgrimage center in the Camargue region on the Mediterranean coast, a typical site with its fortified Romanesque church and the Camargue museum; it is an annual meeting-place for Gypsies. Here, according to tradition, pilgrims honor three women exiled from Judea: **Mary, the mother of James**, the sister of the Blessed Mother, **Mary Salome**, mother of the apostles James and John, and their black servant **Sara**, who also took refuge there.

<sup>2</sup> Another tradition popular in the Midi of France: **St. Martha**, sister of Mary and Lazarus, would have disembarked at Marseilles and would be the founder of Christianity in Tarascon.

<sup>3</sup> **St. Mary Magdalene** is one of the women witnesses of the Passion and Resurrection, possibly, as her name would suggest, from the town of Magdala. Contemporary cinema, more concerned with erotic stereotypes than historical accuracy, has not hesitated to transform this saint into a simple woman in love with Christ. She is sometimes confused, according to a tangled tradition, with the sinful woman who anointed the feet of Jesus with perfume (Lk 7:37) and also with Mary of Bethany. A tenacious tradition attributes to her the foundation of the convent of Saint-Baune. V  zelay, in the Yonne department with its wonderful basilica, an example of Burgundy Romanesque art, is also a Mary Magdalene pilgrimage center (cf. *Cahiers suppl  ment Evangile*, #138 of 2006, consecrated to the figures of Mary Magdalene).

<sup>4</sup> One must be careful not to confuse the family relationships. On the one hand, there is **James the Greater** and his brother John who, according to the gospels, were the sons of Zebedee; this James died by the sword (Acts 12:2) on orders from Herod Agrippa around the year 44. Legend makes of him the apostle of Spain, whose feast is July 25; his remains would have been brought to Compostella and would have roused Christians to expel the Moors. On the other hand, **James the Just or the Lesser or the Minor**, son of Alphaeus, is another apostle, identified as a "brother of Jesus" (Mt 13:55), interpreted in some traditions as a cousin, son of the Blessed Mother's sister. The New Testament presents this James as one of the leaders of the early Christian community in Jerusalem. He was stoned to death in 62 and wrote the letter that bears his name. His feast is May 11.

## For Further Reflection and Research

On women in theology, the Church and social history

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- Yvonne Pelle-Douel, *Etre femme*, Paris, Seuil edition, 1967, 271 pages.
- George Duby and Michelle Perrot, *A History of Women in the West*, 5 volumes, Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Michelle Perrot, *Les femmes ou les silences de l'histoire*, Paris, Flammarion, 1998, 493 pages.

- Christine Bard, *Les femmes dans la société française au XXème siècle*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2004, 285 pages.
- Suzanne Tunc, *Brève histoire des femmes chrétiennes*, Paris, Cerf, 1989, 296 pages.
- Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, Crossroads: New York, 1990, 416 pages.
- *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World*, May 31, 2004, Vatican website.
- Marie-Thérèse van Lunen-Chenu, *Femmes, féminisme et théologie*, in *Initiation à la pratique de la théologie*, vol. 5, Pratique, Paris, Cerf, 1983, p. 267-322.
- *Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People: On the Role of Laity in the Church and the World (Christifideles laici)*, December 30, 1988, Vatican website.

**more in English**

- George Tavard, *Woman in Christian Tradition*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973, 257 pages.
- David M. Scholer, ed., *Women in Early Christianity*, Studies in the Early Church, vol. 17, New York: Garland Publishing, 1993.
- Bonnie Thurston, *Women in the New Testament: Questions and Commentary*, Companions to the New Testament, New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1998.
- Gail Collins, *America's Women: Four Hundred Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates, and Heroines*. New York: William Morrow, 2003.
- Glenna Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman: Woman's Power and Woman's Place in the United States, 1630-1970*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

## For a Personalized Reading

- In the beginning of Christianity, isn't it a fact that women significantly outnumbered men? How does one explain their "inferior institutional status"?
- What do you think of the possibility of women one day gaining access to the ordained ministry? In this regard what are the arguments that the Church puts forth? Why?
- Do Jewish and other Christian traditions take a different approach in this regard?
- In Christian history, have we not often witnessed in the Church sins of misogyny or other cultural, sexist biases? What is the situation like in your country?





## Industrialization of the Gard Department (1861)

**I**t is not easy to find evidence in Fr. d'Alzon's correspondence of the economic development of his department of the Gard, even if there are lots of financial notes regarding loans and purchases, construction projects and sales, and financial details of every sort, especially with Mother Marie-Eugénie, his feminine alter ego, both of whom were faced with similar congregational obligations. Neither Fr. d'Alzon nor his favorite correspondent was a first-line industrial entrepreneur or Wall Street wizard. Nevertheless, Fr. d'Alzon, as a pastoral organizer of the highest order, could not but already be interested in parish planning for those zones undergoing intense economic development and in the construction of new places of worship to respond to the spiri-

tual needs of these populations, beginning especially in Nîmes. For its part the 19<sup>th</sup> century was an important century for the rebuilding of a number of ancient churches damaged during the French Revolution. Development of the metallurgical region of Alès (the Rochebelle and Tamaris neighborhoods) and the coal basin of La Grande Combe led to the exodus of the rural population from the hill country of the Cévennes and the Ardèche and meant adapting the ecclesiastical infrastructure and creating the new parishes.

One may regret that the texts of Fr. d'Alzon hardly allude to all of these transformations, but Churchmen are more sensitive to the social and religious consequences of the human landscape than to the developments of the industri-

al scene. There is no evidence anywhere that he ever entered a textile mill, an oil plant, or a coal mine. It is known that he became familiar with the reality of orphans of the Halluin center, employed in the shafts of the Brebis coal mines near Bully (Pas de Calais). If he was invited, on the occasion of a visit, by local industrialists, he was most certainly received in a salon in their city residences, rather than in a machine room or excavation area. The work world does not often lend itself as a place of worship except for occasional celebrations by various organizations; more often than not it discourages worship. Yet in Nîmes Fr. d'Alzon's name was popular in craftsmen's and workers' neighborhoods of the city because he was close to this "white" population which espoused both anti-Protestant sentiments and Legitimist, monarchist convictions. With the industrial expansion under the Second Empire and the spread of socialist doctrines, the new working masses turned rather toward material gains and socially divi-

sive ideologies. The slogans and rallying cries of the day rejected the clergy and Church realities and placed them alongside other classes considered adversaries or unremitting enemies such as the new business class and the old nobility. The Christian models of charitable assistance such as youth clubs, agricultural colonies, factories with a paternalistic bent, and workers' clubs were regarded by the proletariat as so many false screens and deceitful friends than as means of building a just society. The Church was still searching among the different reform movements of the day (the traditionalist school of Angers with Le Play, the Fribourg school with Bishop Mermillod, the liberal school with Leroy-Beaulieu) for the elements of a solid social doctrine, which finally arrived with the publication of the encyclical *Rerum novarum* (1891). *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, written by Marx and Engels in 1848, put the Church nearly 50 years in arrears in addressing this reality sufficiently.

*My dear daughter,*

*I just arrived from Alais and I had a conversation with Mrs. Varin about her daughter's affairs<sup>1</sup>. Truly, this time, she seemed quite reasonable; she told me that she is proposing to pay approximately*

20,000 francs if she can sell the quicklime oven in Lanerte<sup>2</sup>. She plans on paying the entire sum in two or three years. What she wants to be sure of is that Isaure will not remove the 2,000 that has been set aside for her agricultural colony<sup>3</sup>. Evidently the lack of a silkworm<sup>4</sup> harvest is seriously affecting the owners in the region. But if it is true that she can sell Lanerte, which belongs to her, then she can be afforded the time to do so. But, in the meantime, if you need capital<sup>5</sup>, here is what I propose. My trust is earning not 4 ½ % but 5. So, on the 90,000 I can cede 30,000 to Josephine<sup>6</sup> who would deposit the capital she wants to withdraw. I would let you negotiate the sum of 60,000 francs that you would use for yourself, if you need to. The interest would be paid to me by Isaure's annuity, allowing Mrs. Varin to reimburse me when she wants to and I would use the capital to buy stocks here, as I intended to.

It seems to me that this arrangement can be completed without any great inconvenience. However, your knowledge in business matters trumps mine; I fear making mistakes. Take a good look at this matter because I might possibly be able to sell my trust here. Here's how. Mr. Silhol, a banker in Alais<sup>7</sup>, is making enormous profit in the mines where Mrs. Varin makes her money. Perhaps he will find it a good placement and Mrs. Varin could propose something to him. Send me an answer to let me know if you approve of this and I will write to Isaure. Mrs. Varin feels a bit hurt by you.

Goodbye, my daughter. All the best in Our Lord.

E. d'Alzon

E. d'Alzon to Marie-Eugénie de Jésus, Lavagnac, January 29, 1861, *Letters*, vol. III, Désiré Deraedt edition, Rome, 1991, p. 405.

<sup>1</sup> **Mrs. Jean-Baptiste Varin- d'Aineville** (1882) was a young widow, mother of three, Cécile, Amédée, and Isaure who became a Religious of the Assumption with the name of Sr. Jeanne-Emmanuel (1838-1890). The head of the family, Jean-Baptiste (1805-1857), a friend of Fr. d'Alzon, was a mining engineer. His wife was a patroness of charitable works and a spiritual directee of Fr. d'Alzon. She spent her time between Alès and the family chateau in Servas, near Salindres, which in fact consisted of two chateaux, the old one of medieval origin, and the so-called new one, built in the time of Mr. Varin. Until 1926, Alès was spelled Alais. In this letter, the family business transactions concern the payment of the dowry of Isaure who had become a Religious of the Assumption.

<sup>2</sup> It is impossible to find this site on an ordinary map. The quicklime ovens were built at natural sites often composed of shale areas such as in Brancoux-les-Taillades (Gard), where an 1856 sample has been preserved. Natural quicklime was used in agricultural areas to enrich the soil.

<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Varin directed an agricultural colony, that is, in line with the social and charitable model of the day, a family enterprise that employed, preferentially, young orphans to raise crops and bring in the harvest. The supervised youth learned a profession. This enterprise is akin to the contemporary work of the Orphelins d'Auteuil of Fr. Roussel. At various times, the Assumption had agricultural colonies (Mireman, Andrinopolis, Kebernès) and orphanages (Arras, Toulouse Grand-Allée, Douvaine). This type of apostolate and social work is still alive in Romania (Barati), Vietnam (Saigon), and the Congo (Bumtumbo).

<sup>4</sup> Silkworms at the time suffered from an infectious disease because of micro-organisms producing fermentation and putrefaction; at the time, people attributed the disease to "spontaneous generation." It was the biochemist, **Louis Pasteur** (1822-1895), who, through his experiments, especially those in the Alès region in 1865, succeeded in wiping out sheep blight, chicken cholera, and rabies by the practice of what has since become known as "pasteurization." The practice of vaccination against rabies in people in 1885 assured him world fame. The thread of the silkworm fed the network of spinning mills and textile factories scattered about the valleys of the Cévennes, well represented in Nîmes by the production of shawls, a recognized specialty.

<sup>5</sup> Capitalist practices began in France under the Second Empire thanks to the development of banking networks connected to heavy industry (textiles, metallurgy, coal mining, mechanical and naval construction), to the development of national and international commerce, and, of course, transportation. Means of circulating money multiplied: banks, stock markets, and joint stock companies.

<sup>6</sup> **Joséphine Fabre** (1825-1896), of the Nîmes bourgeoisie, was very attached to Fr. d'Alzon and the Assumption.

<sup>7</sup> Fr. d'Alzon's knowledge of economics, which came as a result of his aristocratic origins where fortune was traditionally linked to the possession of land and its exploitation, was quite different from more modern ideas of the great bourgeoisie into which Marie-Eugénie was born, whose fortune was made (and unmade as well) in the whirlwind of commerce, banks, the railroad, and industry in general.

<sup>8</sup> This certainly refers to a certain **Auguste Silhol**, known as a banker in Alès in 1861. Our sources also speak of a rich family in Alès, **Henri Chamboredon**, a banker and property-owner of the former bishop's residence in Alès, and **Auguste Chamboredon**, a wealthy industrialist, who built a silk factory in 1853.

## For Further Reflection and Research

Concerning industry in the North of the Gard Department in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

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in English

- Jeff Horn, *The Path Not Taken: French Industrialization in the Age of Revolution*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006, 383 pages.
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## For a Personalized Reading

- What economic language does Fr. d'Alzon make use of? How does he enter into the play of financial instruments for placing money?
- What do you know of financial and stock market mechanisms which, by means of lending, borrowing, and credit instruments, make money invested in the form of capital and stocks work?
- Did Church teaching on usury and private property, which tends to apply moral norms to the lending of money, evolve in the 19<sup>th</sup> century? Was there not quite significant change? What are the first encyclicals concerning economic and social matters?
- Religious congregations that were in full expansion in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had great financial needs. What were their sources of revenue and their resources?



## A Caravan from Nîmes on Pilgrimage to Rome (1862)

There is nothing more savoury than the correspondence exchanged by Fr. d'Alzon and the young Vincent de Paul Bailly, then a student of theology in Rome. The latter gladly played the role of intermediary or procurator for all matters which Fr. d'Alzon entrusted to him: requests to the sacred Congregations, inquiries for information, taking the necessary steps to obtain relics, indulgences, apostolic blessings, etc..... to the point that one might wonder at times how this student of ours found time for his studies! It is true that from our vantage point here in Rome in the 21<sup>st</sup> century one can see that this way of doing things has not entirely disappeared, even if it means that some of the students have to add years to their studies and play the

role of unofficial procurators! Whatever we might think of these similarities, Fr. d'Alzon put our good Brother Vincent de Paul in charge of overseeing, for the end of May and the beginning of June, the reception of 65 priests from Nîmes, led by Bishop Plantier and his Vicar General: overall organization, transportation, visits. It was not an easy task, the convents having been requisitioned by troops there or by general chapters, most of the hotels being too expensive, and the rest being "flea dens," in Vincent de Paul Bailly's words. The Nîmes pilgrims found refuge in the *Cappellete*\* of the *Viminal* facing St. Mary Major. Of course, the program foresaw visits to various basilicas and ancient monuments, as well as ceremonies including the famous canonization of the

Japanese martyrs in the presence of 300 bishops on June 8, 1862. But Fr. d'Alzon was also quite busy with another matter: it was, in fact, during this stay in Rome that through multiple contacts with cardinals of the Curia a private audience with Pope Pius IX was arranged during which Fr. d'Alzon felt that he received a mission to Eastern Europe. This mission took on real flesh at the chapter of September 1862. Fr. Galabert generously volunteered to be the pioneer of what would be called in the Assumption the *Mission d'Orient* (the mission to Eastern Europe), to be established somewhere in Bulgaria. There was also question at the time of an eventual fusion of the Resurrectionists and the Assumptionists; Fr. d'Alzon had met Fr. Jerome Kajziewicz, the superior general at the time, on the ship to Rome and he seemed to be quite favorable to the idea. Fr. Jerome Demetriades, a young Byzantine-Rite Resurrectionist priest, a Greek born in Turkey, to whom Fr. d'Alzon gave the nickname *Girolamo, hide yourself quickly,*

even became an Assumptionist novice in January 1864 with the express permission of Pius IX. He left for Eastern Europe in Fr. d'Alzon's place in May 1864 to visit Fr. Galabert and returned to France with two young Bulgarians. However, he himself hastily took leave of the novitiate on January 2, 1865, without further ado. The projected union with the Resurrectionists cooled off quickly as well. This pilgrimage to Rome which ended on June 15 with an arrival back in Nîmes on June 17, therefore, had unexpected and quite indirect consequences. Fr. d'Alzon was turned away from his projects in Palestine, notably the foundation of a Maronite seminary. He was convinced by Pius IX to go and pitch the Assumptionist tent in Bulgaria, but not at Andrinopolis where the Resurrectionists maintained their headquarters. Rather, he intended to found an Oriental rite seminary for Bulgarians and nourished in his heart plans in the Orthodox world to *counter the entire Photian schism.*

*This letter will be given to you by Misses Combié and Fabre, two of my spiritual daughters<sup>1</sup>, whom you saw at my Mass; receive them graciously.*



*Dear Friend,*

*You have full authority for the cook<sup>2</sup>. Since we will lodge at the Viminal<sup>3</sup>, be so kind as to prepare everything, except the sheets, towels and table-ware which we will bring ourselves. Is it possible that some priests will prefer to lodge downtown? They'll have to handle that themselves. I'll write again; by then, you will have partition screens to protect those who are more reserved.*

*Since writing these few lines, we have received several letters from you; you are the most precious errand-runner we could have possibly found under the dome of heaven. Your inventiveness really makes me enthusiastic and proud, as if I were the one involved. As to an intermediary from Nîmes, neither I nor Mr. Barn(ouin), even if he is from Nîmes, can hardly leave. If you can find a few rooms around the Impériale<sup>5</sup>, I think that a few of the V.I.P.s will take them; but don't lose sleep over it.*

*Messrs. Bouisse and Corrieux<sup>6</sup> will be part of the caravan. You can mention that to Mr. Bouisse and offer him my sincerest compliments and warmest thanks. I believe that Mr. Barre<sup>7</sup> will send you the necessary information, if not in tomorrow's mail, at least by Thursday. We'll be bringing the bed linen with us. I presume that you've hired domestic help for the rooms. Farewell! You are a son that is not only admired but loved; how much I long to see you again!*

*E. d'Alzon*

*P.S. Dear friend, the day we arrive, come to pick us up with two carriages and two omnibuses: the omnibuses for the 'omnes'<sup>8</sup>, the first carriage for the Bishop, the second for the stewards who will then be able to arrive an hour before the others. If Mr. Bouisse wants to come with you, it would be very kind of him. Would he not be able, given his considerable influence, to obtain a travel permit for us and send it to Civita Vecchia? Could you or Mr. Bouisse come to meet us at Civita? Please reserve an altar at the cathedral so that the bishop or one of his priests can say Mass; and please foresee breakfast. We will send you the final details on Thursday.*

**E. d'Alzon to Vincent de Paul Bailly, Nîmes, circa May 10, 1862, *Letters*, Désiré Deraedt edition, Rome, vol. IV, 1992, p. 56-57.**

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\* The Antico Palazzo Rospigliosi hotel, formerly known as the Hotel Cappellette di San Luigi, was a former renaissance palace built in 1585.

<sup>1</sup> **Juliette Combié** (+1900) and **Joséphine Fabre** (1825-1896), whose profiles are described by Fr. George Tavard in *Le Père d'Alzon et la Croix de Jésus*, Rome, 1992, p. 85-94, together with those of **Eulalie de Régis** (1826-1867) and **Clémentine Chassanis**, were members of the group known as the Adorers (*Adoratrices*).

<sup>2</sup> He had to organize everything for the Nîmes pilgrimage, including the unavoidable questions of transportation, lodgings, and meals.

<sup>3</sup> The *Viminal* Hill (Latin *Collis Viminalis*, Italian *Viminale*) is the smallest of the famous seven hills of Rome. By extension it is the name of a section of the city, of a hotel or a family B&B, near St. Mary Major, the actual Termini train station (Via Cesare Balbo, #31).

<sup>4</sup> Fr. d'Alzon is in no way niggardly with his compliments. He appreciated the inventiveness, the spirit of initiative, and the savoir-faire of the young Vincent de Paul Bailly to whom the Assumption already owed the discovery, in 1860, of a piece of land to build on in Paris, on Rue François Ier.

<sup>5</sup> Located on the internationally famous 'Via Veneto' (#24), not far from the Spanish Steps and Trevi Fountain, the Hotel Imperiale, built in the 19th century, has always been considered one of Rome's most elegant hotels.

<sup>6</sup> The persons mentioned here are priests from the diocese of Nîmes: **Henri Barnouin** (1860-1895), founding pastor of St. Francis de Sales parish in Nîmes, **Jean-Joseph-Marie Bouisse** (1812-1872), pastor in Alès and brother of Fr. **Ubalde Bouisse**, **François Corrieux** (1807-1880), pastor of St. Gilles of Gard and later of the cathedral in Nîmes. Mr. **François Bouisse** (1779-1868) was a Frenchman from the diocese of Avignon, possibly a relative of the two Bouisse brothers who were priests, founder of a family boarding house or hotel near the Piazza Venetia, #32 Ara Caeli, but certainly not the luxury hotel Minerva built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, #69 Piazza della Minerva, where Stendahl stayed in 1832 and later General San Martín, the hero of the independence of Argentina and Peru. It is true that in 1841 this famous hotel belonged to a Frenchman, **Joseph Sauve**, where many bishops stayed, in particular those coming from France.

<sup>7</sup> **Fr. Louis Barre** (1814-1872), a former medical doctor and professor of Fr. Galabert, was ordained in Rome in 1858.

<sup>8</sup> Fr. d'Alzon is not unaware of the Latin etymology of the word omnibus ('omnes' or all), a means of mass transportation, as were the 'diligence' or the 'imperial' drawn by horses, or the 'rattletrap' --- all in differentiation from the carriage, the hackney, the gig, the light carriage, not to mention the coach.

## For Further Research and Reflection

### About the pilgrimage of the priests of Nîmes to Rome in 1862

- Roger Aubert, *Le pontificat de Pie IX (1846-1878)*, Paris, Bloud and Gay, 1952, p. 996-997 and 248-250, in the collection *Histoire de l'Eglise depuis les origines jusqu'à nos jours*, vol. 21.
- Anatole de Cabrières, *Le pèlerinage de Rome* in *Annales Catholiques de Nîmes*, I (1862), p. 298-314, 393-410, 505-530.
- *Chroniques* in *Annales Catholiques de Nîmes*, I (1862), p. 224, 274-275 (A. Grancolas), 276-280 (A. Grancolas), 330-332.
- Jean Maurin, *La politique ecclésiastique du Second Empire de 1852 à 1869*, Paris, 1930, p. 602-604, 607-618.
- Jacques-Olivier Boudon, *L'Épiscopat français de l'époque concordataire (1802-1905)*, Paris, A.N.R.T., 1991, 2 vol. (608 p.).

## For a Personalized Reading

- In the Assumption, pilgrimages are a major apostolic activity. In your opinion, what constitutes a substantial pilgrimage program?
- What does Assumption today offer in terms of pilgrimage options?
- What kind of distinctions would you make between a travel agency, a pilgrimage council, a cruise, and an organization for pilgrims?
- Rome still remains a pilgrimage destination. What would you consider to be 'must' stops on such a pilgrimage? Have you participated in one or organized one?



## An Adventure: Constantinople (1863)

**F**r. d'Alzon wanted to see for himself what things were like in the Eastern European Mission, the foundation of which had been entrusted to Fr. Galabert at the end of 1862. Accompanied by a former student at the Collège de l'Assomption, Louis Guizard, he made his one and only trip during his long life to the East, using the services of Messageries Maritimes, which from its base in Marseilles served the ports of the Levant. On February 18, 1863, he stopped in Athens where many before him, such as Chateaubriand in 1811, author of the *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem*, wrote their reflections on the Acropolis; he walked in the snow at the Parthenon; and he finally disembarked at Constantinople, Byzantine capital of the Ottomans, on February 21. He was welcomed with open arms by Fr. Galabert at the headquarters of

the apostolic patriarchal vicariate under the direction of Bishop Paolo Brunoni. He preached the Lenten series in the Church of St. John Chrysostom and a retreat to the Sisters of Sion. He received delegations of Bulgarians, visited Chalcedon twice (on March 2 and April 15), and participated in the meetings of the Latin Commission that was considering the conditions to be established for the Bulgarian Union, while Fr. Galabert and Louis Guizard were in Bulgaria to accompany Msgr. Francis Malczinski, a Ruthenian prelate who had joined the Byzantine Rite and had been designated, after the Sokolsky episode\*, as administrator of the Uniate Bulgarians. His trip ended on April 16. Fr. d'Alzon stopped in Rome on the way back to submit a report containing his observations detailed in 21 points. This report, submit-

ted to Cardinal Barnabo of the Propagation of the Faith and then transmitted to Pius IX on June 11, was reviewed in General Congregation but did not receive official approval because it could have been perceived by the Orthodox as an effort to Latinize them.

In fact, there were four specific points in Fr. d'Alzon's report that could be objectively cited to explain why Vatican diplomats were not favorable and felt that his recommendations were inopportune: the re-establishment of a Latin Patriarchate in Constantinople, the creation of an archdiocese in Chalcedon, the nomination of Msgr. Malczinski, and the establishment of direct diplomatic relations with the Porte<sup>\*\*</sup>, all of which, it is true, were presented in a very Franco-French vision by the founder of the Assumptionists. At the same time, Rome encouraged without reservation the opening of Eastern schools and seminaries to be funded by the Assumption (Bishop Brunoni was very clear on this matter!) as well as Fr. d'Alzon's preaching in France on behalf of works in the East.

One might legitimately ask if this trip of Fr. d'Alzon to the East met all his expectations. Certain-

ly, it allowed him to understand first-hand the thousand complex realities and intertwined threads of the East, bound up in the inextricable tangle of politics, religions, rites, nationalities, and particularist interests. Looking at nothing but the question of the actions of Latin-Rite Catholic congregations, their sometimes centuries-old rivalries didn't help much among the Capuchins, Passionists, Resurrectionists, and Vincentians, accentuated by cultural and linguistic divisions with a veneer of nationalism. The Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith was quite upset with the publicity which Bishop Chailot gave to this trip in the columns of the *Correspondance de Rome*, which had published extracts of Fr. d'Alzon's report and made him say, to use d'Alzon's own words, "the greatest stupidities." Though the Assumptionist adventure in the East had already been launched, admittedly in a timid way, it was nevertheless firmly anchored thanks to the exemplary apostolic work of Fr. Galabert. On his return from Constantinople, Fr. d'Alzon brought back a seed that had symbolic value for attracting future vocations in the person of young Pierre Descamps, who at

the time was only 15 years old. In the East, adventures do not simply become mirages of the imagination. Time allows the humble grains sown in the field to acquire starry brilliance. Doubts which never cease to put one's dreams into question become prophetic promises snatched from heavenly hope. Visions that derive from some concealed present can never

completely disappear under the sun of this hope. A living presence hurls them into an ever-invisible kingdom of possible future stars. For a realist only illusions remain, but a man of faith transforms these illusions into struggles, dreams and myths that nourish his projects, thereby allowing his adventure to be written in gold letters in the Book of the Living.

*Dear Friend,*

*Time flies and eternity draws near. Remember this saying <sup>1</sup> which was inspired by a funeral procession that I just saw go by. I will be leaving in eight days<sup>2</sup>. By the time you receive my letter, your Father will be on the water, if he is not in it or under it, as Fr. Pernet has said.*

*Fr. Galabert has returned from his Bulgaria. He'll probably be founding a school in Philippopolis in five or six months; but something has to be done between now and then to find him some resources. Bishop Canova, a very holy Capuchin<sup>3</sup>, rather than brushing him off, is drawn to him and keeps telling him that the consolation of his last days would be to see him build a school there. Where did the Poles<sup>4</sup> get their 12,000 francs<sup>5</sup>? Bishop Canova will give him land and a small sum to get started. It would be up to us to give him some resources for the children. The bishop told him that he would have students in no time. May God hear him!*

*Please tell Msgr. Soubiranne<sup>6</sup> that I am preparing a report to be presented to the Holy See and that I will send it to him. I hope to get a ticket at the embassy. If I had had to go through you, I wouldn't have gotten it. The last time, in Marseilles, we didn't get one ---which made me a bit upset with you, no offense intended. You did well in having Fr. O'Donnell<sup>7</sup> removed from the Dames.*

*In recent days Turkey discovered that Russia had tried to create a military diversion in the Danube region; this provokes the Porte to*

*counter the schism and makes it see how useful it would be to make these provinces Catholic.*

*After thinking about these things quite a bit, I believe I'm all set for the following project: to buy a piece of property near Constantinople with a nice view, but in the country and, therefore, less expensive, in order to build a seminary there; then, in Constantinople, a small house with a chapel<sup>8</sup>. If God sends us vocations, that is, in my opinion, the best way to go. Fr. Galabert's boarding school in Philippopolis will probably allow us to have a certain number of good vocations. Yesterday I attended an interview between Bishop Brunoni and the envoys from Sistovo<sup>9</sup>. Since we bared our teeth, they became more flexible. There only remains the question of local bishops that they are demanding and that they won't be given, or at least not without rigorous scrutiny, and as far as I am concerned I'm for that a thousand times over.*

*Good-bye, dear friend. I am a thousand times yours. Write to me in Rome. I'll be leaving in eight days, unless I don't get my ticket.*

*E. d'Alzon*

E. d'Alzon to Fr. François Picard, Constantinople, April 8, 1863, *Letters*, Désiré Deraedt edition, 1992, vol. IV, p. 258-259.



<sup>\*</sup>In 1861 Bulgarians seeking recognition by Rome sent a delegation, headed by the elderly Archimandrite Joseph Sokolsky, to negotiate with the Holy See. These talks were successful: Pope Pius IX himself ordained Sokolsky a bishop on April 8, 1861, and named him Archbishop for Bulgarian Catholics of the Byzantine rite. The following June he was recognized as such by the Ottoman government. But in June 1861, almost immediately after his return to Constantinople, Sokolsky disappeared under very mysterious circumstances, was forced to travel to Odessa on a Russian ship, and spent the remaining 18 years of his life in the Monastery of the Caves at Kiev. The exact details of this episode have never been revealed.

<sup>\*\*</sup> The Ottoman Empire is sometimes referred to in diplomatic circles as the "Sublime Porte" ("The High Gate" or "The Gate of the Eminent," in Turkish, Bâbîâli) or simply as "the Porte" ("porte" in French means "gate"), due to the greeting ceremony the sultan held for foreign ambassadors at the Palace Gate, which gave access to the block of buildings in Constantinople, or Istanbul, that housed the principal state departments. It also refers to the Ottoman Empire being the gateway between Europe and Asia.

<sup>1</sup> This saying is ancient, from Biblical wisdom (pious sayings) and philosophical thought, and was sometimes inscribed on sundials. It has multiple versions: "Time is the price of eternity" (Bourdaloüe); "time is a moving image of eternity" (Rousseau and Plato in the *Timæus*).

<sup>2</sup> Fr. d'Alzon left Marseilles on February 14, 1863, disembarked at Athens on February 19, and at Constantinople on February 21; he left Constantinople on April 16 for Rome where he arrived on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. He only arrived back in Nîmes on May 5, after an absence of two and a half months.

<sup>3</sup> **Bishop Andrea Canova** (+1866), Latin Vicar Apostolic of Sofia, granted Fr. Galabert the authorization to build a school at Philippopolis that opened in 1864 and was named St. Andrew, patron saint of the bishop. It was the seed of the future St. Augustine College in Plovdiv.

<sup>4</sup> The "Poles" are the Resurrectionists whose center in Eastern Europe was Andrinopolis, today Edirne, eastern Thrace, at the intersection of the Tunca and Maritsa Rivers, at the doorstep of Istanbul on the European side.

<sup>5</sup> This sum was a subsidy provided by the Oeuvre d'Orient or the Oeuvre des Ecoles d'Orient, founded in Paris in 1856, with Cardinal Lavigèrie as its president (Lavigèrie was the founder of the White Fathers, now known as the Missionaries of Africa). In Nîmes, Fr. d'Alzon was responsible for this work.

<sup>6</sup> **Bishop Pierre-Jean-Joseph Soubiranne** (1828-1893) was Director General of the Oeuvre des Ecoles d'Orient, successor of Lavigèrie who had been named bishop of Nancy (1863) before being transferred to Algiers (1867). Soubiranne became a bishop in 1871 as auxiliary of Algiers and, later, residential bishop of Belley (1880).

<sup>7</sup> **Fr. Edmund O'Donnell** (1796-1869) was the first English-language Assumptionist. He was asked to temporarily replace the chaplain for the Religious of the Assumption (the "Dames") at Auteuil, their general house. As the text implies, he wasn't well liked.

<sup>8</sup> The first Assumptionist foundation in Constantinople was only established in 1882, at Koum Kapou, in a Turkish Muslim quarter of the city, on the European side. Prepared by Fr. Galabert, it was directed by **Fr. Joseph Maubon** (1849-1932). Kadi Keuî or Kadi-Köy (Chalcedon) was the third Assumptionist foundation in Constantinople, founded after that of Phanaraki (1886), in 1895 on the Asiatic side of the city and on the territory of the parish which had been founded in 1858 by **Giuseppi De Negri** (1838-1892), an Italian priest. The questions of property, land, and buildings are not simple in Turkey. Andrinopolis remains the first Assumptionist foundation on Turkish territory.

<sup>9</sup> **Bishop Paolo Brunoni** (1807-1877), as Patriarchal Vicar Apostolic of Constantinople between 1858 and 1869, had jurisdiction over the Catholic Christian communities of various rites in the Ottoman Empire and was the first-line spokesman qualified to negotiate the Union of the Bulgarians with Rome. Sistovo (Sistov, Svistov) is a town in northern Bulgaria, on the banks of the Danube.

## For Further Reflection and Research

### On Bulgaria, Constantinople, and the Mission to Eastern Europe

- Ivan Sofranov, *Histoire du mouvement bulgare vers l'Église catholique au XIXe siècle*, Bibliothèque bulgare catholique, Declée & Cie, Rome-Paris-Tournai-NewYork, 1960, 400 pages.
- Siméon Vailhé, *Vie du P. d'Alzon*, Paris, Bonne Presse, 1934, vol. II, p. 366-370.
- Vitalien Laurent, *Le P. d'Alzon et les Églises gréco-slaves*, in *Mélanges d'Alzon*, Hal-Saint-Gérard, 1972, p. 282-301.
- Pierre Touvernaud, A.A., *Religieux et religieuses de l'Assomption au service de l'Orient chrétien (1863-1963)*, in "Pages d'Archives," third series, #6 (1965), p. 419-452.
- Étienne Fouilloux, *L'oeuvre orientale du P. d'Alzon vue par ses fils* in *Colloque Emmanuel d'Alzon dans la société et l'Église*, Paris, December 1980, Le Centurion edition, 1982, p. 199-212.
- "The Bulgarian Catholic Church," CNEWA, <http://www.cnewa.org/ecc-bodypg-us.aspx?eccpageID=74>, 2007.
- "Roman Catholicism in Bulgaria," Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman\\_Catholicism\\_in\\_Bulgaria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholicism_in_Bulgaria)

## For a Personalized Reading

- Were Fr. d'Alzon's apostolic preoccupations concerning the foundation of the Mission in Eastern Europe eventually realized? How?
- What do you know of the movement of a segment of the Bulgarian Church seeking unity with Rome in the 19<sup>th</sup> century?
- What internal and external financial means would a Congregation need to undertake foundations in the foreign missions?
- Isn't it essential for every mission of a congregation to include a religious perspective? Nevertheless, what obstacles might have arisen from denominational/confessional limits, tied to the inter-religious rivalry or ignorance of the 19<sup>th</sup> century? How did the Assumption fare in dealing with the question of native vocations?

## Miss Marie Correnson (1864)

**A**mong the families that Fr. d'Alzon visited frequently in Nîmes, there is one that deserves to be highlighted because of the foundation of the Oblates of the Assumption. The Correnson-Pleindoux family of Nîmes figured among the bourgeois elite of the city; Charles Correnson was a doctor, the son of a doctor and was married to a Pleindoux, herself the daughter and niece of doctors. Their son Henri (1850-1891), who was their only boy to reach adulthood, chose the same profession after his secondary studies at Assumption. Marie, the eldest of the couple's ten children, was born in Paris in 1842; the circumstances of her birth certainly affected her health, i.e. a train accident on the Paris-Versailles line that took the life of the explorer, Dumont d'Urville. She experienced a youth, both comfortable and

strict, current among young ladies of the time, whose education was entrusted to tutors, often more formal than refined. She chose Fr. d'Alzon as her spiritual director as did her friends Eulalie de Régie and Isabel de Mérinargues, and she took part in the various activities of the groups of young ladies of high society of Nîmes: Children of Mary, Adorers of the Blessed Sacrament, convent training. Between 1841 and 1845, the Correnson family and Fr. d'Alzon were neighbors on Rue des Lombards, they at #12 and he at #10 at the Hotel Grangent.

Already in 1858 Marie had been thinking of entering religious life, but in one of the established congregations. Compelled by the urgent requests for help and reinforcements that Fr. Galabert was sending him from the East, in 1863 Fr. d'Alzon had already be-

gun to seek the assistance of a religious congregation of women who would have the indispensable role of lending a hand in schools and hospitals in the East. When his expectations were not met because of unfortunate delays or because of the uncertainties facing established communities in undertaking something new, Fr. d'Alzon thought it best to start up a new congregation; however, he found it somewhat difficult to identify the person to be the foundation-stone on whom he could rely to assure the development of this nascent work. After several disappointments, he ended up supporting the young Marie Correnson, 23 years old in 1865; but her family refused to allow her to assume such a foundational role. There followed two turbulent and painful years for all involved. Marie hung on even though she met with opposition to her choice; she found herself placed by Fr. d'Alzon in 1867 at the head of a congregation that had already been in existence for two years. For Fr. d'Alzon, the founder, she was more a support in his old age than an equal partner, but she deserves credit for being the one that helped to shepherd the ambitious apostolic endeavor which placed the As-

sumption on the road of a yet uncertain Orient. In fact, the daughters of the Cévennes\* proved themselves to be true missionaries, in nature and faith solid and courageous, both in Bulgaria and Turkey. Shaken in her health by a tenacious diabetes and, after 1882, in her confidence in the Assumptionists, Fr. Picard having replaced Fr. d'Alzon at his death and governing with some rather restrictive forms of authority, Marie Correnson had to find new support from outside, to have her congregation of Nîmes recognized in 1893 against all opposition from Rome following two extremely difficult proceedings, and, in 1897, to hand the reins over to her assistant Mother Marguérite-Marie Chamska.

Mother Correnson, known in religious life as Mother Emmanuel-Marie of the Compassion, sacrificed her life and gave up her spirit on July 24, 1900, at the age of 58. As a sign of their fidelity to Fr. d'Alzon, the branch of the Oblates of Nîmes never abandoned the roads of Eastern Europe; they went to Marsivan in 1889, then Tokat and Amassia, three posts in Turkish Armenia that she accepted on the advice of the Jesuits.

*So, my dear child, it will be said that I am the first to write, because for the past eight days I have not seen you and you don't want to give me any news. As for me, I'm not in very good health. Still, I'd like to convince myself that this heat wave is over. There must have been a thunderstorm in the mountains above Le Vigan and the temperature has really cooled down, but not a drop of rain<sup>1</sup>. When you've finally decided that you hate the country, I figure you'll set up your summer residence in Le Vigan. You'll have beautiful meadows, plenty of refreshing water, lovely hills and chestnut trees that are only found in Switzerland. In many ways all that is missing is you. The poor Cévennes are in ruins, you know. There is Protestant agitation; a second temple (i.e. church) has been built with English gold<sup>2</sup>, but the Catholic population has been excellent. These good people believe that I will help them shake off the yoke of the Huguenots that weighs so heavily on them. As for me, I live with my novices; I pray a little, but not enough; I take walks, rest, and receive visitors, but rarely.*

*Would you tell Louise<sup>3</sup>, since she loves dolls, that I won a wonderful boy doll in a raffle that I intend to give her<sup>4</sup>; it says, "Mama." Let me know what is going on in your life, my child, what you've been saying and what you've been thinking. That dear little soul, I love it a lot, I assure you; but I cannot be indifferent to the envelope that protects it in this world. Give me news of this envelope. Will I have the time to wish you a happy birthday? I hope so, unless you see me arrive on August 16 or 17 --- something which isn't out of the question. That depends on time and a few letters I have to write.*

*Give my regards to your mother. A thousand best wishes to my other daughter<sup>5</sup>. Farewell, my dear child. I pray for you. Be assured that I always seek your perfection. I remain yours, with the heart you know.*

*E. d'Alzon*

*P.S. Pray for Bishop Gerbet<sup>6</sup>. It was a great source of suffering for me not to be able to see him again; it becomes even more painful when I realize that only Fr. Combalot remains here on earth of the host of priests that awakened in France the Catholic movement at a time forty years ago when, alas, so many slept! I have a hard time putting into words the sadness which these reflections cause me. Ask*

*God as well to send to his Church great and holy defenders, like those who are lying in the tomb before the battles come to an end. And yet how many assaults are still to be faced! My daughter, love the Church of Jesus Christ and let us love her well.*

E. d'Alzon to Marie Correnson, Le Vigan, August 10, 1864, *Letters*, Désiré Deraedt edition, Rome, 1992, vol. V, p. 144-115.

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\*The Cévennes Mountains surround Fr. d'Alzon's birthplace of Le Vigan. He recruited many of the first Oblates from this region. They were simple, hard-working young women, mostly of peasant stock.

<sup>1</sup> He is referring here to the well-known phenomenon of "dry" lightning storms in summer.

<sup>2</sup> This is an interesting note about the financial situation of Le Vigan at the time. All Churches and denominations exercised financial solidarity among themselves across boundaries. There is nothing here that is either surprising or scandalous.

<sup>3</sup> **Louise Correnson**, sister of Marie and the seventh child of Charles (1814-1875) and Théoline, née Pleindoux (1822-1909), remained single and died at the age of 87, the last of the family.

<sup>4</sup> Fr. d'Alzon was certainly lucky when it came to raffles. There is also mention in his correspondence of a doll he won in August 1865 (*Letters*, vol. V, p. 385-386 --- also in *Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon: In His Own Words/Dalzonian Anthology*, vol. 1, ch. 34). Progress has no limits, as this talking doll of 1864 demonstrates!

<sup>5</sup> This undoubtedly refers to **Augustine Correnson** (1844-1876), the second daughter of the Corrensons, very close to Marie. She thought about a vocation in the Carmel for a long time. Fr. d'Alzon often used the nickname Titina for her or Sister Jacqueline, thinking he could attract her to the Oblates. She joined neither the Assumption nor the Carmel; rather she entered heaven prematurely at the age of 32.

<sup>6</sup> Between 1824 and 1830 Fr. d'Alzon got to know many individuals in Paris involved in the Catholic renewal movement, among whom were **Fr. Philippe-Olympe Gerbet** (1798-1864), who was named bishop of Perpignan in December 1853 and who died on August 7, 1864 in Perpignan, a former disciple of Lamennais (1782-1854) and Fr. Combalot (1797-1873). Bishop Sibour was assassinated in January 1857, de Salinis died in 1867, Fr. de Scorbiac in 1846, and Bishop Parisi in March 1866.

<sup>7</sup> Here we can see an essential trait of Assumptionist spirituality, love of the Church to be sure; we enjoy seeing her called the Church of Jesus Christ, but in the mouth of Fr. d'Alzon the face of the Church has, above all, a certain ultramontane aspect.

## For Further Research and Reflection

### On Marie Correnson, her roots and her activities

- *Colloque Marie Correnson et les premières Oblates de l'Assomption 1865-1935*, Paris-Nîmes, 2000, 229 pages.
- Maria de Crisenoy, *Les Oblates de l'Assomption. De l'Orient désolé et des Chrétientés d'Occident à l'essor des Églises noires (1865-1954)*. Grasset, 1955, 257 pages, in the Collection *Les grands Ordres monastiques et Instituts religieux*, #25.
- Pierre Touveneraud and Sr. Soeur Marie-Léonie Marichal, *La fondation des Soeurs Oblates de l'Assomption*, 1978, 36 pages, in the series *Centenaire 1980*, #4.
- *Lettres de Mère Emmanuel-Marie de la Compassion, co-fondatrice des Oblates de l'Assomption et première Supérieure générale 1842-1900*, Brussels-Paris, 2005, 324 pages. Soeur Marie-Léonie Marichal, O.A., *Survол des champs d'apostolat des Oblates de l'Assomption*, Paris, vol. I and II, 1980, 99 and 84 pages; *Les Oblates de l'Assomption en Turquie*, Paris, 1983, 78 pages in the *Centenaire* series.
- Soeur Marie-Antonie, O.A., *Les Oblates de l'Assomption au service de l'unité en Bulgarie*, Paris 1980, 106 pages in the *Centenaire* series.

## For a Personalized Reading

- What thoughts and feelings does Fr. d'Alzon express in this letter? How does he manage to mix anecdotal, playful, and serious tones?
- What do you think of the relationship between Fr. d'Alzon and Marie Correnson? How did it evolve?
- Over time, the closeness of the Assumptionists and the Oblates has never failed? But what were the ups and the downs? Why?
- In your opinion, is there a spiritual art that needs to be cultivated when a priest addresses a female audience? In your opinion, what would characterize or shape such a style?





## A Torrent of Vocations for the Oblates (1865)

**T**he origins of the Congregation of the Oblates of the Assumption took place on the outskirts of Le Vigan, at *Rochebelle*, in May 1865. Fr. d'Alzon rented a beautiful bourgeois residence there, close to the road, embellished with a terraced park in which a statue of Our Lady had been placed and blessed with the title, appropriately so, of *Our Lady of Bulgaria*. Fr. Hippolyte Saugrain, the novice-master for the Assumptionists, also in Le Vigan, but in the birthplace of Fr. d'Alzon known as *La Condamine*, assisted Fr. d'Alzon greatly with this new religious foundation, which occurred, if not hastily, at least hurriedly. Still, to use his own words, Fr. d'Alzon led *with a stick* these women most of whom he had recruited himself in the course of his apostolic pere-

grinations in the Cévennes Mountains. In fact, it seemed like the Lord was *sending down a torrent of missionary vocations* on this new religious family. A woman co-founder was still needed, since Marie Correnson was not ready to assume a lead role that neither she nor her family desired. The first investiture with the habit took place at Rochebelle on August 14, 1865. Fr. d'Alzon had called upon the Religious of the Assumption for someone temporarily to form the battalion of young women of the Cévennes, all of whom were enthusiastic but quite inexperienced. The first superior nominated by Mother Marie-Eugénie de Jésus arrived from Sedan on July 25, 1865: Mother Marie-Madeleine de Peter (1823-1888), an exemplary religious in every way, much admired and loved by

her adopted daughters. The same cannot be said of her successor who arrived at the end of November 1866, Sr. Marie-Emmanuel Everlange (1827-1923).

So it was with much relief that he installed Marie Correnson as the founding superior at Rochebelle on June 27, 1867. He had given her the habit on the preceding April 7, keeping it from her parents who had taken a dislike to Fr. d'Alzon and were denouncing him to the nuncio. Marie Correnson agreed to go to Auteuil in July 1867 to be formed by Mother Marie-Eugénie in the practice of religious life, which she had only begun to learn. In the month of August she accompanied her all the way to Ems in Germany to take the waters, without Fr. d'Alzon who dropped the idea to avoid rumors in Nîmes. On her return, Mother Correnson preferred to settle in Nîmes, at Collège de l'Assomption (October 7), while waiting to find a

suitable "cradle" for her Congregation. This would happen in 1873 with the acquisition of the Puget house, Rue Séguier, which became the mother-house of the Institute. Already five years had passed since Mother Correnson had, the first of them all, pronounced her perpetual vows on April 18, 1868, in the hands of Fr. d'Alzon, followed the next day in the college chapel by those of the first five missionary Oblates sent to the East: Sisters Thérèse de Jésus Salze, Marie-Marguerite Bernassau, Valérie Sarrau, Colombe Balmelle, and Hélène Puech. On April 25, Fr. d'Alzon, Mother Correnson, and Mother Marie-Eugénie de Jésus accompanied them to Marseilles where they took the boat for Constantinople, to the great joy of Fr. Galabert. The Institute had embarked on the missionary way, a way it would never abandon, come flood or gale.

*My dear daughter,*

*I thank you for your kind letter and the enthusiasm you have shown for our Oblates. I believe, as you do, that the good God will bless them. They need to be formed little by little on the spiritual level, but, believe me, on the material level things are going better than you might think. I go there every evening, Fr. Hippolyte every morning. Things have visibly changed since you left<sup>1</sup>. Fr. Hippolyte is a long-time treasurer<sup>2</sup> who keeps a close eye on finances and understands*

*that a penny saved is a penny gained. Mrs. Arnal is also there<sup>3</sup>. Fr. Hippolyte had a bed set up for her in the mother superior's room. And even a hundred miles away, can you not see that the "numero uno" is either Mrs. Arnal or Fr. Hippolyte? If M[arie] de J[ordan]<sup>4</sup> comes, we'll welcome her but I doubt that the "numero uno" will change for all that. If Miss de Roche<sup>5</sup> wished to dedicate herself to this work, I don't think things would change in that case either. Believe me that we want to proceed slowly but surely. If there is one thing we absolutely need, it is a young woman, 32 years old, full of means and know-how. That woman is the the second of four sisters<sup>6</sup> who will enter with some 12,000 francs for the four of them. The eldest is 41 years old. The youngest says, "My sister will never go to Bulgaria; I will go. Let my sister allow me to go first." The eldest, or Fr. Hippolyte, answers, "There is a thousand francs to dispose of, including a store; the youngest is the more able of the two. She should remain." That's where things stand.*

*If need be, we could have this very intelligent young woman without the slightest problem; then, for the housework there's your Adeline, now Sr. Thérèse<sup>7</sup>, Miss de Serres' cook, whom all of Nîmes considers to be a treasure; and then there are dozens of vocations cascading down the mountains; then, lastly, there are those holy young women who are like the Apostles between the Ascension and Pentecost. What more could you ask for?*

*All your life you have been a woman in a hurry and the good God doesn't want us to be in a hurry. Did I ask you if Miss de Roche would like to join us? You can find out from Isabelle<sup>8</sup>. You haven't spoken to me about this dear child. Every morning Fr. Hippolyte spells out the material needs of the house; I, for my part, in the evening, spell out the spiritual side of things. You can see that we are making progress, oh so slowly and without making noise. Believe me, things are going well. They have a goat, the cherries they have are getting ripe, I suspect they are the ones who sent me some superb strawberries yesterday. So, they're getting along fine.*

*Mrs. Durand<sup>9</sup> told me that she has gotten to know and appreciate you more, that she has been quite happy to join forces with you on certain projects. I should add: she expects to die in Bulgaria.*

## A TORRENT OF VOCATIONS FOR THE OBLATES (1865)

*Farewell, my dear daughter. I'm not going to reread this letter. I am yours truly a thousand times over. When do you leave?*

*E. d'Alzon*

*Please believe that all the pages you write have their value and that I am convinced of that.*

**E. d'Alzon to Eulalie de Régis, Le Vigan, May 28, 1865, *Letters*, vol. V, Désiré Deraedt edition, Rome, 1992, p. 317-318.**

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<sup>1</sup> When the novitiate opened at Rochebelle on May 23, 1865, a "caravan" of friends and well-wishers came from Nîmes, among whom was **Eulalie de Gatimel de Régis** (1826-1867).

<sup>2</sup> **Hippolyte Saugrain** (1822-1905) was only 43 in 1865, but he had been a treasurer at Assumption from the beginning and would remain so throughout his life; he was of good Normand stock, attentive to needs but also to possible savings and to finding additional sources of revenue. He was not the one who invented what might be called the "spendthrift treasurer."

<sup>3</sup> **Mrs. Jean-François Arnal du Curel**, née Marie-Julie-Cléone Rigal (1820-1880), was a benefactor and woman of good works in Le Vigan, devoted to the Oblates, but before long was always getting in the way.

<sup>4</sup> **Marie de Jordan** was an acquaintance of the Countess Narbonne-Lara, a native of St. Hippolyte du Gard, whom Fr. d'Alzon wanted to see join the Oblates.

<sup>5</sup> **Miss de Roche** was an acquaintance of Eulalie de Régis, another of the so-called or presumed postulants who remained virtual.

<sup>6</sup> There is, it must be said, an oral tradition that speaks of four **Durand** sisters: Julie who became Sr. Marie de l'Annonciation (1823-1905), Rosalie who became Sr. Marie-Madeleine (1813-1900), both blood sisters. Philomène, ex-Sr. Marie-Philomène (1846-?) was in fact a relative. There was also another about whom we know nothing, including the baptismal name; she did not persevere either.

<sup>7</sup> **Adeline Salze** became Sr. Marie-Thérèse de Jésus (1835-1902), a native of Sauclières (Aveyron) and the first superior of the Oblates sent to the foundation of the Mission in the East, to Andrinopolis in 1868.

<sup>8</sup> **Isabelle de Mérinargues** (1834-1884) is ex-Sr. Marie des Anges.

<sup>9</sup> **Mrs. Eugène Germer-Durand**, who later became Sr. Cécile (1818-1886), did go to the Eastern mission but died in France at Clichy-sous-Bois.

## For Further Reflection and Research

### On the foundation of the Oblates

- Sr. Marie des Anges Clavier, *La septième petite pierre brute. Souvenirs de la fondation des Oblates de l'Assomption*, Paris, 1965.
- Emmanuel d'Alzon, *Fondation de l'oeuvre de la Bulgarie*, in *Écrits spirituels*, Rome, 1956, p. 1182-1184.
- *Documentation Biographique sur la vie et les vertus du P. d'Alzon*, Rome, 1986, vol. II, p. 699-702 and 720-729.

## For a Personalized Reading

- According to this letter, what image did Eulalie de Régis have of the first group of Oblates that came from the Cévennes Mountains? How does Fr. d'Alzon try to modify his correspondent's impressions?
- What do you know about the foundation of the Oblates and their earliest formation?
- How does Fr. d'Alzon seek to mobilize all of his acquaintances to secure the foundation of the Oblates? What congregations was he led to contact?
- Bulgaria was the first mission territory of the Oblates. How did they open themselves to other missions in later years?



## In the Heart of the Arènes: Bullfighting and the Corrida (1866)

**I**n Fr. d'Alzon's correspondence, we have only one allusion, in 1866, to the practice of bullfighting in Nîmes. This passage makes it clear that he wasn't one of the fans in the city! Besides, in 1853, his bishop, Most Rev. Plantier, had published a resounding decree against these games, definitively condemning what some call a sport, even an art. More than a century later, the issue is still part of an irreconcilable debate between partisans and their opponents, but we do know that the interdiction was lifted for the clergy. As a matter of fact, Bishop Jean Cadhilac, a bishop of Nîmes who died in 1899, was not afraid of appearing at this type of event in his Camargue outfit. In the Midi of today's France, branding ceremonies, cattle and

horse shows, bull and heifer races, cattle and horse herding, and other rituals connected with bullfighting are common currency. It wasn't the same in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the practice of the corrida in the Spanish style, that is, associated with the killing of the animals, was strictly prohibited. It was in 1853, for the first time, that such a spectacle was authorized in the arena (Arènes) in Nîmes. Tourist trains, organized by the Lyon-Mediterranean Line, brought large numbers of the curious from Marseilles and Montpellier. The entire city was literally filled with wave after wave of crowded strangers, even though it was not explicitly stated in the program that the bulls would be killed that day. More than 30,000 spectators filled the grandstands of the ancient amphi-

theater to over-capacity. It was in the face of the demands of a frenzied crowd that the authorities yielded. When the matador went to the base of the dais reserved for officials to request permission to measure himself one on one with the bull, from all sides there was applause, calls, and cries demanding the sacrifice. The authorities gave in and the animal received a mortal blow. The signal had been given and to the joy of the crowd a veritable carnage ensued. The second bull was literally "martyred" by clumsy executioners. The bloodied beast had to be taken away still alive and the public itself, horrified by the act of butchery in which it had participated, applauded once again when the authorities decided to ban any such killing in the future. Only ten years later, on May 10 and 14, 1863, two bullfights to the death were authorized with the renowned El Tato in the Arènes of Nîmes, to the exceeding glee of the citizens of Nîmes enamored of such spectacles. Municipal authorities had promised two bullfights and the

program announced "toros de muerte" (bulls to the death). The tickets sold out at one franc apiece. For the first sword, the Cuadrilla (the organizers) had called upon the most famous *matador* in Spain, Antonio Sanchez, nicknamed El Tato. Among the *picadors* ("lancers") was Calderon and among the *bandilleros* ("flagmen") El Cuco. They had planned on having Spanish bulls, but the commissioner in charge of commercial relations with Spain, Garcia-Pagès, was unable to obtain them on time; so, bulls from Camargue were used. Six bulls were stabbed, stuck with *bandilleras* (sharp barbed javelins) and killed according to the ceremonial used in Madrid arenas: torero costumes, padded horse harnesses, mule teams, banderillas, javelins, all the accessories, and bugle calls. In 1863 everyone admired the sangfroid, style, and skill of El Tato and his companions. But as Fr. d'Alzon pointed out in 1866, as far as bullfighting is concerned, it is not always the man that wins or the bull that loses.

*My dearest friend,*

*I'm thinking your proposition over. Being a founder, as the mother superior desires, or being a superior are two very different things. I fancy the first title; the second scares me a bit<sup>1</sup>. Under Pius IX I doubt*



*that it would be granted. Let's have people pray about it, but let's not be hasty.*

*A mother superior residing in Rome is best, in my opinion. Yet Fr. Véron is their eighth superior since I have been taking care of them..... on average, one every three years<sup>2</sup>. How long has Fr. Véron been the superior? It seems to me that he is at the end of his term, if it isn't over already. A little patience; it won't last.*

*Fr. V[incent] de Paul will have informed you that instead of a deficit of 24,000 francs, like last year, the prep school's deficit this year is 2,974 francs and change, including the interest for the investors. That's consoling. It is no less consoling to see the spirit of the religious and the teachers that we have on board for next year and that we are making progress in all areas. In this regard, there is only one thing to be said, "What is a battle won, if not a battle that we believe won."<sup>3</sup>*

*Tell Fr. Pernet that I will have people pray for his daughters<sup>4</sup>. Tomorrow I will celebrate Mass for them and I will have the Oblates here receive Communion for them. They are making a good impression and have an excellent way about them for young women who have little or no education<sup>5</sup>. The bishop remains remarkably well disposed toward Auteuil.*

*Nîmes has been saddened by three catastrophes. The night before last three railroad employees were killed on the Beaucaire line. Yesterday a toreador, killed by a bull, died instantly<sup>6</sup>. Today an inmate at the central prison killed a guard, one of his companions, and then slit his own throat.*

*Farewell, my dearest friend. Don't do things like that. Yours truly in Our Lord.*

*E. d'Alzon*

**E. d'Alzon to Fr. François Picard, Nîmes, September 3, 1866. *Letters*, vol. VI, Désiré Deraedt edition, Rome, 1993, p. 141.**

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<sup>1</sup> This letter refers to the Véron affair (**Paul Véron** 1815-1867). Véron, the ecclesiastical superior of the Religious of the Assumption, demonstrated exaggerated pretensions of jurisdiction. Mother Marie-Eugénie de Jésus sought to get out of the situation by asking Fr. d'Alzon to present himself as the Founder.

<sup>2</sup> Until 1866 the Religious of the Assumption in Paris had known a number of ecclesiastical superiors: **Fr. Combalot** (1839-1841), **Fr. Gros** (1841-184), **Fr. Gaume** (1843-1849), **Msgr. Sibour**, cousin of Archbishop Sibour (849-1852), **Fr. de la Bouillerie** (1852-1855), **Fr. Darboy** (1855-1858), and from 1859-1867, the seventh, **Fr. Véron**, who eventually calmed down and had the good taste to die suddenly in 1867, the pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Paris.

<sup>3</sup> Fr. d'Alzon knew his classics! There was a saying that went, "*only those battles are lost in advance that have not been fought.*" **Marshall Maurice de Saxe** (1696-1750), the brilliant victor at Fontenay in 1745 (during the War of the Austrian Succession) had written, "*a lost battle is one that we believe is lost.*" Fr. d'Alzon, always the optimist, re-wrote the phrase in a positive way.

<sup>4</sup> **Sr. Marie-Denise** (Marie de la Croix), one of the first companions of Mother Antoinette Fage, died in Paris on August 22, 1866, from an infection contracted while caring for victims of cholera.

<sup>5</sup> Fr. d'Alzon is referring here to the work that the Oblates were doing at the college in Nîmes.

<sup>6</sup> The municipal archives in Nîmes allow us to identify him: it was the Spaniard **Felipe Carrasco Matas** (1827-1866), who died from wounds on September 2, 1866. Already in 1845, on October 11, a Brother of the Christian Schools had been mortally wounded by an inmate, a death which led the brothers to withdraw from the Central Prison, a detention center in Nîmes.

## For Further Reflection and Research

- Adolphe Pieyre, *Histoire de la ville de Nîmes depuis 1830 à nos jours*, Nîmes, Catelan, 1886-1887, three volumes --- the most recent edition, Nîmes, Lacour, 1994, 3 volumes (*La première corrida en Nîmes*, p. 40, and *Reprise des corridas à Nîmes les 10 et 14 mai 1863*, p. 48).
- Bartholomé Bennassar, *Histoire de la tauromachie, une société du spectacle*, Paris, Les Éditions Desjonquières, 1993, coll. «Outremer», 278 p.
- Éric Baratay and Elisabeth Hardouin-Fugier, *La corrida*, P.U.F., 1955, in the collection *Que sais-je?* # 5568.
- Mireille Didrit, *Le rite dans le jeu. Une étude de la tauromachie*. Paris, Université Sorbonne, September, 1995.
- James F. O'Dwyer, *The Art of the Matador*, A.H. Clark (Glendale, Calif), 1988, 86 p.
- A.L. Kennedy, *On Bullfighting*, New York, Anchor Books, 2001, 176 p.
- Garry Marvin, *Bullfight*, University of Illinois Press, 1994, 256 p.

## For a Personalized Reading

- How did Fr. d'Alzon keep up with local news? What newspapers did he read?
- What do you get out of reading daily papers? Where do you get your news?
- Do you have an opinion on bullfighting: its practice, an art, a sport, the treatment of animals, ethics?
- Does the Church today have any particular teaching or doctrine with regard to sports in general? On bullfighting? What are the values the Church promotes with regard to ethics in sports?



## In All Confidence and Trust: a Spiritual Directee (1867)

**T**he practice of the Christian life in all eras of Christianity has been the object of different styles or teachings that can be discovered by studying manuals or advice reproduced in numerous spiritual texts. For those Christians who are particularly demanding or with special calls, the way of evangelical perfection is often accompanied by a personalized guidance that has received different names over time: spiritual direction, spiritual accompaniment, or spiritual discernment. Whatever the terminology, the essential has to do with the felt need to expose one's life to the experienced regard of a master, a guide, a pastor, a 'father,' the latter term describing a man or a woman. This need has been particularly felt in religious life where specific initiation al-

ways takes place under the guidance of an accredited master or mistress of novices.

Christian lay people may choose to submit the way they live the Gospel to the regard of priests or religious who, sacramental confession apart, welcome this particular ministry which demands of them, by virtue of their role as consultant-expert, a welcoming spirit, a listening ear, respect, discretion, discernment, a willingness to challenge, and an ability to call upon the Holy Spirit and his light. As to directees, they, too, must display empathy, trust, and similar spiritual effort so that exchanges and dialogue may be in tune with the Holy Spirit. For his part, Fr. d'Alzon dedicated a huge amount of attention, time, energy, and ink to spiritual accompaniment. As evi-

dence, one need only take a look at his voluminous correspondence where women religious and ladies of high society figure prominently, but also persons of every social or cultural condition. One can learn a lot by noting the principal characteristics of this spiritual direction: his attentiveness to individual persons, to their state in life, his desire to raise their souls to a more perfect, more generous, more considerate, more Church-centered life. In all things he seeks to favor that form of Christian life which consists above all in participation in the sacramental and liturgical life, rooted in a passionate love of the Church. Particular devotions hardly play a role in his advice. He was intent on ridding, “in a manly way” or “squarely,” illnesses of the souls such as scrupulosity, self-centeredness, withdrawal into oneself, narcissism or the more or less romantic escape into vague sentimentality or the torture of the passions. Fr. d’Alzon recommended the reading of the *New Testament*, the *Im-*

*itation of Christ*, and books that emphasized doctrinal content rather than facile piety, i.e. “spirituality lite.” The authors he preferred were those of the French School\* and especially St. Francis de Sales. When he recommended various religious practices and exercises, he was motivated by a concern for sobriety, duty of state, and a sense of balance, with a slight tendency toward the asceticism prevalent in his day, but without excess. Fr. d’Alzon was particularly sensitive to the values of apostolic commitment, a firm witness of the faith, and a clear desire to serve the Church, what one might call the pressure points of the Christian life as it is lived openly in the world and for the world in the spirit of the Gospel. These recommendations were nothing more than a reflection of his own spiritual life, at once firm, determined, and rich, far from what he called “the nature of cotton balls,” but it was not a spiritual life on his part that was void of kindness, tenderness, or humanity.

*My dearest daughter,*

*I would be grateful if you would send me the Pope’s speech and provide me with proof that I wasn’t so out of place in the cathedral giving a sermon that aroused such anger<sup>1</sup>; I said exactly what Pius IX said<sup>2</sup>. One has to support him; there is only one truth, so there is only*

*one truth to defend. Liberal Catholics are people who are preparing the death of society. I swear to you that I was never a liberal Catholic<sup>3</sup>.*

*I am here to rest a little. I come, I go, I'm here at a grave time in the life of the people of Le Vigan. Will the silkworms succeed or not? That's the question you hear everyone asking on the street. Ah, well, for the last two weeks no one has been able to give a definitive answer. I trust that Louis has recovered from the illness of which you spoke last time, since you don't mention it in this most recent letter. When will you be coming back definitively? You know that Alix has left for Thorens where her sister-in-law is quite sick<sup>4</sup>. I received news from them two days ago; they're really upset about Mrs. de Roussy's illness. My sister is still in Paris, but I am hoping to see her back soon. I am not sure what she's still doing there, unless she is waiting for the Exhibition<sup>5</sup> to be fully set up; as far as I am concerned, I have no desire to see it.*

*Would you be so good as to obtain a relic of St. Eulalie for me? I have a very special reason for wanting it. I am trying to write a short biography of Eulalie de Régis. If you could provide me with some information, I'd really appreciate it. Marshall MacMahon thinks that it's necessary to cut off the leg of the little imperial prince<sup>6</sup> and, even with that, it might not be enough. The Emperor declared that in that case he would fling himself into the Republic.*

*Farewell, my dearest daughter. A thousand kindnesses to Maurice<sup>7</sup> and my warmest wishes to your husband. Yours in Christ.*

*E. d'Alzon*

E. d'Alzon to Mrs. Louis de Giry, Le Vigan, May 11, 1867, *Letters*, Désiré Deraedt edition, Rome, 1993, p. 244-245.

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\*French School (*École française*) --- A development of the Catholic Reformation like the Spanish mystics and the Society of Jesus, it focused the devotional life of the Catholic faithful on a personal experience of the person of Jesus and the quest for personal holiness. This movement in Catholic spirituality had many important figures over the centuries, the first being its founder, Cardinal Pierre de Berulle (1575-1629). Others included Jean-Jacques Olier, the founder of the Sulpicians, St. Louis de Montfort, and St. Jean Eudes.

<sup>1</sup> This refers to a conference given on January 28, 1867 (not on the 26<sup>th</sup> as stated by Vailhé in his *Cronologie*) on the war against the Church, a conference preached by a sick Fr. d'Alzon *in spite of everyone* after an eight-day postponement; it is described as having been extremely brilliant and remarkably forthright.

<sup>2</sup> As a result of the Convention signed on September 15, 1864, France agreed to withdraw its troops from Rome with a promise from Victor Emmanuel II to hold back the Italian patriots who wanted to annex all of the Papal States. France implemented the terms of the Convention and withdrew its troops in September 1866 but it was not respected by the adversaries of the temporal power of the Pope (cf. circular letter of Ricasoli on November 15, 1866). Pius IX denounced this "hypocritical" agreement in his response to the Sacred College (end of December 1866) and to the officers of the Pontifical troops (December 27, 1866). Garibaldi tried to force the issue with his volunteers in September 1867 against Rome, but Napoleon III sent an expeditionary force to Civitavecchia that helped the Pontifical troops defeat the Garibaldi volunteers at Mentana on November 3. Pius IX did not renounce his temporal power or the defense of the rights of the Church. He surrendered only in September 1870 before the armed forces of Piedmont.

<sup>3</sup> For Fr. d'Alzon the order of the day never changed: *to be Catholic before all else*; but his argument here is more polemical than dogmatic. For if the truth is theologically "one" as is the Church in its dogmatic articulation, its translations, its expressions, or its perceptions cannot be uniformly and without stated precautions considered as such at least on the level of a healthy, human, and evolving historical presentation. The Apostles Creed clearly invites Christians to believe, in its fourth term, in "the Church, one, holy, catholic (that is, universal), and apostolic": this does not prevent one, even in a Church of Catholic confession, to speak, for example, of its own Oriental Churches. The infantile illness of Western Christianity which has undoubtedly been its, if not original, at least almost continual sin consists in having too often pretended to want --- at least in the hard-line enunciation of its formulas and curial practices --- to make everything uniform, centralized, Romanized, Latinized, that is, unified humanly speaking. We know what opposition history dealt such pretensions: rupture with the East and Reformation in the West. If Christ prayed that the Church might be one, he must have had his doubts that in taking the risk of placing her in human hands she would face the lasting terror of men and centuries that, as we know, have not been all united or holy or catholic or apostolic. The Gospel of John declares, "There are many rooms in my Father's house" (14:2). If Churchmen in Rome and elsewhere had read this closely, they would not have allowed the following outrageous expression to pass by without some note of comprehension, "Outside the Church there is no salvation," since John 1:9 says, "The Word is the true light that gives light to all men." Clearly, to be Catholic is more to seek the truth than to think of defending it as one's own, but it is first and foremost to preserve the bond of love. And on this level, the champions have not all been Catholics!

<sup>4</sup> **Louis de Giry** was the husband of his correspondent; **Alix** (Mrs. Paulin de Malbosc) was the first cousin of Mrs. Louis de Giry, née Constance de Roussy de Sales; the sick sister-in-law of Alix is **Renée de Brosses** (+ 1868), wife of **Eugène Roussy de Sales** (1925); **Thorens** is the town in Haute-Savoie where the ancestral family of the Roussy de Sales lived.



<sup>5</sup> The World Fair in Paris was inaugurated on April 1 by the Imperial couple. French industry gathered at the caravanseraï. The city of Nîmes was well represented: Arnaud-Gaidan Company and Flaissier Brothers won gold medals; Clément Gravier, Samuel Guérin, Germain and Sons, and P. Pallier took silver; in addition, nine businesses from Nîmes won bronze.

<sup>6</sup> **Marshall Edme Patrice Maurice MacMahon** (1808-1898) was undoubtedly more of a distinguished military man than a solid politician, and, in any case, not a medical doctor or surgeon --- which was better for the Imperial prince, **Napoléon-Eugène-Louis** (1856-1879), 11 years old in 1867; he had just had an operation on his hip in March 1867, carried out by the famous Nélaton, and had gone through it without anesthetic chloroform. The prince had had an accident doing mounted gymnastics. A period of convalescence at Luchon sufficed to assure the healing and give the lie to the pessimistic prognosis.

<sup>7</sup> **Maurice de Giry** (1847-1870) was the only son of the de Giry couple, a student at the Collège de l'Assomption. He died in Rome at the Porta Pia in September 1870.

## For Further Reflection and Research

### On spiritual direction

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- André Louf, *Être formé à l'accompagnement spirituel* in *Seminarium*, 1999, #4, p. 553-568.
- *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, Beauchesne.
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- Claude Savart, *Le P. d'Alzon et la direction spirituelle des laïcs, d'après sa correspondance* in *Colloque d'histoire 1980*, Le Centurion, 1982, p. 259-278.
- *L'accompagnement spirituel. Éléments pour une pratique*. Province of France, Assumptionists, Paris-Denfert, 1996, 19 pages (English edition, *Spiritual Direction: Some Practical Guidelines* in *Publications on Assumptionist Formation* #2, 20 pages).

### in English

- Jean Laplace, *Preparing for Spiritual Direction*, Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1975, 192 pages.
- Thomas Merton, *Spiritual Direction and Meditation*, Collegeville, MN, 1960, 99 pages.
- Damien Isabell, O.F.M., *The Spiritual Director: A Practical Guide*, Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1976, 80 pages.
- William Barry, S.J., and William Connolly, S.J., *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2009, 240 pages.
- David Fleming, S.J., editor, *The Christian Ministry of Spiritual Direction* (on a readable CD-Rom), St. Louis, 2004.

## For a Personalized Reading

- Being a Christian and loving the Church demands all one's being. How does one learn to bring together in one's life solid orthodoxy and solid orthopraxis? Doesn't Fr. d'Alzon appear to you to be a bit excessive in his preferences and attractions when it comes to the Church?
- How do you understand in today's Church doctrinal fidelity and freedom of opinion? Are they compatible in all circumstances?
- Unity, truth, and charity form the foundation of the Christian life in the Catholic way of looking at things: never one without the other, and even less one against the other. What limits does "a harmony of their opposing forces" sometimes place on a true attitude of tolerance?
- Is not freedom of conscience the crucible in which this threesome of unity-truth-charity is strengthened when individuals must make decisions in concrete circumstances?

# PART V

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## At the General Chapter of 1868

**T**he founding of a Congregation takes place in time: the Assumption traces its beginnings to Fr. d'Alzon's founding gesture on Christmas Day 1845, an act that was recognized by the Church five years later on Christmas Day 1850 with the profession of first vows. But even if it is not difficult to establish the exact calendar date of its origins, a new Congregation, from its official or unofficial birth, sets out on a slow process of maturation and internal structural development which often takes decades. So it was for the Assumption which Fr. d'Alzon liked to call "our little Congregation"; it took more than ten years to draw up, through various iterations of its *First Constitutions*, a specific definition of the spirit, more than six Chapters between 1850 and 1868 to identify clear apostolic directions addressing the needs of

contemporary society, and more than forty years to constitute for itself the contours of a social body that was fairly well developed.

For its part, the Roman Church takes its time in giving official recognition to the emergence of a new religious family in its bosom. It asks first of all that it receive the approbation of three bishops. For the Assumption the "Decree of Praise" was given in 1857, some twelve years after initial attempts at expressing a common and apostolic life occurred in different places. Then in 1864 it received the "Decree of Approbation" which recognizes the period of probation, puts an end to its provisional status, and confers on it Pontifical, and no longer diocesan, status. But it was made clear in 1864 that this approbation did not extend to the text of the *Constitutions* whose close examina-

tion by the *Roman Congregation for Religious Institutes* often leads to delays and to modifications of original points of the *Rule* in view of objectives or criteria which a religious family may not have taken into account. These are the infamous *animadversiones* which, from examination to examination, make a Congregation pass through the Caudine Forks\* of Canon Law and often require it to go back to the drawing board. We know that the Assumption did not get a green light until 1923, after some very painful mishaps, more than forty years after the death of Fr. d'Alzon.

Fr. d'Alzon, whom many liked to describe as "always in a rush," in this case showed no hurry whatsoever and did not ask for any exemptions in spite of the personal favor he enjoyed with Pius IX. The foundation of a Congregation is first of all an act of faith and better for him to leave it to the designs of Providence. We might even say that he died without having the human certitude that his foundation would survive long after him because of the internal and external

difficulties that worked unceasingly to put off the solid hopes of the Founder for the coming of the Kingdom to some uncertain future. In this light one can interpret the various attempts at union or fusion with other Institutes or Religious Orders: Resurrectionists, Holy Cross Fathers, Augustinians, and Hermits of St. Augustine. But the bedrock of his founding principles knew neither substantial change nor trial period. In spite of everything, the convictions of his faith never changed. In his mind God wanted the Assumption to be an incarnate expression of "the evangelical Kingdom of His Son" in individuals fully committed to the service of this same apostolic love. Was he succeeding or was he still waiting to do so? At the cost of many battles whose influence remained uncertain in heaven, the idea of what he intended to do seemed to emerge from difficult human situations. A rule for a permanent lifestyle hung like a sword over a crib, a rule that would allow individuals to be born and reborn by love, in the service of the Kingdom.

*Our spiritual life, our religious substance, our 'raison d'être' as Augustinians of the Assumption<sup>1</sup> is to be found in our motto, "Adve-*

*niat regnum tuum*” (“Thy Kingdom come”). The coming of the Kingdom of God in our souls by the practice of the Christian virtues and the evangelical counsels<sup>2</sup> in keeping with our vocation; the coming of the Kingdom of God in the world by the fight against Satan and the conquest of the souls redeemed by Our Lord and yet immersed in the darkness of error and sin<sup>3</sup>. What could be more simple! What could be more ordinary, if I dare use this expression, than this form of the love of God!<sup>4</sup> If to this basic love you add the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Blessed Virgin His Mother, and of the Church His Spouse, you will know in its briefest expression the spirit of Assumption<sup>5</sup>.

But what is special, what is characteristic in this? Don't we have here something that any true Christian can accept<sup>6</sup>? What notion, beyond these basic ideas, can help distinguish us from other religious families<sup>7</sup>? Do not religious and Christians repeat every day in the Lord's Prayer this appeal that we want to make our battle cry: “*Adveniat regnum tuum*” (“Thy Kingdom come”)? Do not all Christians and religious have to love Our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, the Church? Once again, why claim as our own what is the legacy of all?

First of all, we must recognize the first mark of our Institute: simplicity of means. It is often said that the least common thing in the world is common sense. Would it be a paradox to say that in the Catholic world the rarest thing is Catholic common sense? That is why we seek to appropriate it to ourselves as an original trait. We are quite simply Catholic, but as Catholic as it is possible to be. We are Catholics all of one piece....This is the first trait of our character as Augustinians of the Assumption.

E. d'Alzon

Closing talk to the General Chapter, September 17, 1868,  
*Écrits spirituels*, Rome, 1956, p. 130-132.

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\* The battle of the Caudine Forks (321 BC) was a humiliating defeat inflicted on the Romans by a Samnite army in the Apennine Mountains (Second Samnite War).

<sup>1</sup> This closing talk was given by Fr. d'Alzon on September 17, 1868, before he wrote the famous *Letters to the Master of Novices*. The talk repeats in an up-to-date manner, influenced by the major events of the day, the principal spiritual and apostolic themes already contained in the *Directory* of 1859.

<sup>2</sup> We can admire this ordered linkage: the practice of the Christian virtues constitutes the common and ordinary path of the Christian life received at baptism; the practice of the evangelical counsels which follows or flows from them is, within this common path, the consequence of a choice of life appropriate or specific to religious life. Religious life is the development or the deepening of the baptismal vocation which is first and basic. This perspective has not always been so clearly articulated in the theology of religious life.

<sup>3</sup> The repetition of the formula, "the coming of the Kingdom of God," in the form developed here repeats that ordinarily given by Fr. d'Alzon: "the coming of the Kingdom of God in us and around us," that is, in its double form, personal and social, which, in turn, recalls the great commandment with its two-fold movement, love of God and love of neighbor.

<sup>4</sup> The love of God is to be understood in the same evangelical sense: first, the love of God for us, which is the great gift of divine election, and, in turn, our love of God that is incarnate in our love of neighbor. Benedict XVI's encyclical *Deus caritas est* takes its cue from this same conviction.

<sup>5</sup> In fact what we see here in this concise but complete form, which is the best developed of the ones we have, is what has come to be called the triple love of the Assumption; one of the first times the expression is mentioned is in a letter from Fr. d'Alzon to Fr. François Picard on June 5, 1856.

<sup>6</sup> What we have here is already an answer to all those reproaches, to all the questioning, to all the commentaries, more or less inspired, that have been written on a supposed lack of originality with regard to the spirit of the Assumption. The originality of the spirit of the Assumption is to take the spirit at its source or at its foundation, that which springs from the very heart of Christian prayer, received from the lips of Christ himself.

<sup>7</sup> To distinguish without opposing, to pick up without repeating, that is a difficult and subtle art because it means affirming one's place without trampling or encroaching on others. But we are well aware of what the human spirit is capable of in terms of self-centeredness and pride, even within religious communities, in seeking to appropriate for oneself a modicum of originality or distinguishing oneself from what came before.



## For Further Reflection Or Research

- *Constitutions and Rule of Life of the Augustinians of the Assumption* over time, 1855, 1865, 1983
- *The Assumptionist Spirit according to Emmanuel d'Alzon*, collected essays, Rome, 1993, 98 pages.
- Pierre Touvernaud, *Charisme du P. d'Alzon et charisme de l'Assomption*, in *Approches et Recherches*, Rome 1974.
- George Tavard, *The Weight of God: The Spiritual Doctrine of Emmanuel d'Alzon*, Rome, 1982, 114 pages, in the 1980 Centennial Series, #5.
- George Tavard, *Emmanuel d'Alzon: La foi et le Royaume*, Paris, Cerf, 2003, 179 pages.
- André Sève, *Christ is My Life: the Spiritual Legacy of Emmanuel d'Alzon*, New York: New City Press, 1988, 175 pages.
- Wilfrid Dufault, *The Spiritual Legacy of Emmanuel d'Alzon*, Milton, Massachusetts, 1988, 209 pages.

## For a Personalized Reading

- In your opinion what are the traits of the Assumptionist spirit according to Fr. d'Alzon?
- Isn't it somewhat difficult to define a spirit? What are the major texts in which Fr. d'Alzon made an effort to define it or restore it?
- Why did the Congregation have so much difficulty in being recognized by Rome using its only, unique, true, veritable, and genuine original name, Augustinians of the Assumption?
- Can you summarize in ten points or so the traits proper to the Assumptionist spirit as they are found in the writings of the Founder and as you would re-express them in your own words?



## At Vatican I, Fleas and Diarrhea Under a Leaden Sun (1870)

**F**r. d'Alzon personally witnessed one of the exceptional events of the Church known as an ecumenical council. He did not go as an actor of privilege, as is the case of every bishop who attends *ex officio*, but as the theologian of Bishop Plantier whom he accompanied to Rome. So he did not participate in the formal sessions but did attend several public ceremonies and certain peripheral get-togethers outside the official sessions, that had their importance in the give-and-take of extended discussions and debates. It should be added that Fr. d'Alzon went to Rome with a few unshakable ideas, but he quickly came to understand that the order of conciliar debates and the way they were conducted emanated neither from systematic, human logic nor a simple rigo-

rously planned organization. In fact, the Fathers of the Council had a pre-digested menu set in place by various preparatory commissions. However, the course of the debates did have unexpected twists and turns, especially with regard to a question not on the program but which got everyone going, papal infallibility. Fr. d'Alzon lodged at the French Pontifical Seminary on Via Santa Chiara, in the heart of the historical district, which allowed him to visit many Roman churches and shrines. His main preoccupation was to mobilize the greatest number of Council members possible in favor of the dogma of infallibility when the question came up. How? By organizing a sort of press bureau and by becoming, in his own words, *a back-street driver*,\* multiplying

contacts and visits wherever the news would take him. For his part, Fr. Galabert, the theological adviser of his own bishop, Most Rev. Raphael Popov, gathered all the bishops from the East, who were immune to Latin, to present to them, in the same line of reasoning, what people were discussing and what was at stake at the Council. Fr. d'Alzon's correspondence from this period teems with information on the city of Rome, on the rumors going about there, on how people were thinking of voting, and on the discussions of the Council Fathers. Tongues were loosened and Fr. d'Alzon gladly lampooned one or other of the orators for being too wordy, too obscure, or too inappropriate. In his writing he used every necessary means; he raged, he railed. It even happened that he would depict certain Church dignitaries with such liberty as to set aside ordinary ecclesiastical etiquette and even Christian charity. The tone could be sharp, irascible, sometimes waggish, often polemical. For

example, he once wished a good case of the runs for one bishop whose tongue was too well nourished! On the other hand, we can see his complete admiration for the young and courageous bishops from missionary lands responsible for evangelizing vast stretches of territory, who had come to Rome without great means or pomp, in contrast to certain Hungarian prelates, still great lords, going about in their stylish coaches and accompanied by extravagant retinues. In doing so, Fr. d'Alzon helps us discover another facet of the Church that was born in faraway lands, one which held in its heart a love of the papacy and as its primary *raison d'être* a dedication to spreading the gospel. In some way it brought to light a heart that beats in tune with Rome and for Rome, even if it lives so far away, at the limitless frontiers of the mission. So it was a lesson and an example for his Congregations and for him, that made the flea bites he endured in the swelter of Rome worthwhile.

*Thank you, my dear daughter, for your excellent letter. I presume that you didn't stay long in Paris after writing it, especially if you have to leave Nîmes on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Alas, I will not have arrived by then<sup>1</sup>. The Gallicans and the presiders (the latter more guilty than the former) are keeping us here<sup>2</sup>. I still have a lot of hope. Guess in what?*

*Diarrhea. It's churning up the intestines of a few of our adversaries. That should encourage them to bring things to a close. Why have they delayed so much? The presiders, the presiders!*

*The weather is quite heavy. There hasn't been the slightest breeze to dry things out and allow one to breathe<sup>3</sup>. The countryside is green. But, oh, the fleas! My daughter, I've already counted 21 and it's not yet 4 o'clock and I've missed quite a few. Fr. Chesnel<sup>4</sup> claims that when you kill them at this season of the year, they rise again in 48 hours. He tried an experiment on a few of these buggers by placing a mark on their tails. Tell your students to give it a try<sup>5</sup>.*

*The Pope was magnificent. Yesterday we saw him enter St. Peter's; we had great places. Today I didn't go out. My sincere congratulations on the result of your elections<sup>6</sup>; but, believe me, in order for your Congregation to walk in charity, there must be firmness. Nothing will get done without that. Fr. Vitte<sup>7</sup>, who has returned from Lyons, believes that, from this point of view, something may be missing. It's been too long since I've been to Lyons or Paris, but it is certain that one must never fall asleep.*

*Before you leave, be sure to remind the sisters to observe the Rule. My God, how difficult it is to have a novitiate done right! And when a novitiate has been done badly, it is the poor local superiors who must pick up the pieces. When you leave, I would like you to tell the sisters that, on your return, you are going to have them redo the novitiate according to what happened at the Chapter. You will see the wholesome fear it will create, one that I'll be careful to nourish<sup>8</sup>.*

*Good-bye, my dear daughter. Know how sorry I will be to have missed you on my arrival. A thousand times yours in Our Lord.*

*E. d'Alzon*

E. d'Alzon to Sr. Marie-Gabrielle de Courcy, Rome, June 29, 1870, *Letters*, vol. VIII, Désiré Deraedt edition, 1994, p. 450-451.

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<sup>3</sup>back-street driver (French, *mouche de coche*, comes from a fable by Jean de la Fontaine, "Le Coche et La Mouche," "The Coach and the Fly".)

<sup>1</sup> **Sr. Marie-Gabrielle de Courcy** (1830-1885) was the R.A. superior at the convent in Nîmes in the 1870s.

<sup>2</sup> The presiders of Vatican I named by Pius IX were Cardinals **Charles-August de Reisach** (1800-1869; he died in December 1869), **Antonio De Luca** (1805-1883), **Giuseppe Bizzarri** (1802-1877), **Luigi Bilio** (1826-1884), **Annibale Capalti** (1811-1877), **Filippo De Angelis** (1792-1877).

<sup>3</sup> In summer the Roman heat is often suffocating because of the temperature and the humidity. Only the ponentino (a slight, westerly sea breeze), blowing at night, can bring a bit of cool relief.

<sup>4</sup> **Fr. François Chesnel** (1822-1876) was one of six French theologians, known as papal theologians. He was the vicar general of Quimper and one who shared d'Alzon's views.

<sup>5</sup> The passage is obviously humorous. The size of a flea is so small that it does not allow the naked eye to make out particular anatomical parts; nevertheless, they do a lot of damage throughout the night well beyond the belly-button. Rome was sadly known for how filthy its streets were and how much its citizens lacked hygienic practices.

<sup>6</sup> These refer to the elections at the third general chapter of the Religious of the Assumption held at Auteuil on June 25, 1870. Mother Thérèse-Emmanuel O'Neil remained an assistant; Mother Marie-Madeleine de Peter was elected second assistant; Mother Marie-Thérèse de Commarque remained a councilor; Mother Marie-Walburge Howly remained a councilor; Mother Marie-Caroline de Paty and Mother Marie-Séraphine Déroutilhe were elected alternate councilors. There was also an election for the *Rules Committee*: Sisters Marie-Gonzague Saint-Julien, Marie-Gabrielle de Courcy, Françoise-Eugénie de Malbosc, and Marie du Saint-Sacrement de Gouy.

<sup>7</sup> **Fr. Pierre-Ferdinand Vitte** (1824-1883) was a French priest, a native of l'Ain, named bishop in 1873 and Apostolic Vicar in New Caledonia, and well known to the Religious of the Assumption.

<sup>8</sup> To be sure, the Bible says, "Fear is the beginning of wisdom"; but wouldn't that be relying on a spiritual ploy that risks being in and of itself too negative and too ineffective in the long run of one's religious life? On his return to Nîmes Fr. d'Alzon did better than giving the sisters a good dressing down; he preached a series of magnificent conferences to the sisters at the convent on the spirit of the Assumption, which were later printed.

## For Further Reflection and Research

### On Vatican I

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421 pages.
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ses," #12, 219 pages.

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#### On Fr. d'Alzon and Vatican I

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- *Le P. d'Alzon et les deux Conciles du Vatican, Quelques aperçus*, Rome (International College of Rome, student conferences, November 19-21, 1960), 1960, 48 pages.
- George Tavard, *Le P. d'Alzon au premier Concile du Vatican*, Rome, 1996, 66 pages.
- *Le P. d'Alzon au service du Premier Concile du Vatican (1869-1870)*, in *Dossier sur la vie et les vertus du P. Emmanuel d'Alzon*, 1986, vol. II, part II, chapter XXV, p. 778-823.
- Siméon Vailhé, *Vie du P. Emmanuel d'Alzon*, Paris, Bonne Presse, 1934, 2 volumes.

### For a Personalized Reading

- Why was Fr. d'Alzon in a hurry to leave Rome? Was the Council not in fact locked in debates of opinion which seemed endless and without direction?
- What was Fr. d'Alzon's reproach to the Council's headliners? How could the presiders be held accountable for the shilly-shallying and lengthiness of the Council?
- In your opinion, is observing the Rule a sufficient condition for the good running of a Congregation and the spiritual animation of communities?
- A religious, in Fr. d'Alzon's mind, should be a *perpetual novice*. How do you understand this recommendation?





## 43

## In the Hour of Defeat, the Seeds of Hope for a Catholic (1871)

**R**ash and cocky, without weighing matters seriously at all, France went to war with Prussia on July 19, 1870, in fact with the entire Germanic realm, without much preparation, in contrast to its enemy which had become a military power after its victory at Sadowa against Austria (July 1866). All the cunning Bismarck had to do was to wave the *red cloth* before the *Gallic bull*, with a matter for which France had already received satisfaction, the withdrawal of the candidacy of the Hohenzollern for the throne of Spain.

Isolated, France threw itself imprudently into a poorly managed war to “*punish an insolent Prussia*,” convinced that its troops would advance without a hitch to

the heart of Berlin, even though the French army was sorely under-armed. It only took two battles for France to have to abandon Alsatia; on August 15 the Prussians occupied Nancy without a fight. Napoleon III turned the command of the Rhine army over to Bazaine who allowed his troops to be surrounded at Metz. The army of MacMahon, reconstituted at the camp of Chalôns, could not retreat from Sedan and surrendered on September 2. The French generals acted blindly, with little coordination, whereas Moltke\* was able to carry the day because he was flexible and decisive. Strasbourg fell on September 28, Metz on October 27. Victor Emmanuel took advantage of the fall of Napoleon III and the withdrawal of French troops from

Rome in order to march on the Eternal City (September 1870) and make it his capital in spite of the protests of Pius IX. He installed himself in the Quirinal Palace together with his government (July 1871).

Despite undeniable acts of bravery on both sides, France was defeated militarily. The Siege of Paris was about to begin. Even though the *Government of National Defense*, formed on September 4, enlisted a massive corps of volunteers according to revolutionary principles, neither the army of the Loire nor the army of the North nor that of Burgundy was able to raise the siege of the surrounded capital and begin to retake ground. In Paris Trochu encouraged Ducrot to attempt sorties but the offensives were all broken by the flooding of the Marne, an arctic cold wave, and the Wurtemberg troops. Faidherbe was beaten at Saint-Quentin, Chanzy at Le Mans, and the army of Bourbaki\*\* had to enter Switzerland in order to avoid being crushed. The German Empire was proclaimed at Versailles on January 18, 1871, and the armistice with the Germans was signed on January 26. Gambetta resigned on February 6 and the country at large voted for

peace during the February 8 elections against a republican and hawkish Paris. Thiers, chosen as head of state on February 17, and Jules Favre in Foreign Affairs negotiated a peace treaty with Bismarck who showed no flexibility in the draconian measures he demanded: the cession of Alsatia and part of Lorraine as well as the payment of a war debt of 5 billion gold francs\*\*\*. From his seat of power in Versailles Thiers decided to dismiss the National Guard of Paris. On March 18, 1871, the population of Paris opposed the removal of cannons from Montmartre. The uprising ended with the deaths of Generals Claude Lecomte and Clément Thomas at the hands of the rioting mob. The Paris Commune, an insurrectionist and revolutionary government, was proclaimed. The Treaty of Frankfurt was signed on May 10, 1871; the capital was taken from the Commune by the Versailles army after a week of fratricidal street fighting. A first loan was procured in June 1871 to accelerate the payment of the war debt and the progressive liberation of occupied departments (September 1873); another loan was successfully procured in July 1872. France remained diplomatically isolated until 1893.

On May 23, 1873, the assembly replaced Thiers, the republican, with MacMahon, the monarchist. France, beaten and humiliated, nourished an anti-German sentiment of revenge that exploded in 1914 and again in 1939. How would Fr. d'Alzon, a man of faith and hope, react?

*Dear Friend,*

*Just now, just now, I received your letter. Alas! Alas! We have reached the bottom of the abyss and have gotten what we asked for. Yes, Paris has surrendered<sup>1</sup> and, would you believe it, in studying the will of God not from the exclusively French point of view, but from the Catholic point of view, so be it. What a four-and-a-half-month Lent Parisians have just lived through! How the suburbs were purified! How many fewer orgies! How much more fruitful poverty! We will have less gold, but we will make more iron; we will have fewer manufacturers of luxury, but we will have more edifying enterprises. Listen, if France had invested in arsenals what she put into theaters, in weapons what she expended for parties, in military exercises what she put into grand balls, would we be where we are now? Alas, let us learn from this lesson<sup>2</sup>. God knows.*

*Your brother was fine; my nephew Jean is also doing well. Find us some vocations. One religious dead, one novice sent home for health reasons, another joining the army, still another drafted: there you have it<sup>3</sup>.*

*We did not have a single shell fall at Auteuil, at least not at the convent. Here Pierre Baragnon is raising the threat of a civil war with his more or less yellow posters if, through a spirit of conciliation, he is not appointed deputy<sup>4</sup>. We're going to have to go through three or four really bad days until the elections which will be held on the 8<sup>th</sup>, unless the elections in Paris bring us some relief<sup>5</sup>. What can I say to you about the future? Thiers<sup>6</sup> believes that the Republic and the Empire are dead, but that we mustn't bury the Republic just yet. As for me, as sad as I am as a Frenchman, I am full of hope as a Catholic. Who ever heard that the disasters of 1814 and 1815<sup>7</sup> brought even the shadow of conversion to our troops? Out of all this will come, believe me, some wonderful apostolic efforts<sup>8</sup>.*

*I am not well these days. Raymond de Surville has died<sup>9</sup>. Pray for the foundation of a Catholic university and for an immense association dedicated to the defense of the Church. I urge you, when you have the time, to arrange things so that you can come to see us as soon as possible.*

*Goodbye and all the best.*

*E. d'Alzon*

E. d'Alzon to Fr. Vincent de Paul Bailly, Nîmes, February 6, 1871, *Letters*, Désiré Deraedt edition, vol. IX, Rome 1994, p. 11.

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\* **François Achille Bazaine** (1811–1888) was a French General and from 1864, a Marshal of France, "who suffered the fate of Generals who win every battle except the last". During four decades of distinguished service (including 35 years on campaign) under Louis-Philippe and then Napoleon III, he held every rank in the Army from Fusilier to Marshal of France. He was severely punished for his surrender of the fortress city of Metz and his army of 180,000 men to the Prussians on 27 October 1870, during the Franco-Prussian War.

**Marie Edme Patrice Maurice de MacMahon**, first Duke of Magenta, Marshal of France (1808-1893), was a French general and politician. He served as *Chief of State* of France from 1873 to 1875 and as the first president of the Third Republic, from 1875 to 1879. On September 1, 1870, the Prussians laid siege to the city of Sedan. Standing at the gates was a powerful force of 200,000 Prussian soldiers under the command of General Helmuth von Moltke. MacMahon was highly indecisive, allowing the Germans to move in reinforcements to completely encircle Sedan.

**Helmuth Karl Bernhard Graf von Moltke** (1800–1891) was a German Generalfeldmarschall. The chief of staff of the Prussian Army for thirty years, he is regarded as one of the great strategists of the late 1800s, and the creator of a new, more modern method of directing armies in the field. He planned and led the Prussian armies in the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), which paved the way for the creation of the Prussian-led German Empire in 1871.

\*\* **Louis Jules Trochu** (1815-1896) was a French military leader and politician. He served as President of the Government of National Defense - being France's *de facto* head of state - from September 4, 1870 until his resignation on January 22, 1871. **Auguste-Alexandre Ducrot** (1817–1882) was a French general. He served as a division commander in the Franco-Prussian War. **Louis Léon César Faidherbe**, **Antoine Eugène Alfred Chanzy**, and **Charles Denis Sauter Bourbaki** were all French generals who had seen action in Africa before their assignment to the Franco-Prussian War.

\*\*\* **Léon Gambetta** (1838-1882) was a French statesman. Gambetta had hoped for a republican majority in the general elections on February 8, 1871. These hopes vanished when the conservatives and Monarchists won nearly 2/3 of the six hundred Assembly seats. He was a leading defender of the lower classes. **Louis-Adolphe Thiers** (1797–1877) was a French politician and historian. Thiers was a prime minister under King Louis-Philippe of France. Following the overthrow of the Second Empire he again came to prominence as the French leader who suppressed the revolutionary Paris Commune of 1871. From 1871 to 1873 he served initially as *Head of State* (effectively a provisional President of France). **Jules Claude Gabriel Favre** (1809–1880) was a French statesman. After the establishment of the Third Republic in September 1871, he became one of the leaders of the Opportunist Republicans faction.

<sup>1</sup> On September 2, 1870, Sedan surrendered, leading to the fall of the Empire, the downfall of Napoleon III, and the proclamation of the Republic in Paris on September 4. Strasbourg fell on September 28, Metz on October 27. Paris was under siege and starving. The government requested an armistice on January 26, 1871, and signed on the 28<sup>th</sup>, the equivalent of a general surrender; but patriotic Parisian forces condemned the capitulating politicians. The large provincial cities of Bordeaux, Toulouse, Marseilles, and Lyons were seething with Communist convulsions.

<sup>2</sup> In addition to the shame of a complete military defeat that struck hard at the country's hawkish pride of July 1870, there were added, as far as Catholics were concerned, unfocused feelings of national indignity and of divine retribution, merited, in their mind, on the one hand by the excesses of *imperial celebration* and justified on the other by a theological version, apocalyptically tinted, of *the wrath of God*. Religious discourse of the time welcomed this moralizing tendency which combined with the sadness of a national defeat and with some sense of repentance, against the background of total political confusion.

<sup>3</sup> The deceased religious is **Br. Edouard Pratt**, who died in Nîmes on November 28 of purpura. The novice who joined the army could have been **Br. Paulin Bonnefoi**; the novice drafted in to the ambulance corps, **Br. Jules Ferret**; the brother sent home for health reasons **Achille Gounin** or **Claude Lhérisson**. Fathers **Vincent de Paul Bailly** and **Étienne Pernet** were volunteer chaplains for the French prisoners of war at Mayence

<sup>4</sup> A former journalist in Constantinople, who had become a candidate for deputy with anti-Bonapartist and Republican tendencies, **Pierre Baragnon** (1830-1904) was, in fact, just one more opportunist of the common "weather-vane" type!

<sup>5</sup> The February 8 elections resulted in a very conservative Chamber of Deputies, composed of many prominent figures favorable to a restoration of the monarchy.

<sup>6</sup> **Adolphe Thiers** (1797-1877) was, in fact, the strong man of the new government, the one which came out of the previous provisional government, after the interregnum of **Gambetta** (1832-1882), who traveled around France in a hot-air balloon! Thiers would repress the Commune and found the Third Republic. He was politically liberal but socially conservative. He was acclaimed as the liberator of the country in 1873, at the very moment he was expelled from the government in order to be replaced with a much more reassuring choice, Marshall MacMahon (May 24, 1873).

<sup>7</sup> Refers to Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo and the events immediately leading up to it.

<sup>8</sup> In the years 1871-1872 the Assumption proved to be extremely inventive in its apostolic initiatives: alummates, the press, pilgrimages, the renewed publication of the *Revue de l'enseignement chrétien*, discussions about the possibility of founding Catholic universities, the organization of Catholic commissions, workers' circles, and associations for the defense of the Church.

<sup>9</sup> **Raymond de Surville** (1848-1871), an alumnus of the Collège de l'Assomption, was the son of a Nîmes family that was very close to Fr. d'Alzon: Charles de Surville (1803-1868), a former Legitimist parliamentarian and general tax collector for the Gard department, and his second wife, née de Richard.

## For Further Reflection and Research

- Henri Guillemin, *Cette curieuse guerre de 70: Thiers, Brochu, Bazaine*, Paris, Gallimard, 1956, 266 pages (collection: *La Suite du temps*).
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## For a Personalized Reading

- With regard to a political appreciation of events what do you think of this stark divorce between Paris and the provinces? Did not the threat of civil war augur the coming of the Commune?
- In your opinion what were the real causes of the French defeat, military and political, before a German front united by Bismarck? Does one not find oneself before two politically antagonistic national models, one drawing inspiration from Athens and the other from Sparta?
- Isn't there often with people who have active, willful temperaments like Fr. d'Alzon a marked contrast between a kind of pessimism toward ideas in the present and an optimistic call to action for the future?
- Does not hope, the theological virtue, offer the firmest ground for the future to believers who do not surrender themselves to dark thoughts and the turmoil of the present?

## Fr. d'Alzon at Moulins-à-vent (1872)

**F**r. d'Alzon sank roots in Nîmes on November 14, 1835; in spite of repeated offers, from then on he never left his city of adoption, which does not mean that, like other human beings, he didn't move around a lot. In Nîmes itself, from 1839 to 1878, he had an office at the *bishop's residence*, which has since become the *Departmental Museum of Historic Nîmes*, next to St. Castor Cathedral. Bishop Plantier would have loved to have him make it his regular abode but that didn't take into account his assistant's independent streak.

The list of various places where he lodged briefly or rented is alluded to here and there in his correspondence. That is how we know where he first lodged in Nîmes, with his maternal great-uncle, Fr. Daniel-Xavier Liron d'Airolles, at *16 Rue d'Aspic*, a

temporary residence that he quickly changed (about three months later?) to a rented apartment at *9 Rue-du-Gras* (today #7) at the corner of *Rue des Orangers*, which he shared with a certain Fr. Bernard Rode. In 1839, when he was named titular Vicar General, it was more convenient for him to be in his own place, so he rented a large apartment at *Rue 10 des Lombards* or *Rue Marguerite* in the Grandgent building. In 1845, from Paris, he terminated the lease, causing a commotion among his directees, and he decided to move to his *Collège de l'Assomption*, then on *Rue de la Servie*. He undoubtedly lodged in different cells of the various buildings that made up the school complex, among which the one called *Noah's Ark*. We do know that when he died on November 21, 1880 he was staying in the room over the car-

riage house gateway, later transformed into a memorial museum. He did show a lack of fidelity to the Assumption when, in 1872, he decided to move to the heights of Nîmes, to a neighborhood known as *des Moulins-à-Vent* on *Mount Duplan*, in the *Prophète residence* which the diocese had bought many years earlier (1854) to house at that time the *Argaud Youth Center*. Fr. d'Alzon wanted to transform it into one of the *Cercles catholiques* ("Catholic circles")\* which were then so popular throughout France. As legend would have it, it is told that students from the collège were requisitioned to move from hand to hand and street to street the volumes of the *Migne Patrology collection* that d'Alzon had no intention of leaving behind. His move did not last long, it seems, just a few years until 1877, undoubtedly --- by the way, he only lived there intermittently; it seemed to make much more sense to everyone that the *Patriarch*, so taken up with his other responsibilities, be reintegrated, together with his precious collection, into the school. Another religious was assigned to the Argaud circle between 1874 and 1877, Br. Désiré Gallet, as well as Fr. Joseph-Marie Blanc, a

former Assumptionist. Fr. d'Alzon resold the property to the diocese in 1878.

It is said that, as far as lodgings were concerned, Fr. d'Alzon was quite austere, in the style of a monk or a hermit, with the bare minimum of furnishings. When he left Lavagnac in 1835, he refused a carriage emblazoned with the d'Alzon coat of arms, which, in his estimation, would have blocked the streets of the old city and would have especially discouraged future benefactors by its display of luxury! Just the same he did bring two silver mirrors, a skull, and a painting of St. Mary Magdalene. For a long time he kept a large crucifix which his first bishop, Bishop Chaffoy, had given him. The same sort of sobriety reigned at his large apartment on Rue des Lombards: his office contained four white chairs, a prie-dieu, and a table with a skull. It is true that over time his admirers in Nîmes made him accept a few conveniences such as a secretary with drawers, a gift from Ms. Josephine Fabre now jealously kept by the Oblates at their provincial house in *Hulsberg (Netherlands)*. The Assumptionist community in Nîmes, *Rue St. Perpétue 2*, still has his choir stall, located in the



chapel, more like a ceremonial chair or throne than a necessary liturgical piece of furniture. All of the other personal souvenirs we had from Fr. d'Alzon, as a result of the string of expulsions and moves, ended up being dispersed to the four winds of history which don't only make windmills operate whether in Nîmes or elsewhere in the Midi of France! Even the mortal remains of Fr. d'Alzon

knew three moments of relocation ---- the Assumptionist plot at St. Baudille Cemetery from 1880-1892, the burial vault in the chapel of the Collège de l'Assomption from 1892-1942, and the burial vault in the chapel of the Oblates on Rue Séguier from 1942 to the present, sure proof that *the children of this world cannot have a permanent dwelling-place here below.*

*To the One prodigiously loved by his father by birth and by yours truly, Reverend Father!*

*First of all, let me say that you are no ogre; so, I am asking you to replace Mr. Argaud at the youth center in Nîmes with Assumptionist religious, to change the name of Mr. Charles Laurent working with the apprentices to Fr. Charles Laurent, of the Augustinians of the Assumption<sup>1</sup>; and ask Fr. François if he knows a certain Mr. François Chambourdon, director of men's ministry in Nîmes. This is clear. Also at Alais, place Assumptionist religious; at Le Vigan, for men's ministry, place Assumptionist religious. A worker's circle has just been established in Le Vigan. Fr. Hippolyte was the founder and was ousted as soon as it opened --- but that's not so bad.*

*Now what can I tell you? We have nearly 170 boarders, and 100 externs or semi-boarders....non c'è male<sup>2</sup>. Fr. Picard likes being in Le Vigan. He'll be insisting that Fr. Charles be sent to Arras. With a Mass of the Holy Angels I have been installed here at the work begun by Mr. Argaud<sup>3</sup>, that is, as of this morning. The men here really showed strong opposition not long ago, but in the last 15 minutes they've been as meek as lambs<sup>4</sup>.*

*Allemand arrived from Marseilles in a somber mood; your letter had been given to him. What can I tell you? Have you definitively obtained the apartment of Ms. de Longueil<sup>5</sup>? As soon as the Revue<sup>6</sup> is published, I'll send you another article. Sunday, weather permitting, 1,200 people from Nîmes will go to Rochefort, almost as many from*

*Avignon, and almost as many from other places. If the weather holds out, we can count on 3,000-4,000<sup>7</sup>.*

*The priests' retreat was so-so. Don't be in a rush to invite Fr. Barbe<sup>8</sup>.*

*At that, I kiss your beard<sup>9</sup> and bid you Good-night.*

*E. d'Alzon*

*We have 10 to 12 Masses a day at the Assumption<sup>10</sup>.*

E. d'Alzon to Fr. Vincent de Paul Bailly, Nîmes, October 2, 1872, *Letters*,  
Désiré Deraedt edition, vol. IX, Rome, 1994, p. 436.

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\*In December 1871 leading French figures, Albert de Mun, René de La Tour du Pin, and Maurice Maigren, established the *Cercles catholiques*. These circles were intended to bring together labor and management as well as army officers in an effort to foster better understanding among social classes with the Christian concern of helping the neediest.

<sup>1</sup> What d'Alzon is referring to in this letter to Fr. Vincent de Paul Bailly is the need to modify names registered in the *Annuaire des Associations Catholiques Ouvrières de France* ("Annual Directory of Catholic Worker Associations of France") for the year 1873-1874. At the time Fr. Vincent de Paul was the secretary of the organization. Fr. d'Alzon holds to the name "Augustinians of the Assumption" for his religious who included: **Charles Laurent** (1821-1895), **François Chambourdon** (1844-1902), who was incardinated in the diocese of Nîmes in 1877, and **Hippolyte Saugrain** (1822-1905).

<sup>2</sup> Italian for "not so bad"

<sup>3</sup> **Fr. Casimir Argaud** (1814-1901) had been the founder and director of this youth ministry program where Fr. d'Alzon had helped out. In 1872 it was a question of resurrecting this work with new energy and effort. Later on it was handed over to the Priests of Timon-David. **Fr. Charles François** (1841-?) had just been ordained. He left the Congregation in 1876 and we have no trace of him afterwards.

<sup>4</sup> The young men whose center had just been transferred to Mount Duplan on the "pic Argaud" (also known as the Prophète residence) proved to be quite recalcitrant to the direction of **Br. Norbert Mathieu** (1852-1918), who was ordained a priest in 1878 and eventually sent to the Mission in Eastern Europe in 1880. At this time, according to Fr. d'Alzon, the center counted some hundred young people. At one time Fr. d'Alzon was hoping to make Mt. Duplan the motherhouse, the scholasticate and the novitiate of the Congregation!

<sup>5</sup> Fr. Vincent de Paul listed this person as a neighboring owner on Rue François 1er, undoubtedly a benefactor of the Assumption and someone who attended Mass regularly at the community chapel as did Ms. de Mauroy in 1877, who gave her house in Sèvres to become the Paris novitiate.

<sup>6</sup> The "Revue" is the *Revue de l'Enseignement chrétien* which reappeared between 1872-1875; Fr. d'Alzon contributed a number of articles.

<sup>7</sup> This pilgrimage where d'Alzon preached, in fact, took place on October 6, 1872 in spite of wind and rain. Fr. d'Alzon was not happy that the lawyer and Legitimist deputy, **Ferdinand Boyer** (1823-1885), had spoken then in favor of a union between Henri V and the Pope. He didn't like mixing the two elements.

<sup>8</sup> The preacher of the priests' retreat of 1872 in Nîmes, not otherwise identified, would have been the brother of another diocesan priest that we have been able to figure out, **Fr. Jean-Pierre-Léon Barbe** (1809-1867), pastor in Boudrac (Haute-Garonne).

<sup>9</sup> Since the events of the Commune, the religious in Paris had let their beards grow to protect their identity and to avoid being placed on the proscription list. Later Fr. d'Alzon encouraged them to shave them off. In 1863 we know that he himself had sported a magnificent beard in Oriental style.

<sup>10</sup> Here is an indication of the number of priests who were living and working at the Collège de l'Assomption. Besides Fr. d'Alzon, the other religious were Emmanuel Bailly, Alexis Dumazer, Charles Laurent, Charles Désaire, François Chambourdon, Adrien Latour, Jules Ferret, Joseph-Marie Blanc, and Charles François.

## For Further Reflection and Research

On the Nîmes lodgings of Fr. d'Alzon and the Argaud ministry

- *Maison de l'Assomption* (magazine of the third Collège de l'Assomption in Nîmes), October 1936, p. 27-29, (rue du P. d'Alzon 1810-1880).
- Jean-Paul Périer-Muzet, *Chronique alzonienne: les logements du P. d'Alzon à Nîmes?* in *A.T.L.P.*, May 1994, #106, p. 16-19.
- *Oeuvre Argaud 1837-1937. Fêtes du centenaire de l'oeuvre*, Nîmes, 1938, 63 pages.

## For a Personalized Reading

- In your opinion, why did Fr. d'Alzon, who spent almost his entire apostolic life in a school, hold so tightly to being in contact with young people?
- What were the principal ways that the church reached out to young people at that time?
- In your opinion, has the Assumption been able to maintain its outreach to the world of the young today? How, with which initiatives, with which ministries?
- The world of youth is ever-changing. What are the human and spiritual qualities that can always be found with them?

## France on the Verge of a Restoration of the Monarchy (1873)

For observers of French political life, the period between 1873 and 1877, which has been dubbed with the at least ambiguous title the “*Republic of the Dukes*,” leaves one totally perplexed. What we see is a France, uncertain, indecisive, tacking between opposing constitutional forms, evidenced in the rather contradictory electoral results that took place during this time. In February 1871, deputies who were elected to the Assembly were primarily monarchists, certain of them more or less nostalgic, but all of them certainly divided. For a century, the country oscillated among irreconcilable dynastic families: the *Bourbons*, driven from power in 1830, but ever pretenders to the throne with the *miracle-child*, the Count of Chambord, known as the Legi-

timist line; the *Orléanists*, exiled in 1848, but always ready to present candidates with the title and branch known as the *Count of Paris*; and the *Bonapartists*, whose defeat in 1870, in spite of the declared fall from grace of Napoleon II and the premature death of the Imperial Prince (1873) did not dismiss all hope of returning to power.

Thiers, the strongman of executive power in 1871, was ousted in 1873 by Marshall MacMahon, without having been able to establish a republican regime in a country for which he had worked to rebuild, above all, the economy, the finances, and the army. MacMahon was a loyalist military man elected to the presidency for seven years by the monarchist coalition. But, in spite of his personal preferences which led

him to draw his ministers from the ranks of the right, he did not want to impose on the country, by a new imposition of force from which France had already suffered too much, a regime that would not have resulted from a fair election. Over the years, the republican camp was strengthened in every election until the open conflict of February 1876 which gave it a clear majority in the Chamber. MacMahon intervened directly in parliamentary life, dismissed Jules Simon\* on May 16, replaced him with the Duke of Broglie\*, and dissolved the Chamber of Deputies. But after the elections of 1877, without a doubt the most contentious France has ever known, the president had either "to submit or resign," as the Gambetta\*\* camp put it. Constrained to govern with republican ministers such as Dufaure\*\*\*, MacMahon resigned in January 1879 before his term had ended, following senatorial elections that assured another republican victory. Thanks to the Walloon Amendment of January 1875, the Assembly had reluctantly voted to recognize the republican form of the regime as well as the three Constitutional laws that would serve as an institutional basis for the Third Republic.

Fr. d'Alzon, like many of his contemporaries, was pinning his political hopes on the restoration of the monarchy and supported the Count of Chambord. He believed these hopes could be realized and that they were in fact realized on May 24, 1873\*\*\*\*, but it is known that in politics and political strategy d'Alzon was hardly happy or lucky and certainly no precursor or prophet. His family ties and the style of his Church involvement did little to predispose him to a favorable understanding of or familiarity with the expectations of the new social classes and even less to the tactics of the political arena that sway so easily with the winds of popular opinion. Fr. d'Alzon operated in the arena of convictions and had neither a taste nor an appreciation for the arena of opinions that were changing, compromising, detached, or even hostile to religious concerns. To be sure, by dint of experience, he had been obliged himself to undertake a slow process of desacralizing political power; but he refused to accept the choices of an ever-changing society, one with liberal designs and democratic horizons always in search of non-confessional reference points, structural reforms, and a break with traditional values. Slowly cut

off from his spheres of influence in the political arena, his ecclesiastical conscience nevertheless continued to arouse his duties as a citizen which could accept neither political “cohabitation” nor compromise. It was pushing to the limit the slogan, “Outside of the Church, there is no salvation.”

*You do well to complain of our silence. But where is the news being made? In Nîmes or in Paris? So, how do you respond to that? If it is in Nîmes, come and see; if it is in Paris, well, send me some, you ogre<sup>1</sup>! Isn't it enough that you are at the well? Must you laugh that we are without water? Come on now, a little patience. Ah, traitor! Do you think we'll only drink wine<sup>2</sup>?*

*Here is some news: my cousin, Mrs. d'Alzon, has died; Ms. Valat has died; Mrs. Chaudordy is battling an enlarged heart and a serious stroke<sup>3</sup>. Would you like a list of the recent nominations of pastors and those assigned to weekend ministry<sup>4</sup>? But pilgrimages have a way of stirring up fear. Why does Freppel hate us? I'd like to know the reason<sup>5</sup>. For my part I'd be tempted to return the sentiment, but it's just not possible for me to waste my time and energy on hating anyone. I hate the sin, which is a “something,” but I love the sinner, who is a “someone”<sup>6</sup>.*

*Now we have the tricolor with the lily<sup>7</sup>. Falloux has prevailed. Oh, Falloux! Well, I am making an effort, but I will not hate you; it is your sin that is detestable.*

*If this letter bothers you....! If this letter bothers you, well, throw it away. No, my son, I will never believe that pilgrimages are useless. I'm telling you ahead of time that I'll never display the tricolor with the lily. That'll save me a few cents. Try to find out what truth there is in the nomination of Fr. Gay to Montpellier<sup>8</sup>. My son, I kiss you on both cheeks.*

*E. d'Alzon*

*If Fr. François<sup>9</sup> bothers you, Fr. Hippolyte will take care of it.*

E. d'Alzon to Vincent de Paul Bailly, Nîmes, October 18, 1873, *Letters*, Désiré Deraedt edition, vol. X, Rome, 1994, p. 128-129.

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\* **Jules François Simon** (1814-1896) was a statesman and philosopher, and one of the leaders of the Opportunist Republicans faction. He held a number of positions in his lifetime, including Prime Minister, Minister of Justice and Minister of Education. **Jacques-Victor-Albert, 4th duke of Broglie** (1821-1901), was a monarchist politician. He served at various times as President of the Council and Minister for Foreign Affairs as well as Minister of the Interior.

\*\* For **Gambetta**, see notes in chapter 43

\*\*\* **Jules Armand Dufaure** (1798-1881) was a statesman who served as Minister of Justice at the time of MacMahon.

\*\*\*\* On this day, Thiers was expelled from power and hopes were raised that the monarchy would be restored under the Count of Chambord.

<sup>1</sup> Fr. d'Alzon's reasoning is impeccable! Besides, Fr. Vincent de Paul Bailly worked at *Le Pèlerin*: although a journalist doesn't really make news, he is digesting it all day long.

<sup>2</sup> "Well, water, wine": the metaphor who milked for all its worth! It is digestive humor!

<sup>3</sup> The listing of deaths is somber: **Mrs. Edmond d'Alzon** and **Ms. Valat** both died in 1873. As for **Mrs. Louis-Justin Chaudordy**, née Converset (1811-1874), her deteriorating state of health presaged her death in the near future.

<sup>4</sup> Fr. d'Alzon was the vicar general. At that period of the year, transfers of clergy from one post to another were numerous and could be found in the *Semaine religieuse de Nîmes*.

<sup>5</sup> Bishop Charles-Emile Freppel (1827-1891) was named bishop of Angers in December 1869 and was formerly a Parisian neo-Gallican who became an Ultramontane. He got himself noticed after 1877 for his lively, combative humor against the anticlerical Republic. As for the phrase concerning pilgrimages "that scare people," one needs to understand that public mass demonstrations of faith struck fear in governments; the organization of these events included travel by train such as for national and international diocesan pilgrimages which were quite popular (in France, to Lourdes, La Salette, Paray-Le-Monial, Pontmain) and to large centers, not small centers of piety which draw local crowds and never really attract throngs.

<sup>6</sup> This formula is thoroughly Augustinian. *Sermon* 13, VII/8: "Si sic audis... peccata persequeris, non peccatem" ("If you hear your neighbor's case in the same way as you hear your own, you will attack the sins, not the sinner") or again *Contra Adimantum* XVII, 5 "Sed hoc perfectorum est, ut non oderint in peccatoribus nisi peccata, ipsos autem homines diligant" ("But it is a mark of those who are perfect that in sinners they hate only the sins but love the human beings").

<sup>7</sup> The effort to unite the various factions of monarchists, who hoped to call the **Count of Chambord** to the throne, began to founder on the question of the color of the national flag: white with lilies for the royalists and the tricolor (red, white, and blue) for the parliamentarians of the liberal right. **Mr. Frédéric-Alfred de Falloux** (1811-1886), on October 6, had them make the choice of the "Tricolor with Lilies." **Pierre-Charles Chesnelong**, a deputy from Béarn, participated in the Committee of Nine, who went to the pretender to the throne to have him accept it on October 17, 1873. They thought he had accepted. A letter from the Count of Chambord, dated October 27, 1873, and made public on the 30<sup>th</sup> at noon, gave a flat denial: never would Henri V abandon the flag of Henri IV and never would he become the legitimate king of the Revolution! All the political combinations of the liberal right and the ultras had collapsed.

<sup>8</sup> The episcopal see of Montpellier had been vacant since the resignation of **Bishop François-Marie-Joseph Lecourtier** (1799-1885). **Charles-Louis Gay** (1815-1892) was not named bishop till 1877, as an auxiliary to Bishop Pie in Poitiers. It was a former student of Fr. d'Alzon, **Fr. Anatole de Cabrières**, who was named bishop of Montpellier in 1873.

<sup>9</sup> **Fr. François d'Assise Chambourdon** (1844-1902), an Assumptionist before being incardinated into the diocese of Nîmes, was, for a time, working at *Le Pèlerin* under Fr. Vincent de Paul Bailly.



## For Further Reflection and Research

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- Jean-Marie Mayeur, "Les idées politiques du P. d'Alzon" in *Colloque d'histoire: Emmanuel d'Alzon dans la société et l'Église du XIXè siècle*, Paris, Le Centurion, 1982, p. 144-164.
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### For a Personalized Reading

- What do you make of the fact that with a Chamber featuring a monarchist majority in 1873, France moved step by step toward a democratic republic? Isn't this a somewhat contradictory or incoherent development?
- What could Fr. d'Alzon hope for from a restoration of the monarchy? Wasn't he deluding himself about the politicians of his day, including those who were on his side?
- In your opinion, what separated Fr. d'Alzon from a France that was politically liberal, constitutionally parliamentary, and socially reformist?
- Fr. d'Alzon had friends in the government in 1873 from whom he could have requested favors now and again. Does taking advantage of one's contacts seem to you to be fair, innocent, dangerous, or morally acceptable? What would be the risks?

## A Dream Barely Begun: the “Conversion” of the Slavs (1874)

**W**hen he received a blessing from Pope Pius IX for “your works in the East and the West” (1862), Fr. d’Alzon could have hardly imagined the journey upon which his two Congregations, during and after his lifetime, were going to embark in this great apostolic enterprise, which had been that of the Apostles themselves. Without clear-cut directives, without a pre-established action plan, and without means either, the Assumption had to invent its way in this complex and fragmented world of the East. Fr. Galabert, who was the first willing and courageous pioneer of the Mission to the East, let it be clearly understood that he was one of “those stones buried in the foundation” who with time remain hidden from human sight. His sacrifice was undoubtedly

equal to all his virtues among which patience was not the least; but his incontestable superiority came from that good and generous love which inspired him to study the customs and traditions of the East, always seeking to understand them from the inside and not judge mentalities, prejudices or particular ways of doing things, which can easily be lampooned in a foreigner’s regard. Fr. Galabert became a Bulgarian in heart, learned the language, and even composed a dictionary. He easily placed himself within the reach of the small school children of St. Andrew’s School, this medical doctor with a degree from Montpellier and a doctorate in Canon Law from Rome. If any comparison has to be made, let us simply say that in this matter this disciple proved himself to be a master.

And what can we say of those young Oblates, who had left the Cévennes Mountains and were sent without preparation to Andri-nopolis, whose defense Fr. Galabert often took up before Fr. d'Alzon, who was strict when it came to observing the Rule but who lived far from this land where their daily devotion, their ability to relate to people, and their qualities of heart and faith won many a victory, a testament to an incomparable and heroic charity?

Through the years, Fr. d'Alzon never ceased to be haunted by this mysterious Orient that he grasped through the distorted prism of the West's mirror. His love of the Church with all its requirements of truth and unity carved in him an obsessive desire for union which expressed itself in terms that sometimes appear misplaced to us: he perceived only resistance or echoes of schism in those Eastern Christians who groaned for centuries under the yoke of the Ottoman Empire. He wanted to "convert" the Slavic peoples, separated from Rome to be sure, but who had welcomed the gospel more than a thousand years before. And what of the Greek popu-

lations who trace their origins back almost to the beginnings of Christianity! Above all else, d'Alzon never stopped dreaming of the great Russia, the heart of the Slavic nation, split between those who supported an openness to the West and those who insisted on its Slavic identity, fierce defenders of the traditions inherited from Byzantium. He was drawn to this vastness, of space to be sure, but also of autocracy and great social inequalities; he was anxious to "attack this colossus" with columns of missionaries. An aristocratic lady of Russian origin, Mrs. Fricero, a convert to Catholicism, who had maintained a heart full of wonder for the religious traditions of her people, nevertheless tried to open the eyes of Fr. d'Alzon who remained very Latin and very Roman in his approach to the East. Nothing worked. The beginning of a dialogue ended with a kind of justifying juxtaposition of irreconcilable positions. Fr. d'Alzon's dreams remained dreams yet unrealized. Still, on the ground, his sons and daughters opened doors of reconciliation that a creative love would widen with a spirit of esteem, appreciation, and hope.

*My dear friend,*

*I am taking advantage of a neuralgia which prevents me from doing much else in order to catch up on my correspondence, on which I have fallen behind a bit. Would you please have Fr. Athanase<sup>1</sup>, whose penmanship is more readable than yours or mine, draw up a description of the houses, the religious, male and female, either at Andrinopolis or Philippopoli? It should indicate:*

- 1) the purpose of the house,*
- 2) the names of the religious, male and female,*
- 3) the children who attend the school, if there is one,*
- 4) the resources,*
- 5) the state of morale.*

*Making the description in this way will enable me to get an accurate picture of the situation<sup>2</sup>. The description does not have to include everything from cellar to attic, but enough to give a good idea. In any case the outline of the report can be modified if experience shows us that it can be improved. I would like to send you someone as soon as possible, but Fr. Adrien is leaving us and Fr André has already left<sup>3</sup>. You can see that we're hardly making any progress at all.*

*So, Bishop Pluym's death was quite sudden. What a terrible loss! Before taking the parish in Scutari<sup>5</sup>, we must think twice because we will be replacing Bulgarians and it is with Bulgarians that we want to work. If we stay within the boundaries we've set for ourselves, we will be able to pursue our goal more easily, the conversion of the Slavs. Here Bishop de Cabrières has been recommended for the see of Montpellier<sup>6</sup>; that's a big deal and I have serious concerns. At least he has given us a residence in Montpellier and an aluminate at Montmau. Ask Fr. Athanase to write to me himself about what he thinks of the studies of his children. Our small alumnates are not going badly; it's only the resources that are lacking everywhere. Sr. Hélène's sister has joined the Oblates<sup>7</sup>. 1,000 to 2,000 Masses should have been sent to you; I took 195 of them intended for you in order to pay a bill that you had with the Oblates. Please take note of these 195 Masses, since the amount has been used to pay off your affairs. Let me congratulate you for setting aside 2,000 francs for the hospital<sup>8</sup>; that will help us get the devil off our tail a bit.*

*Good-bye, dear friend. Very tenderly yours,*

*E. d'Alzon*

*I do not believe much in the threats on the Italian front. On the contrary I do believe France is getting back on its feet, but the Catholic liberals with Broglie and Dupanloup are getting the upper hand again. De Cabrières was nominated only when Mr. de Larcy threatened to resign<sup>9</sup>.*

E. d'Alzon to Fr. Victorin Galabert, Nîmes, January 17, 1874, *Letters*, vol. X, Désiré Deraedt editon, Rome, 1994, p. 180-181.

<sup>1</sup> Fr. Athanase Malassigné (1839- circa 1922) was an Assumptionist before becoming a Carthusian in 1880. He had been sent to help Fr. Galabert in 1869.

<sup>2</sup> Here is an accurate way to establish the status of a situation at a given time. In 1874 the Assumptionists were in only two places in the Near East, but they had multiple ministries: *Philippopoli* (St. André School, opened in January 1864; a youth club; a St. Vincent de Paul Conference) and *Andrinopolis* (residence of the superior of the Near Eastern Mission already in 1867 in a house called Sélamlik; the beginnings of an alumnate at Karagatch created around 1870-1872; and an agricultural orphanage known as St. Joseph at Kaik). As for the Oblates who arrived in Andrinopolis in May 1868, they were serving at two hospitals, dispensaries, and schools. Their principal residence was in Andrinopolis, in the house called Mekemet, that later moved elsewhere. They had a parish school, *St. Dimitri*; a hospital, *St. Vincent de Paul*, in the same Mekemet residence; a hospital, *St. Louis*, in the Kaik quarter, generously subsidized by a certain Richard and rebuilt in 1885; a Bulgarian school, *Our Lady of Mercy*, opened in 1869. It was only in 1890 that Mother Chantal Dugas opened the *St. Helen Day School* in the Kalé quarter. In Janaury 1874 there were in the Near Eastern Mission only 6 Assumptionists but already some 20 Oblates.

<sup>3</sup> Fr. Adrien Latour, the former Fr. Pierre (1825-?), was an Assumptionist novice who was asked to leave in 1874; Fr. André Rigal (1849-1919) had been recently ordained but did not stay in the Assumption in spite of various efforts.

<sup>4</sup> Bishop Antoine-Jossph Pluym (1808-1874) was a Dutch Passionist, successor to Archbishop Paolo Brunoni in Constantinople in 1870, as Apostolic Delegate for the Orientals and Patriarchal Vicar Apostolic for the Latins; he died on January 13, 1874.

<sup>5</sup> Scutari, the present Üsküdar, is the name of a quarter in Constantinople on the Asian side, the site chosen for the major railroad station of the city. At the time Scutari was part of a parish served by the Vincentians.

<sup>6</sup> Bishop Anatole de Rovièr de Cabrières (1830-1921), a future cardinal, was a priest from Nîmes ordained in 1853 and, until then, Bishop Plantier's secretary.

<sup>7</sup> Sr. Marie-Hélène (1843-1878) and Sr. Marie-Nathalie Puech (1844-1829).

<sup>8</sup> It was an allocation or subsidy given by the French Embassy.

<sup>9</sup> Duke Albert de Broglie (1821-1901) was a politician in the Orleans royal tradition and a liberal. Under MacMahon he had been Vice-President of the Council of Ministers. He was forced to resign in May 1874 when the effort to restore the monarchy failed. He was briefly recalled to power between May and November 1877. Baron Roger de Larcy (1805-1882) was a Protestant from Le Vigan and a friend of Fr. d'Alzon. He was a Legitimist royalist. He was Minister of Public Works in the first cabinet of Duke Albert de Broglie.

## For Further Research and Reflection

On Fr. d’Alzon’s thoughts on the apostolate in the Near East

- Julian Walter, *L’apostolat des Assomptionnistes auprès des Bulgares de 1862 à 1880*; Étienne Fouilloux, *L’oeuvre orientale du P. d’Alzon vue par ses fils*, in *Colloque d’histoire*, December 1880, *Emmanuel d’Alzon dans la société & l’Église du XIXe siècle*, Paris, Le Centurion, 1982, p. 144-164; p. 199-220.
- *Actes du Colloque d’Histoire*, November 2003, *Les Assomptionnistes et la Russie*, Bayard, 2003, 319 pages.
- Kathy Rousselet, *Les débuts de la mission d’Orient. Le P. d’Alzon et la Russie*, in *Deux siècles de l’Assomption. Le regard des historiens (Paris 2000-2001)*, Paris 2003, in the collection *Rencontres assomptionnistes*, Université d’été à l’Assomption, #7, p. 113-131.
- Antoine Wenger, *Qui est la ‘Dame Russe’ des lettres du P. d’Alzon?* in *AA Informations*, September 2006, #5, inset I-XII.

## For a Personalized Reading

- What apostolic priorities did Fr. d’Alzon send back to Fr. Galabert?
- Did Fr. d’Alzon have the means “to attack the entire Photius schism”?
- How was the Assumption able to slowly get itself out of the trap of an offensive Catholic form of proselytism in the East and develop a more positive, more respectful, and more ecumenical attitude?
- Was the Near East Mission the only “ecumenical laboratory” of the Assumption?





## Fr. d'Alzon, Ill-treated by the Chapter of Canons of Nîmes (1875)

The year 1875 was a time of trial for Fr. d'Alzon, both physically and morally. Bishop Plantier, gravely ill with stomach cancer, died in his easy chair in Nîmes on May 25, 1875, leaving his successor a certain number of difficult decisions and delicate nominations to make. For Fr. d'Alzon this loss was cruel because of the great affection that had grown between the two men over twenty years (1855-1875), nourished by the same fighting spirit, rooted in their ultramontane convictions. Contrary to all expectations, the Cathedral Chapter decided not to choose Fr. d'Alzon as Vicar Capitular, but Fr. Corrieux instead, and allied itself to a significant group of the Nîmes clergy in order to voice their rejection of the list of episcopal candidates recommend-

ed by Fr. d'Alzon and to suggest that the diocese of Nîmes had had enough of his way of governing as Vicar General since 1839. Described as *contemptuous* by some, Fr. d'Alzon, who had taken such care to foster unity among the clergy of Nîmes, was at first taken aback by this animosity and this repudiation, then really hurt by the attacks that he considered to be unjust. He could not imagine his authority being so directly contested; he had a hard time believing that his influence could be described as dictatorial. Above all, he didn't want to see the bishops' ranks filled with such "incompetent and mediocre individuals," whom he would denounce loud and clear when he made his evaluation known, as the Concordat required.

When it became obvious that the name of Bishop Besson would be retained for Nîmes (decree signed on August 3, confirmed on September 23, and consecrated on November 14 at Besançon), a choice that he feared at first but supported in the end, Fr. d'Alzon had said it all after the bishop's solemn entrance into Nîmes on November 25, 1875, "Our bishop is not handsome but we can see that he is someone!" At first, Fr. d'Alzon wanted to take a bit of distance by retiring to the hill of Notre-Dame des Châteaux for the entire month of August. He considered his decision no longer to be part of the administration of the diocese and even thought about resigning immediately. Nevertheless, he relented and met with Bishop Besson at his residence in Grenoble. Bishop Besson persuaded him that he wanted his services for the good of his administration, for his much appreciated counsel, and for his knowledge of the lay of the land. In his heart, Fr. d'Alzon, re-named to his post by a decree of December 12, 1875, put off for a few years a resignation that he

judged opportune, if not evident. Very soon he saw that the time for a harmonious relationship was over, given the methods and the choices of the new bishop compared to those he had come to appreciate from long experience in the field. Fr. d'Alzon did not suffer from any weakness, decried as it was, in making nominations; nor did he engage in the frivolity of certain public attitudes or of speech considered pure gossip. He regretted the length of his too frequent absences and argued against the decision the bishop finally made not to use the cathedral during extensive renovations. He submitted his resignation in writing in September 1878, firmly resolved to consecrate all his time and energies to his two Congregations. This resignation, when at last accepted, was made public on November 5, 1878. A page had been turned; Fr. d'Alzon felt that the diocese could go on without him. Bishop Besson wished to have the last word, "Fr. d'Alzon has left me; but I sincerely hope he has not abandoned me."

*My dearest daughter,*

*The River Garonne has carried off all my work in the Bigorre and in half an hour hailstones destroyed all of my wine. What a lesson in*

*economy hail provides! I had come for some time off in one of the most stunningly beautiful spots in Savoy<sup>2</sup> only to see the effects of floods that drown people and entail considerable loss.*

*They say that I am the one that had the new bishop named<sup>3</sup>, despite the Nuncio and even despite the Minister a bit. They say that I have become Orleanist, Gallican, Dupanloupist and who knows what else? The fact is that not being able to get the ones I wanted<sup>4</sup>, I at least fought to get a man of value. One can always get along better with those men than with imbeciles, even when they agree with you. Already long ago, Bishop Besson gave me all the guarantees one could ask for. I do not believe that he has written against the bishop of Orleans even though he has published some twenty books. Fr. Bougaud was suggested to the Bishop of Orleans by Mr. Baragnon<sup>5</sup>. The reply came: "Neither a Vicar General of Orleans nor a Vicar General of Poitiers." But I am not a Vicar General at all. The Chapter did not take the trouble to thank me; they just threw me out<sup>6</sup>. It is said that I got my revenge by the choice of Bishop Besson. It is clear that they wanted Bishop d'Hulst<sup>7</sup>. They made a great pilgrimage to Paray to ask this favor of the Sacred Heart; we will make a pilgrimage to Lourdes to thank the Blessed Virgin for the nomination of Bishop Besson against whom they did as much as they could, simply because I wanted him.*

*In a nutshell, here's the story: in two weeks, I'll be 65 years old. All I want is to rest a little and to take care of my Congregation which God is putting to the test., but which he is also blessing with superabundance by the success of the alummates.*

*You tell me you are unable set up a regular routine, a rule of life. It seems to me that the essential point is to impose on oneself a certain number of hours for sleep, for meditation, for reading, and for an examination of conscience. So much for the material side of things. What is keeping you from basing your life on something very serious, on a profound idea? The love of Our Lord, of the Blessed Virgin, and the love of the Church, for example, which goes to the heart of the spirit of the Assumption. With Our Lord, you have communion, the social kingdom of the Divine Master, the truth. With the Blessed Virgin, you have the model of all human perfections. And in devoting yourself to the Church, you accomplish the great duty of Christians today. If this*

*triple idea, which can be reduced to just one basically, suits you, who can prevent you from pondering it in your heart, nourishing yourself with it, and translating it into action? Come, my dear Amélie, get out of your torpor a little, and give yourself over to the perfection that your status demands.*

*Very affectionately yours, my dear daughter.*

*E. d'Alzon*

E. d'Alzon to the Countess d'Escures (Mrs. Amélie de Pélissier),  
Notre Dame des Châteaux, August 17, 1875,  
*Letters*, vol. XI, Désiré Deraedt edition, Rome 1995, p. 206-207.

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**Mrs. Louis-Joseph-Josias de Gaillard d'Escures** (+1919), née Rose-Claudine-Amélie de Pélissier received spiritual direction from Fr. d'Alzon.

<sup>1</sup> From the aluminate of Montmau, Fr. d'Alzon had received news that a hail-storm had destroyed the promise of a wine harvest for the year.

<sup>2</sup> Fr. d'Alzon had left Nîmes for the hill of Notre Dame des Châteaux at Beaufort-sur-Doron on August 1, 1875. He stayed there the entire month.

<sup>3</sup> The decree of nomination of Bishop Besson (1821-1888) is dated August 3, 1875. The nuncio in Paris as of the end of 1873 was **Bishop Pier-Francesco Meglia** (1810-1883). He was created cardinal by Pope Leo XIII in 1879. The Minister of Education and Cults was **Henri-Alexandre Wallon** (1812-1904).

<sup>4</sup> Fr. d'Alzon had put forward his list of "candidates" to succeed Bishop Plantier, who had died on May 25, 1875, in Nîmes: **Bishop Théodore Legain** (1809-1881), named bishop of Montauban in 1871; **Canon Pierre-Marie Gervais** (1828-1900), a priest of Bordeaux; **Fr. Louis-Hippolyte Guiol** (1818-1884). He finally, without enthusiasm, accepted the candidate of the Ministry, Fr. Louis Besson of Besançon.

<sup>5</sup> The bishop of Orleans was none other than Bishop Dupanloup (1802-1878). **Numa Baragnon** (1835-1892), an alumnus of the Collège de l'Assomption, was Under-Secretary of State. **Fr. Louis-Victor-Émile Bougaud** (1823-1888) was named bishop of Laval in 1887.

<sup>6</sup> When Bishop Plantier died, Fr. d'Alzon was one of four Vicars General, but the chapter chose none of them as Vicar Capitular. Bishop Besson had to insist that Fr. d'Alzon accept the post again. Fr. d'Alzon's intention was to resign as quickly as possible. He did resign in writing in 1878. The Nîmes Chapter had put forward other candidates to replace Bishop Plantier.

<sup>7</sup> **Bishop Maurice Le Sage d'Hauteroche** d'Hulst (1841-1896) was the secretary of Bishop Guibert of Paris, organizer of the Catholic Institute of Paris and Ecclesiastical Superior of the Religious of the Assumption.

## For Further Reflection And Research

### About Fr. d'Alzon's year in Nîmes in 1875

- Fr. Louis Bascoul, *Vie de Mgr. Besson*, vol. II, Paris-Arras, 1902, 472 p.
- *La Semaine religieuse de Nîmes* (diocesan review or newsletter).
- *La succession de Mgr. Plantier. Le P. d'Alzon vicaire général de Mgr. Besson (1875-1878)*, in *Dossier sur la vie et les vertus du P. d'Alzon*, Rome, 1986, vol. II, part II, ch. XXXI, p. 971-991.

## For a Personalized Reading

- Why did certain groups of clergy and of the Chapter of Nîmes reproach Fr. d'Alzon?
- Was not Fr. d'Alzon himself somewhat tired of a post that he had held without interruption since 1839?
- Did not the nomination of Bishop Besson to Nîmes illustrate the politico-religious compromises that the Concordat of 1801 gave rise to?
- Was Fr. d'Alzon, who finally accepted Bishop Besson, able to pacify the clergy of Nîmes and work for the good of the diocesan Church without holding a grudge?



## By the Fireside at Lavagnac (1876)

**A**t the beginning of 1876, from January 5-17, Fr. d'Alzon spent a few days resting at Lavagnac with his nephew's family, Jean and Clotilde de Puységur, née de Quinsonas. Bad weather there caught him by surprise and delayed his return to Nîmes. This unexpected delay occasioned a few anecdotal lines on life at the chateau, isolated by the snowfall, and on the homey atmosphere that Fr. d'Alzon found in the intimacy of his small family – they were all that was left of his family since the death of his sister Marie (1819-1869) – far from the noise and the hubbub of the city. He liked to read by the fireplace without losing track of the world or of his Congregation which was never far from his mind. The vast Russian horizon which filled his imagination and became an obsession was fed by the similari-

ties in climatic or meteorological conditions which, in turn, gave free rein to his musings and dreams. Fr. d'Alzon's mind was happy to escape to those thoughts since there were probably very few visitors who came to the house at that time of the year. His entourage at Lavagnac was limited, not counting the domestic staff. Jean and Clotilde, who married in 1872, had begun their family: in 1873 their first daughter, Alix (1873-1952), was born; then in the following years a second daughter, Marie-Clotilde, and finally a third, Isabelle. Tradition has it that Fr. d'Alzon amused himself by carrying Marie-Clotilde in the hood of his religious habit during his walks. Those days enjoying the fresh air with his family did him a lot of good. Many Assumptionists were also honored to receive an ever cordial welcome at the chateau,

already going all the way back to 1849. In 1980, during the celebration of the centennial of the death of Fr. d'Alzon, a last opportunity for Assumptionists to visit the residence at Lavagnac with its décor and furniture took

place. We can only hope that it will be rehabilitated if it passes into the hands of the General Council of the Hérault, as it has been announced, even if it is eventually used for commercial purposes.

*After the snow, there was frost. Then last night it snowed again. This morning there was a small biting frost, but I mean biting. The coachman, who wasn't expecting anything yesterday, can do nothing today. So I am still stranded here with the fire, with tea, with some books, lazy and filled with a crazy desire to go and convert the Russians who travel by sled. The day before yesterday, the coachman, who is from Savoy, made a sled and went to get provisions at Montagnac. Yesterday Jean<sup>1</sup>, out of kindness to me, tried the sled, but there was too much weight and CRASH! The sled broke, fortunately close to Lavagnac. Jean returned with snow up to his knees. And that's where the snow hasn't piled up so much; elsewhere it is much deeper.*

*So, here I am. God does not want me get involved in the elections<sup>2</sup>. If it were to snow like this throughout France, the elections would go up in flames. Who would say that it wasn't a supreme act of mercy? Don't mention the proposal to Barnouin<sup>3</sup>. He would anathematize me. As for me, there are so many things about Russia that I think about. Long live snow-covered Russia!*

*If this letter bothers you, we will start it, it, it, it over again. Of course not! I send countless good wishes to papa Laurent<sup>4</sup>. The frost, for the moment, has given permission to the rain to join it in falling. If it continues like this, we might be able to leave the day after tomorrow. At last!*

*Omnia tibi prosperiora suscipior. Vale<sup>5</sup>.*

*Post-script. I don't recall what I wanted to say. How the wind is blowing! I have never seen such frost. If anyone asks you where I am, tell them that I am in the land of wind and snow, of frost and freezing rain (which isn't hail, however). I hope that they do not wait for me to*



*begin the conference<sup>6</sup>. My friend, what a beautiful thing patience is!  
And to think that I am in the Midi, the land of flowers and love!*

E. d'Alzon to Fr. Emmanuel Bailly, Lavagnac, January 13, 1876, *Letters*, vol. XI,  
Désiré Deraedt edition, Rome, 1995, p. 334-335.

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<sup>1</sup> **Jean de Puységur** (1841-1910) was Fr. d'Alzon's nephew.

<sup>2</sup> Two series of elections were foreseen for 1876: senatorial elections on January 16 and 30 and legislative elections on February 20. They all ended with a great success for the republican camp. MacMahon tried to oppose them by throwing Jules Simon out and dissolving the Chamber of Deputies. But in the end he chose to submit to the verdict of the ballot box and called on a republican moderate, Dufaure, and in so doing he encouraged a parliamentary interpretation of the republican regime and of the constitutional texts of the Third Republic that would prevail in France until the end of the Fourth Republic in 1958. The governments would be chosen from among a coalition of parties that formed a majority.

<sup>3</sup> **Canon Henri Barnouin** (1830-1895) was the founding pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Nîmes.

<sup>4</sup> Papa Laurent referred to **Fr. Charles Laurent** (1821-1895), already one of the older Assumptionists.

<sup>5</sup> Broadly translated in good English, it means, "I wish you all the best. Be well."

<sup>6</sup> The series of Catholic Conferences had resumed on January 11, 1876. These conferences touched on all the political themes of the day for the defense of the interests and positions of the Church whose leaders did not hide their ties with the different rightist parties in power. Beginning in 1898 with the Dreyfus Affair, all the republican tendencies together would unite in a vast governmental coalition to try to exclude this time all possible interference or political influence of the clergy with regard to elections and the political expressions of public life. The first blow came with the law on Associations in 1901, liberal in its spirit but restrictive in its application and exclusive in its interpretation vis-à-vis Religious Associations, among whom were counted Congregations, in direct contempt of the law; the second blow was the unilateral scrapping of the Concordat (1905), in the name of a militant laicism.

## For Further Reflection and Research

### About Lavagnac

- *Merveilles et Châteaux de Provence*, Hachette, 1970, 316 pages (text by Claude Frégnac and documents by Pierre Fauchaux) in the collection *Réalités*. Pages 209 and following are about Lavagnac.
- Jean-Paul Périer-Muzet, A.A. *Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon: In His Own Words. Dalzonian Anthology*, vol. I, Rome, 2007, p. 7-8 (introduction to chapter 2).
- Jean-Paul Périer-Muzet, A.A. *Sur les pas du P. d'Alzon*, in *Lettres du P. d'Alzon*, vol. XVII, Rome, 2005, p. 567-580.

## For a Personalized Reading

- Fr. d'Alzon did not suffer from a lack of humor. Do you see evidence of it in this letter?
- In rural areas, when winter sets in, what would be the pastimes of a man of action stranded by the weather?
- To which books on Russia is Fr. d'Alzon referring? What similarities were there with his own situation?
- What kinds of transportation did Fr. d'Alzon use to travel from Lavagnac to Nîmes

## Thirty-Third Meditation: Study (1878)

**F**r. d'Alzon nurtured great doctrinal ambitions for the Assumptionist Congregation. He himself had the good fortune of having benefited from a solid foundation in two Parisian schools (1823-1828). His theological studies, begun at the major seminary in Montpellier (1832-1833) and pursued in Rome under the tutelage of a number of cardinals and ranking officials, had a less systematic character, perhaps, but intellectually were very formative, given their contact with what was happening in the Church at the time. Throughout his life Fr. d'Alzon sought to keep abreast of the doctrinal currents that coursed through the Church. He liked to read the Bible and the Fathers of the Church in the original as is evidenced by his acquisition of the patrology collection of Migne. He didn't neglect the opi-

nion-forming newspapers of his time nor books about current affairs. The prep school in Nîmes had a large, well-stocked library, worthy of the great monastic halls of the past, before its dispersion and dislocation, caused by the trials of time.

In founding the Augustinians of the Assumption, Fr. d'Alzon indicated his choice of having the Doctor of the West as the master of thought for his family and made him the patriarch protector and guide of studies. At the time of the First Vatican Council, he kept up to date with the renewal of Thomistic theology that had been given a new place of honor by the Dominican, Fr. Zigliara (1833-1893), professor of philosophy at the Minerva of Rome, commentator on the works of St. Thomas Aquinas and author of several scholastic manuals. A little later on, Pope Leo XIII would

promote a kind of orchestrated return to the thought of the 'Angelic Doctor' as the basis of Christian philosophy. In the end, Fr. d'Alzon warmly welcomed this return, recommending that his religious unite in their studies these two figures and study the thought both of Augustine and Thomas. For him this living link was especially important because, in his view, it was necessary to impregnate the innate relation between theological study

and the development of doctrine with the great affirmations of the faith. In that sense, the two new dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and Papal Infallibility seemed to form for him a kind of arc of light for theological thought, at the very time that civil society, guided by ambient rationalism and positivism, wanted to free itself of all supernatural experience in order to build an earthly city without God, without stars, and without brakes.

*An old world is vanishing<sup>1</sup> – it has almost vanished. Why? – it's not up to me to say. All I perceive is the fact – but I do believe it to be part of God's plan.*

*"Providence," says de Maistre, "erases only to write anew"<sup>2</sup>. So many of our ancient institutions have been erased. What other institutions will replace them? If they bear the imprint of God's hand, then they will contribute, during the span of their existence, to the continuation of God's work – otherwise it won't take long before they sink into oblivion. But one institution will endure: that which, founded on Jesus Christ, comprises the Pope, and around him the bishops<sup>3</sup> – and around them the priests..... and the religious, especially called to be concerned with sound doctrine.*

*Through the darkness of the night, through the smoke arising from the bottomless pit, God has set beacons to light the path for modern man. First, the Immaculate Conception<sup>4</sup> which reminds us of two basic truths: that we have all contracted Original Sin, and that we have all been restored to God's favour by Jesus Christ. Second, the proclamation of Papal Infallibility – this centralizing force whereby Christian truth holds firm amid the Babel of "think as you like" and "do as you please"<sup>5</sup>.*

*Believe me: when, through the doctrine of Mary Immaculate, we receive the strength to perceive the connecting link between every phase of the Divine Economy that flows from it, when through the Infallible Vicar who is the origin and term of our Faith, we can study safely down through the ages, then we will be able to plumb the depths of the greatest mysteries.....and we will realize that the longest life is far too short to scan the length, breadth, height and depth of what God has revealed to us.*

*So let us study. Let us admire the way whereby God affirms His truth, despite the sneers and denials of the proud. Try to discover the wonderful developments of Catholic doctrine and bask in that light that falls ever more brilliantly from heaven<sup>6</sup>.*

*E. d'Alzon*

Text from the *Écrits spirituels*, Rome, 1956, p. 592.

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<sup>1</sup> This expression is indirectly Scriptural, but the idea itself has nourished typical prophetic and apocalyptic texts of the Bible in the form of "new heaven and new earth": Is 65:17, 22; II Pt 3:13; Rev 21:1.

<sup>2</sup> This quotation seems to be an approximation. We did not find it as such anywhere. **Joseph de Mais-tre** was a traditionalist author for whom the young Emmanuel d'Alzon had a great deal of appreciation.

<sup>3</sup> This is a very hierarchical definition of the Church. It reflects the times of Vatican I. It remains true that the Church, for the believer of every era, is a divine institution.

<sup>4</sup> The proclamation of this dogma dates back to 1854, four years before the apparition at Lourdes.

<sup>5</sup> We recognize here the two fundamental criticisms that Catholic doctrine makes of the various movements of the Protestant Reformation: freedom of interpretation of the Bible and consequently the latitude in what is taught and in moral conduct resulting from the multiplication of numerous confessions.

<sup>6</sup> This is a beautiful image provided by Fr. d'Alzon that reminds us of the expression describing the scene of St. Paul on the road to Damascus: Acts 9:3, 22:6.

## For Further Reflection and Research

### On the Obligation to Study at the Assumption

- Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon, *Fourth Circular Letter*, 1874, in *Circular Letters 1874-1875*, ed. Fr. Robert Fortin, A.A., Worcester, 1981, p. 18-25.
- *Circulaire du P. Picard* on rationalism and fidelity to St. Thomas (1898).
- *Recommandations sur les études à l'Assomption* (General Chapter of 1906).
- Claude Maréchal, *À la découverte de la tradition intellectuelle de l'Assomption. Session sur les études spécialisées*, Rome, January, 1997.
- *Ratio institutionis: Formation for Life and Mission* (General Chapter 2005).
- Désiré Deraedt, *De fortes études, une conviction très ferme du P. d'Alzon*, Rome, 1997, 18 pages.

## For a Personalized Reading

- Fr. d'Alzon had a “providentialist” reading of human history in the manner of Bossuet. What expressions refer to it in this text?
- What links does Fr. d'Alzon establish between the two dogmas proclaimed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century?
- How does the Catholic Church today define its ministry of truth in the context of the explosion of Christian confessions?
- Christ, light from above, enlightens everyone, says the prologue of St. John's Gospel. What are the obligations of believers when it comes to seeking the Word, the true light?

## The Threat of a Dangerous Anticlerical Republicanism (1879)

In 1879 Fr. d'Alzon experienced the rise of a wave of political republican anticlericalism against religious congregations. Even if the period of the "Moral Order" (1873-1877) might have led one to think otherwise, public opinion in France had been won over to the idea of a Republic that promised social transformation. The political powers to which the Church was traditionally allied proved at each election that they were crumbling and impotent to contain this overwhelming force of change. In 1879, the final step had been taken when the Senate, the last bastion, saw the arrival of a republican majority. MacMahon drew the lesson from this blow and resigned the presidency in the wake of the republican victory. Jules Simon, a moderate republican,

replaced him, but he was not able to oppose the implementation of anti-Congregation measures enacted by his government. Jules Ferry pressed his offensive against "the Vatican-esque, monastic, congregationist, and Syllabus-producing machine." This is what Ferry thought of religious congregations, which were not recognized by the law, that is, a force of 160,000 anti-republican religious, according to the statistics of the time. The Jesuits were in the first row, the scarecrows brandished for a century by the force of "free thought," the Freemasons, and the Education League. It must be said that France was not the exception on the European scene. Piedmont had set the tone in Italy from 1855 on, and, beginning in 1866, implemented the same measures

of confiscating the goods of convents everywhere on the peninsula before occupying Rome and treating it in the same fashion. The Spanish Revolution of 1868 also targeted the Jesuits and all the convents founded after the exclaustations of 1835. Bismark's Germany, since the law of 1872, had extended, throughout German lands, the *Kulturkampf*, banning the Society of Jesus and, from 1875 on, all the non-nursing orders in the Kingdom of Prussia. The Swiss Confederation revised its federal constitution to reinforce the measures of exclusion against the Congregations. Even the "calm" state of Belgium began a policy of laicization after the electoral success of the liberals in 1878.

On March 15, 1879, Jules Ferry proposed a bill that foresaw, in addition to measures reestablishing the prerogatives of the State after granting freedom of higher education in 1875, the exclusion of members of non-authorized congregations from education, public or private (article 7). The Society of Jesus was to be dissolved throughout the country

within three months. According to another article, non-authorized congregations were refused the right to a *de facto* existence and obliged to request authorization within the same time-frame. Not far behind the Jesuits, the Assumptionists became a target, that small ultramontane congregation which was particularly dynamic and engaged in a dangerous activism since it made use of modern technology (railroads for pilgrimages and the printing press for publications).

Fr. d'Alzon had chosen the path of resistance, but the nuncio, Czacki, and certain bishops, with their diplomatic sensitivities, feared this extreme position. Even Pope Leo XIII hesitated and, faced with the indecisiveness and the divisions which appeared after the expulsion of the Jesuits, recommended a formula of compromise. Obedient, Fr. d'Alzon submitted to it but had no illusions. He was already thinking about countries where his religious could be welcomed or where they could seek refuge in case they were expelled.

*My dear friend,*

*Evidently there is electricity in the air. It's already been awhile, especially over the past few days, that I have wanted to have your ad-*



dress. You have given it to me; thank you! I am taking advantage of receiving it to answer your questions.

1. Only the Jesuits will be expelled, but it will take place violently<sup>1</sup>. At Vals, they will have to break down the doors of the 150 or 200 rooms of the religious and apprehend them. The day before yesterday, the superior of Vals was coming back from Toulouse, where he had picked up those I mentioned to you. At La Louvsec, of the seven, three will be left for the pilgrimages and four expelled. At Avignon and Montpellier, after believing they could resist, they now fear for their schools.

2. The other Congregations will be left alone for the moment<sup>2</sup>.

3. Four Attorneys General and three public attorneys have resigned; and it will not end there<sup>3</sup>.

4. The contrast between the Communards that received amnesty and religious who are expelled is odious beyond words<sup>4</sup>.

5. The public conferences are doing an immense good and we will organize some in small cities and towns; Baragnon is enjoying huge success.

6. I am quite convinced that public opinion is turning. If we have elections only in eighteen months, I would not be surprised that after the triumph and fall of Gambetta (which will be quick), after Rochefort comes to power<sup>5</sup>, or anyone else of the same ilk, order will return with the monarchy, the idea of which is gaining a lot of ground<sup>6</sup>.

In essence, that is what I can tell you. Now a few questions.

1. Could you tell me how much the new edition of the complete works of Cardinal Newman might cost?

2. Would it be possible, were we to be expelled, to take refuge in one of the places in your care? I believe it would only be temporary.

I congratulate you for the good God is accomplishing through you. If it continues and others do as much, England will return to the Catholic truth.

Goodbye, dear friend. I am yours in Christ.

E. d'Alzon

E. d'Alzon to Fr. Henri Galeran, Nîmes, June 25, 1880, *Letters*, vol. XIII, Désiré Deraedt edition, 1996, p. 338.

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<sup>1</sup> As of October 14, 1877, the deputies were in great majority republicans. As of January 5, 1879, the Senate also had a republican majority. **Jules Ferry**, a positivist and anticlerical republican as Minister of Public Education in February 1879, and as of September 1880, as President of the Council, prepared reform measures in public education with three key words: lay, free, and obligatory for primary grades. He also presented a bill to the Assembly forbidding teaching by religious congregations that were non-authorized and non-recognized by law (article 7). The Jesuits were targeted first, their schools as much as their residences. Vals-près-Le-Puy (Haute Loire) was the town where they had their major scholasticate in France since 1833; La Louvsec (Ardèche) was their pilgrimage center dedicated to St. Francis Régis, S.J., entrusted to the Jesuits since 1832. In many cities in France the Jesuits directed secondary schools including that of Avignon, dedicated to St. Joseph founded in 1850, and that of Montpellier called École libre du Sacré-Coeur planned by **Fr. Maurel** in 1856 for the quarter of Grand-Saint-Jean near the railroad station but actually completed in 1874 at 4 Rue Rondel by **Fr. Michel Lanusse**.

<sup>2</sup> The measures taken against the Jesuits, who had already been threatened in 1845, were the subject of the decree of March 29, 1880, in which a delay of three months was given to dissolve their order or be expelled. The decree of March 30, 1880 obliged the other religious congregations to request government authorization. It targeted the Assumptionists, also not authorized, in November 1880: expulsion from Sèvres, from François Ier and from Nîmes. In general, congregations of women were not bothered. The decree of expulsion of the Jesuits took effect on June 30, 1880.

<sup>3</sup> As a result of the expulsion of the congregations, there resulted a series of resignations in the ranks of the magistrates and the military. *Le Pèlerin* of July 10, 1880, published under the title *Le Livre d'or de la magistrature* a long list of judges who had resigned. They were replaced by republican judges who catered to the orders of the government.

<sup>4</sup> The former Communards, who had escaped the massacres of May 1871, had been condemned to harsh penalties: condemned to death, to deportation (Algeria and New Caledonia), or to hard labor. On July 11, 1879, they received a decree of amnesty.

<sup>5</sup> **Léon Gambetta** (1838-1882), a lawyer, headed the Republican Union that sat at the extreme left. Rather opportunistic, he became President of the Chamber in 1879 but exercised real power only briefly between November 1881 and January 1882, before being overturned. **Henri Rochefort** (1831-1913) was an aristocrat, politician, and republican writer who had been a Communard. After the amnesty, he became a deputy (1885), a nationalist and a follower of Boulanger.

<sup>6</sup> Fr. d'Alzon was still under the grand illusion of a possible return of the monarchy in France. He was counting on a reversal of public opinion tired of the disorders and the excesses of a tumultuous political life. The fact is that after twenty years of a rather opportunistic and moderate republican regime, but not one without crises, the Republic would become wiser, would settle in for the long haul and render the monarchy obsolete for the French people.

<sup>7</sup> The expulsions of 1880 did not have a lasting effect. After the 'grand ministry' of **Gambetta**, the anti-Congregation measures were no longer implemented. The Assumption had set up its novitiate in Spain, at Isma for six years (1880-1886), before transferring it back to France, at Ivry. However, after the *Trial of the Twelve* (*Procès des douze*) in 1900, the French Assumption would undergo a rigorous and universal exile that forced it into a first movement of internationalization, involuntary but beneficial: the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Italy.

## For Further Reflection and Research

### On the anticlerical French Republic and Religious Congregations

- Jean-Louis Mayeur, *Une Congrégation face à la IIIe République anticléricale*, in *Deux siècles d'Assomption. Le regard des historiens* (Paris 2000-2001), Paris, 2003, in the collection *Rencontres Assomptionnistes*, U.E.A., #7, p. 43-59.
- Jean-Paul Périer-Muzet, A.A. *Assomptionnistes? Entrée d'un nom de Congrégation dans l'histoire de la société et de l'Église*, in *Notices Biographiques des religieux de l'Assomption, 1850-2000*, Rome, 2001, vol. V, 2001, annex #10, 11 pages.
- Christian Sorrel, *La République contre les Congrégations*, Cerf, 2003, 365 pages.
- Jacqueline Lalouette and Jean-Pierre Machelon, *1901: Les Congrégations hors la loi?*, Letouzey et Ané, 2002, 304 pages.

### in English

- Theodore Zeldin, ed., *Conflicts in French Society: Anticlericalism, Education, and Morals in the Nineteenth Century*, Allen and Unwin, 1971, 240 pages.
- Owen Chadwick, "The Rise of Anticlericalism," in *The Secularization of the European Mind in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1975, 286 pages.

## For a Personalized Reading

- In your opinion, what was the ideological opposition between Christian thought and republican political thought in 19<sup>th</sup> century France? Why was anticlericalism paired with republicanism?
- Over the years why had the question of education become the major political and ideological battleground in the merciless struggle of the republicans against the Church in France?
- In your opinion, are the rights of God, the rights of the Church, and human rights irreconcilable? What developments have taken place in this regard, especially since Vatican II?
- The Religious Congregations were particularly targeted by the republican anticlerical political forces. How would you explain this relentless opposition?



## Prayer for the Beatification of Fr. d'Alzon

*Lord Jesus Christ, You called Emmanuel d'Alzon  
to be, with you, among your people at the service  
of the Father and of His Kingdom.*

*With brothers and sisters in the Assumption,  
He shared that same service and his love  
for you, Mary, and the Church.*

*Today, in hope and prayer, we wait for the Church  
to recognize the holiness of Father d'Alzon.*

*That is why, through his intercession we implore you,  
with the poor and the disciples of the Gospel,  
to grant us the favor that we ask of you for*

*Have pity on us!  
Share with us your passion for the Father and His people.  
Make of us laborers of Your Kingdom.*

*You who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen*

***With the approbation of the Ordinary (2006)***

***Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon (1810-1880)***

*Founder of the Augustinians of the Assumption  
and the Oblates of the Assumption*

*Faithful disciple of Christ,  
in the school of St. Augustine's spirituality,  
Emmanuel d'Alzon, Vicar General of Nîmes,  
consecrated his life in the service of the Church.*

*He founded two congregations for the mission  
and the renewal of society,  
by means of a doctrinal, social, and ecumenical commitment.*

*Awakening vocations and educating the young were his  
preferred areas of involvement.*

*Under the patronage of Our Lady of Salvation,  
he launched numerous ministries such as a confraternity  
of prayer, pilgrimages, and the press.*

## Stages in the Cause of Fr. d'Alzon

- January 14, 1931: Approval of Fr. Romuald Souarn as Postulator General by the Congregation of Rites and Fr. Arthur Deprez as Vice-Postulator.
- February 1, 1931: Bishop Girbeau of Nîmes orders that the writings of Fr. d'Alzon be sought and gathered.
- April 1931: Establishment of the diocesan tribunal responsible for gathering information in view of the Cause of Fr. d'Alzon.
- June 21, 1931: The bishop of Montpellier also orders that Fr. d'Alzon's writings be sought and gathered.
- February 19, 1935: The dossier of the diocesan trial is given to the Congregation of Rites.
- June, July 1937: The entire collection of the writings of Fr. d'Alzon, transcribed and authenticated (52 volumes), is deposited at the Congregation of Rites in Rome.
- November 20, 1940: **The Congregation of Rites approves the writings of Fr. d'Alzon** (Nihil Obstat).
- August 15, 1942: Fr. Jude Verstaen is named Vice-Postulator to replace Fr. Deprez.
- November 3, 1942: Exhumation and transfer of the body of Fr. d'Alzon to the chapel of the Oblate Sisters on Rue Séguier in Nîmes.
- June 25, 1943: Closure of the investigation of non-cult.
- May 8, 1948: Approval of the nomination of Fr. Jude Verstaen, Assistant General, as Postulator General, replacing Fr. Souarn, deceased.
- November 12, 1953: Approval of the nomination of Fr. Aubain Colette as Postulator General.
- April 30, 1954: Nihil Obstat given for the volume *L'Âme du P. Emmanuel d'Alzon*.
- January 18, 1956: Publication of the *Écrits spirituels du P. d'Alzon* by Fr. Athanase Sage.
- May 29, 1958: **Decree of introduction of the Cause of Fr. d'Alzon.**

## EPILOGUE

November 19, 1960: The cause of Fr. d'Alzon is transferred to the Historical Section of the Congregation of Rites.

November 26, 1964: Ceremony of exhumation and identification of the remains of Fr. d'Alzon in the chapel of the Oblates on Séguier Street.

November 21, 1966: Publication of the First Constitutions of the Augustinians of the Assumption by Fathers Athanase Sage and Pierre Touveneraud.

April 29, 1970: Nomination of Fr. Pierre Touveneraud as Postulator of the Cause of Fr. d'Alzon to replace Fr. Aubain Colette. He is given the task of writing the Positio.

September 29, 1983: Fr. Wilfrid Dufault is named Postulator of the Cause of Fr. d'Alzon to replace Fr. Touveneraud, who died in December 1979. His nomination is accepted by the Congregation for the Cause of Saints on October 19, 1983. Fr. Désiré Deraedt is Fr. Dufault's assistant.

March 3, 1986: Publication of the Dossier on Fr. d'Alzon's life and virtues.

November 19, 1991: The Commission of Cardinals unanimously recognizes the heroic virtues of Fr. d'Alzon.

December 21, 1991: Pope John Paul II ratifies this conclusion by signing the decree on the heroic virtues of **Fr. d'Alzon, declared Venerable**.

March 7, 2000: Fr. Bernard Holzer is named Postulator General of the Congregation for all causes (Bulgarian martyrs, Fathers d'Alzon, Pernet, Picard, and Vincent de Paul Bailly).

April 18, 2005: Fr. Vincent Cabanac is named Postulator General of the Congregation for all the causes.



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