

COLLECTION RECHERCHES ASSOMPTION

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## ASSUMPTIONIST EDUCATION

Acts of the International Congress  
Worcester, MA (USA), 17-27 July 2016

Richard Lamoureux and John Franck eds

Collection "Recherches Assomption"

- 1 - *L'aventure missionnaire assomptionniste* – Actes du Colloque d'Histoire du 150<sup>ème</sup> anniversaire de la Congrégation des Augustins de l'Assomption, Lyon-Valpré, 22-26 novembre 2000
- 2 - *Les Assomptionnistes et la Russie (1903-2003)* – Actes du Colloque d'Histoire, Rome, 20-22 novembre 2003.
- 3 - *Les origines de la famille de l'Assomption, Fondateurs et Fondatrices, Fondations, Intuitions, Relations et Différends* – Actes du Colloque Inter-Assomption, Paris, 6-10 janvier 2004.
- 4 - *Antoine Wenger, une traversée dans le XX<sup>ème</sup> siècle et dans l'Église* – Actes du Colloque d'Histoire, Rome, 5 décembre 2014

## Table of Contents

PROGRAM OF THE CONGRESS .....	5
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS .....	13
LIST OF SCHOOLS REPRESENTED .....	15
PRESENTATIONS	
<b>“Emmanuel d’ALZON: the Context – historical, social, political and ecclesial - of XIX<sup>th</sup> Century France”</b> – Sr. Clare Teresa Tjader, R.A. ....	17
<b>“Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness," (Genesis 1:26) – Father Emmanuel d’alzon’s vision of teaching and education”</b> – Bro. Jean-Michel Brochec, A.A. ....	29
<b>“Emmanuel d’Alzon’s Dream of a University”</b> – Fr. Richard E. Lamoureux, A.A. ....	37
<b>“A Mysticism of Education”</b> – Fr. Tomas Gonzalez, A.A.....	47
<b>“Marie-Eugénie and Emmanuel d'Alzon. Common features in the field of education”</b> – Sr. Thérèse-Agnès de Balincourt, R.A.....	57
<b>“Putting out into the (New) Deep – Challenges Facing the Church and Catholic Educators in the Globalized World”</b> – Prof. Mary Ann Glendon .....	67
SUPERIOR GENERALS' FINAL REMARKS	
Sr. Felicia Ghiorghies, O.A.....	87
Fr. Benoît Grière, A.A. ....	95
<b>Text of reference: “For an Assumption Education Today” .....</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>Father d’Alzon on Education: an anthology of texts .....</b>	<b>109</b>



## Program

July 17-27, 2016

**16 July, Saturday** – Arrival, welcome, and registration

2 to 5:30 PM Registration, Lobby, Living Learning Center  
 6:15 PM Dinner, Taylor Dining Hall  
 8:00 PM Welcome and Orientation, Hagan Hall

***PART ONE: "SEE"***

**17 July, Sunday**

8:00 AM Breakfast, Taylor Dining Hall  
 10:00 AM Eucharist, Chapel of the Holy Spirit  
 Presided by Most Rev. Robert McManus, bishop of  
 Worcester  
 11:00 AM Tour of the Campus  
 12:30 PM Lunch, Taylor Dining Hall  
**4:00 PM Opening plenary session of the Congress, Hagan  
 Hall:**  
     **Introduction** of participants by country  
 6:15 PM Barbecue/picnic with communities of the  
 Assumption Family in the region

**18 July, Monday**

8:00 AM Morning Prayer & Mass, Chapel of the Holy Spirit  
 9:00 AM Continental Breakfast, Hagan Hall  
 9:30 AM Plenary session: presentation of institutions  
 12:30 PM Lunch, Taylor Dining Hall  
 3:00 PM Plenary session: presentation of institutions  
 (continued)  
 5:30 PM Evening Prayer, Chapel of the Holy Spirit  
 6:15 PM Dinner, Taylor Dining Hall

**19 July, Tuesday**

- 8:00 AM Morning Prayer & Mass, Chapel of the Holy Spirit  
 9:00 AM Continental Breakfast, Hagan Hall  
**9:30 AM Plenary session**  
 What points of convergence and of difference can you identify in the institutions as they were presented? Can you identify some characteristics that seem to you to arise from their Assumptionist identity?  
 9:45 AM Small group work  
**11:00 AM Plenary session: Large group sharing**  
 12:30 PM Lunch, Taylor Dining Hall

**PART TWO: "JUDGE"**

- 3:00 PM Plenary session**  
 Presentation, followed by questions & answers:  
*"Emmanuel D'Alzon: the social, historical, political, and ecclesiastical context of France in the 19th century –What challenges did he face?"*  
 - Sr. Clare Teresa Tjader, r.a.  
 4:00 PM Break  
 4:20 PM Personal work on the texts from Fr. d'Alzon  
 5:30 PM Evening Prayer, Chapel of the Holy Spirit  
 6:15 PM Dinner, Taylor Dining Hall  
*Evening* Personal work on the texts from Fr. d'Alzon  
 (continued)

**20 July, Wednesday**

- 8:00 AM Morning Prayer & Mass, Chapel of the Holy Spirit  
 9:00 AM Continental Breakfast, Hagan Hall  
**9:30 AM Work in small groups**, to identify the educational convictions of Fr. d'Alzon, based on his writings  
**11:15 AM Plenary session: sharing of small group reflections**  
 12:45 PM Lunch, Taylor Dining Hall

- 3:00 PM**      **Plenary session**  
 Three presentations:  
*“D’Alzon, the educator and his vision – A theological and anthropological perspective”* –  
 Br. Jean-Michel Brochec, a.a.  
*“University Education for Fr. d’Alzon”* –  
 Fr. Richard Lamoureux, a.a.  
*“The formation of educators, using Fr. d’Alzon’s writings”* (“Una mística de la educación”) –  
 Fr. Tomás Gonzalez, a.a.
- 4:15 PM      Break
- 4:30 PM**      **Plenary session:**  
 Presentation, followed by questions & answers:  
*“Marie-Eugénie and Emmanuel d’Alzon – Common traits in the area of education”* –  
 Sr. Thérèse-Agnès de Balincourt, r.a.
- 5:30 PM      Evening Prayer, Chapel of the Holy Spirit
- 6:15 PM      Dinner, Taylor Dining Hall
- 8:00 PM**      **Plenary session**  
 Presentation & discussion: *“Child protection in our institutions”* – Dr. Francesco Cesareo, president of Assumption College and *chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops National Review Board on the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults, together with Mr. Bernard Nojadera, Executive Director, Secretariat for Child and Youth Protection, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.*

## 21 July, Thursday

- 8:00 AM      Morning Prayer & Mass, Chapel of the Holy Spirit
- 8:45 AM      Continental Breakfast, Tinsley Campus Ministry Center
- 9:30 AM      Personal work: work on a description of Fr. d’Alzon’s vision of education, based on everything we have heard
- 11:15 AM      Small group work
- 12:30 PM      Lunch, Taylor Dining Hall

- 3:00 PM**      **Plenary session:** sharing of the work done in small groups and discussion in order to arrive at four or five characteristics of Fr. d'Alzon's vision of education
- 5:30 PM      Evening Prayer, Chapel of the Holy Spirit
- 6:15 PM      Dinner, Taylor Dining Hall

### ***THIRD PART: "ACT"***

#### **22 July, Friday**

- 8:00 AM      Morning Prayer & Mass, Chapel of the Holy Spirit
- 9:00 AM      Continental Breakfast, Hagan Hall
- 9:30 AM**      **Plenary session**  
 Short presentations by five participants, responding to the following questions: *What have I discovered over the past few days about Fr. d'Alzon and an Assumption education? What has inspired me? What do I feel challenged to accomplish in my life as an Assumption educator? Until now, for me, d'Alzon was... As of now, he is... What am I going to try to put into practice?*
- 11:00 AM**      **Work in small groups**  
*What precise and concrete content would you give to the educational characteristics in d'Alzon's thought and practice?*  
*What challenges do you feel arise for you based on everything you have heard up till now?*  
*What does all this invite you to change in your way of doing things?*  
*What consequences might there be for your institutions?*  
*It will be important in this reflection that we try to define as clearly as possible what we mean by the different characteristics of an Assumption education.*
- 12:30 PM      Lunch, Taylor Dining Hall



- 3:00 PM**      **Plenary session**  
 Sharing of the work done in small groups  
 Discussion, proposals, debate in view of a first attempt to elaborate an Assumption educational project/charter, i.e. to identify the fundamental principles of any Assumption institution
- 5:30 PM      Evening Prayer, Chapel of the Holy Spirit
- 6:15 PM      Dinner, Taylor Dining Hall

*During the evening*

The synthesis group will gather what they have heard and prepare a preliminary draft of a profile of an Assumption institution. This would be a kind of Assumption educational project or charter, with fundamental principles valid for every Assumption school.

**23 July, Saturday**

- 8:00 AM      Morning Prayer & Mass, Chapel of the Holy Spirit
- 9:00 AM      Continental Breakfast, Hagan Hall
- 10:30 AM**      **Plenary session:** presentation of first draft of a project/charter by the synthesis group, followed by questions, reactions, suggestions

*Before the afternoon session, the synthesis group will prepare a second draft of the project/charter.*

- 12:30 PM      Lunch, Taylor Dining Hall
- 3:00 PM**      **Plenary session:** presentation of the second draft of the project/charter
- 5:30 PM      Evening Prayer, Chapel of the Holy Spirit
- 6:15 PM      Dinner, Taylor Dining Hall

**24 July, Sunday**

- 8:00 AM      Mass and Morning Prayer, Chapel of the Holy Spirit
- 9:00 AM      Breakfast, Taylor Dining Hall

Outing *à la carte*: the city of Boston and its surroundings  
 6:15 PM Dinner, Taylor Dining Hall

### 25 July, Monday

8:00 AM Morning Prayer & Mass, Chapel of the Holy Spirit  
 8:45 AM Continental Breakfast, Tinsley Campus Ministry Center  
**9:30 AM Conference** (*open to the public*)  
*“The Challenges facing the Church, and Educators in particular, in the Globalized World of the 21st century”* - Prof. Mary Ann Glendon, Professor of Law, Harvard University, member of different Vatican Commissions, and former ambassador of the United States to the Holy See  
 11:00 AM Break  
 11:30 AM Exchange with Prof. Glendon  
 12:30 PM Lunch, Taylor Dining Hall  
**3:00 PM Plenary session**  
 Presentation by Sr. Thérèse-Agnès de Balincourt, r.a., on the follow-up that her Congregation gave to their international education congress of 1998. After the presentation, a time to pose questions, followed by a brainstorming session on the following question: in the area of education, what support do we need from our Congregations?  
 5:30 PM Evening Prayer, Chapel of the Holy Spirit  
 6:15 PM Dinner, Taylor Dining Hall

### 26 July, Tuesday

8:00 AM Morning Prayer & Mass, Chapel of the Holy Spirit  
 9:00 AM Continental Breakfast, Hagan Hall  
**9:30 AM Plenary session**  
 A final look at the document prepared by the synthesis group on an education project/charter

- 10:15 AM**     **Work in small groups**  
*What follow-up can /should I give to the work of the Congress... to convey the results of the Congress, to implement what I have discovered in my institution/or in Assumption institutions in my region, to foster links between institutions...? What support do we need from our Congregations?*
- 11:30 AM**     **Plenary session:** sharing of the work done in small groups
- 12:30 PM     Lunch, Taylor Dining Hall
- 3:00 PM**     **Plenary session:**  
 Presentations/Reactions by the two superiors general, Sr. Felicia Ghiorghies, o.a. and Fr. Benoît Grière, a.a., followed by questions and discussion
- 4:30 PM**     **Work in small groups** to discuss concrete follow-up measures to be taken after the Congress
- 5:30 PM     Evening Prayer, Chapel of the Holy Spirit
- 6:15 PM     Dinner, Taylor Dining Hall

*During the evening*

The synthesis group will edit a text based on the summaries given by the small groups.

**27 July, Wednesday**

- 8:00 AM     Morning Prayer, Chapel of the Holy Spirit
- 8:45 AM     Continental Breakfast, Hagan Hall
- 9:15 AM**     **Plenary session**  
 Presentation of the text prepared by the synthesis group  
 Discussion
- 10:30 AM     Evaluation and Closing Remarks
- 11:30 AM**     **Closing Eucharist**, Chapel of the Holy Spirit  
 Presided by Fr. Benoît Grière, a.a.
- 12:30 PM**     **Festive closing meal**



## Participants

Ghiorghies, OA	Felicia
Grière, AA	Benoît
Cotraud, OA	Christophe
Brochec, AA	Jean Michel
de Lombaerde	Joseph Lutgard
de Lescure	Raoul, Marie, Joseph, Bertrand
Franck, AA	John
Lamoureux, AA	Richard
Marzolla, AA	Juan Carlos
Rabitz, OA	Claire
Kahindo Kihugho, AA	Emmanuel
Chatov, AA	Edouard
Koné Benin	Eugénie
Marciel, AA	Marcelo
Kivuya Muke, AA	Louis
Loustaunau	Esteban
Patiño	Beatriz
Kambale Matsongani, AA	Mulumba
Corriveau, AA	Roger
Caglione, AA	Daniele
Carlsen, AA	Ryan
Nuyda, AA	Blair
Verzella, AA	Brian
Balincourt, R.A.	Thérèse-Agnès
Cesareo	Francesco
Gallagher, AA	Dennis
Carroll-Keeley	Louise
Kasereka Kibanda, AA	Wilfrid
Kakule Kalengehya, AA	Jean-Pierre
Lusenge Lina-Lyogha, AA	Oswald
Vandermersch, OA	Zoé Marie, Sonia
Lachaud	Yvan
Jégat-Deniau	Patrice Bernard Marie
Ndovya Kibonge, AA	Eloïs
Somo Mbayiterwa, AA	Vincent de Paul

Katsuva Matandiko, OA	Agnès-Marie
Muyisa Wa Vene	Kyowire Gaudentie
Mantombela, OA	Mbambu Josephine
Iyonde	Sebastien
Siliolio Matong'wa, AA	Ignatius
Yallah Odhiambo, AA	Benard
Masika Kahindo Makuta, OA	Irène
Misanga	Morice Albert
Kaswera Kighoma Kisenge, OA	Jeanne Marie
Kambale Muhemi	Jean
Botralahy, AA	Gilbert Romain
Zabus	Ann
Biesiaga	Véronique
Lenglez, AA	François André M
Schrooten	Katrien
Vermeiren	Els
Robijns	Karin Jozef A.
Jeurissen	Christiane Maria M.
Magré	Stéphane
Meroni	José Ignacio
Baioni	Orlando Francisco
Comolli	Norberto Marcelo
Rivero	Claudia Viviana
Santana Vargas, AA	Cristian
Alarcón González	Laura Rebeca
Sandino Alfaro	Rosalba
Herrera, AA	Silvio
Núñez Rubio, A.A.	Juan
Kadembi Kitambala, AA	Remacle
Sagadou, AA	Jean-Paul
Gonzalez Herrera, AA	Mariano Tomás
Glendon	Mary Ann
Tjader, RA	Clare Teresa

## **List of institutions represented**

### **Augustinians of the Assumption**

- Assumption College, Worcester (USA)
- ISEAB, Butembo (RD-Congo)
- Collège Pie X Kambali, Butembo (RD-Congo)
- Institut technique Mahamba, Butembo (RD-Congo)
- St. Monica's Academy, Nairobi (Kenya)
- E. d'Alzon High School, Arusha (Tanzania)
- Collège Mgr Canonne, Ejeda (Madagascar)
- Collège D'Alzon, Bure (Belgique)
- Collège St. Michel, Gosselies (Belgique)
- Sint-Theresiacollege, Kapelle-op-den-Bos (Belgique)
- Sint-Aloysiusinstitut, Zepperen (Belgique)
- Instituto San Román, Buenos Aires (Argentina)
- Instituto NS de Lourdes, Santos Lugares (Argentina)
- Colegio Manuel d'Alzon, Lota (Chile)
- Colegio Emmanuel d'Alzon, Bogota (Colombia)

### **Oblates of the Assumption**

- Collège Ste-Anne, Le Bouscat (France)
- Collège Ste-Anne, Segré (France)
- Ste-Elisabeth, Paris (France)
- Institution du Sacré-Cœur, La Ville du Bois (France)
- Institut D'Alzon, Nîmes (France)
- Institut Mapendano, Butembo (RD-Congo)
- Institut D'Alzon, Butembo (RD-Congo)
- Institut Malkia Wa Mbingu, Butembo (RD-Congo)
- Lycée Mwandu, Beni (RD-Congo)





SR. CLARE TERESA TJADER, R.A.

## **Emmanuel d'Alzon: the Context – historical, social, political and ecclesial - of XIX<sup>th</sup> Century France**

### GENERAL CONTEXT:

The lives of Emmanuel d'Alzon and Marie Eugenie Milleret largely spanned the Nineteenth Century. D'Alzon was about ten years older than Marie Eugénie and she outlived him by about 20 years. This is a period of French history that some historians call “the long century” extending from the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars to World War I, the period between wars that led to great transformations.

As one historian put it: “Noah, disembarking from the Ark after the Flood, must not have found the world more changed than did a man of the 18th century, propelled into the new century as the year 1801 opened.” One society was crumbling, another emerging. A system of hereditary wealth, prestige and power was being replaced by one of constitution and peoples’ choice. The values of land, title and honor were being replaced by liberty, business and money. It was a period of political turmoil moving France - and many European empires- from monarchy towards democracy through multiple advances and reverses. This is immediately evident when we look at the successive governments in France. The period saw eight political regimes, changes often effected with violence.

French Revolution 1789-1792

    First Republic 1792-1804

    Reign of Terror 9/1792-7/1794

Directoire 1795-1799

First Empire 1804-1814/15

Bourbon Restoration 1814/15-1830 Louis XVIII, Charles IX

July Monarchy 1830-1848 Louis Philippe

Second Republic 1848-1852 Louis Napoleon

Second Empire 1852-1870 Napoleon III

Third Republic 1870-1940 after the War of 1870

1871 Commune (lasted 2 months)  
 '71-'79 Royalists in power  
 (the Belle Epoque) 1890-1914

Power was shifting during the 19<sup>th</sup> century from the wealthy landowners to the rich bankers and merchants, from the countryside to the city, from the aristocracy to the bourgeoisie. Voting rights were tax-based so we mustn't imagine that during this era democracy extended to the general population - or to women!

Abraham Lincoln said that God must love the poor because He made so many of them. There were many but dearth, sickness and famine often made their lot, not just poor but wretched. It was a period of massive urbanization (Second Empire), the rise of industrialization and the urban working class. (A new class appeared, 'the proletariat'.) Extreme wealth and extreme poverty moved to the city. As the industrial revolution advanced –late in France– urban poverty often meant living in survival mode.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a period of consolidation and centralization when France, the second most populated country in Europe (fourth in the world), truly became a nation: peasants became citizens, the population became linguistically united and literate.

The railroads and all sorts of means of communication -the rise and proliferation of newspapers, an efficient postal system, the telegraph, even the telephone by the end of the century (1876) - contributed to the making of a unified nation.

Napoleon gave the country a code of law and a centralized bureaucracy. King Louis Philippe was not simply the king of [the territory of] France but called himself the 'king of the French' [people].

It was a period of confusion and struggle for the Church and within the Church moving to recover and renew herself while the country moved towards secularism and that unique laicism of France today. The Catholic Church had survived the Revolution and, despite conflicts within and without, knew a period of tremendous growth in religious, priests and institutions. The Church as institution, however, was

constantly on the defensive to maintain her authority, liberty and traditions. Anti-clericalism will become more embedded in everyday life.

With peace, after the bloody Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, came not only advances in the natural and social sciences but also a burst of intellectual energy, new ideas that, for the first time, were developing largely outside the Church. Often against the Church. The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw multiple Inventions with significant developments in the fields of mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, electricity, and metallurgy that laid the groundwork for the technological advances of the 20th century.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a period of rapid colonial expansion and with it intense missionary activity. The white man sailed out into the world as explorer, merchant, planter and miner, conqueror and administrator, - educator and missionary. As superior. The 19<sup>th</sup> century also saw the end of slavery in most parts of the world.

With the advent of Romanticism, its emphasis on sentiment and intuition, the Enlightenment with its intellectual attacks on religion lost some of its attraction. Apologetics, in the Romantic style, dominated with appeals to a religion of faith, mystery and heart. This allowed Chateaubriand to carve out a niche for Catholics in the intellectual world with the *Genie of Christianisme* 1802, declaring that “the Christian religion is the most poetic, the most humane, the most favorable to liberty, to the arts and literature.”

The rationalism of the Enlightenment, however, was simply sidelined; it did not go away. Like anti-clericalism, it became a current running deep in the culture.

Social theorists like Comte, St. Simon, Fourier did not have a great impact at the time, but writers like Victor Hugo and Emile Zola profoundly influenced the social conscience of the nation - and beyond.

In fine, the political revolution and its results were obvious, the social revolution could be seen taking place, the intellectual revolution interested only a few. Fewer still those who could identify the human

revolution. From the Enlightenment through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a paradigm shift was taking place in the understanding of human nature, man's place in the world, his relationship to God and society.

#### THE ASSUMPTION FOUNDATIONAL CONTEXT

##### *Let us look more closely at the Church after the Revolution.*

Liberty, equality, fraternity, the right of the person to control his own destiny, all - ideals of the Revolution - are in accord with the Gospel. The French Revolution, moreover, did not really start out as an attack on the Catholic faith. It was a political attack on the Monarchy and the power of the nobility.

But many currents -intellectual, political, economic and religious - joined to create a mighty torrent. The up and coming bourgeoisie contested the political power of the aristocracy. From the Enlightenment 'philosophes' came ideas about the Rights of Man based on natural law, as well as the supremacy of reason and science over faith and religion. In the same vein, the intellectual and economic power of the Church came under fire. The poor were incited to rebel against all wealth and power.

There were some, however, who were not satisfied with stripping the Church of political power (First Estate), prestige and wealth: of buildings, land and treasure. (It is estimated that, on the eve of the Revolution, one tenth to one sixth of French land belonged to the Church which also had the right to tithe) They wanted to do away with the Church and religion altogether.

To the aggressively atheistic attack on the Church were added hatred and revenge. It was payback time for oppression and neglect. Not necessarily against the clergy but against the bishops who were for the most part aristocrats, largely absent from their dioceses, tepid in their faith and sometimes dissolute, faithful to the monarchy as well as to the tradition of Gallicanism (sub-ordination of the Church to the State). Priests and religious were executed, religious orders exiled. (In 1792, there were 60 000 priests, in 1815, 25 000.)

Within the Church, confusion and division resulted from the Civil Constitution of the Clergy which, among other things, obliged priests to pledge allegiance to the Revolutionary government's Constitution. Some accepted (Jurors), others refused (non-jurors).

Napoleon realized that he had to come to terms with the Church both because she had survived the storm and was a power to be contended with, and because she could be very useful to him - to sanction his authority and to assume many charitable services that the State would otherwise have to pay for. By the Concordat of 1801, he restored much of the Church's former position. Religious services were authorized and bishops and priests even received a salary from the State, thus becoming servants of the State. But church buildings remained the property of the State and bishops could not be named without government permission. The monastic orders, being of 'no use' remained banned.

Tension about the role of the State with regard to the Church – the locus of authority- will run throughout the century. The conflict between the rights of man and the rights of the Church will be translated into a conflict between the rights of Man and the rights of God.

The Revolution had not destroyed the Church. France remained Catholic. But the Church was severely weakened and there was work to do. With the Bourbon Restoration, the Church had to deal with problems simmering since the Counter-Reformation. Interiorly, persecution had fortified the Church and many saw the importance of a spiritual renewal. Priestly formation was at the top of the list. Schools, lay associations, charitable works appeared by the dozens. Religious orders returned from abroad and new ones were founded. Schools became more numerous than before the Revolution. By 1865, there were again more than 50 000 priests, a younger and more dynamic force. Emphasis was put on instruction, cultivating a personal spiritual life and the liturgy. Devotions and prayer books multiplied; public processions gave a new visibility.

The Church, however, was no longer in the forefront of French intellectual life. There were conferences, catechisms and apologists like Chateaubriand. Few Catholics, very few, were engaged in philosophy and theology as sciences. The 'heresies' of the Enlightenment were still

being deplored, not really challenged, while newer challenges stood largely unattended. The Voltarian spirit, a kind of Deism, had seeped into the up and coming professional and intellectual classes.

The Church moreover had to come to terms with the Revolution. For most, especially in the countryside, this meant simply restoring the Church of the past. With peace, some kind of alliance of throne and altar, was as far as their imagination took them. Even if their power was greatly diminished, many nobles who came back on the scene with the Restoration, still looked to the Church as an ally of conservatism and the monarchy – considered so necessary for peace and order. At the same time, the Church sought an ally and support in the State.

Nevertheless, there were some Catholics – a very small number – who believed in the ideals of the Revolution and saw that the Church was called to keep up with the forward march of history. They desired the growth of democracy, more social justice, a truly renewed Church. They grasped the evils of the alliance between throne and altar. They were not hoping to see the Church necessarily regain political power but demanded liberty: liberty of conscience, of speech, of the press, of association, liberty in education.

These were the positions of Felicité de Lamennais (de la Mennais), a Breton priest, brilliant, distinguished writer and apologist, who would play a part in the foundation of the Assumption.

His *Essai sur l'Indifférence* (1817) in the vein of Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme* had brought him fame and made him the voice of the Restoration Church. In 1825 and 1826 he published *De la religion considérée dans ses rapports avec l'ordre politique et civil*, which took the position that the Gospel and Christianity were not to be confined to doctrine and dogma, to personal liberty and holiness. They should have their place in the sciences and in social institutions. (In this, he was truly prophetic.)

He believed that the Enlightenment was the cause of society's ills, that the Revolution was a fact and that only the restoration and reformation of the Church could regenerate French society.

A monarchist at the start, he found the succession of monarchs disillusioning and gradually turned to 'the people' and democracy. In seeking the political role of the Church, he then espoused the cause of Liberty. The liberty Christ had obtained by his blood. The Church, he insisted, doesn't need protection and support from the State at the price of submission. Vigorously rejecting concordats and Gallicanism, Lamennais ended up looking to Ultramontanism: the locus of authority and the guarantee of liberty should be the pope.

In 1828, in *Du Progrès de la Revolution et de la guerre contre la Religion*, he went still further in his Ultramontism vehemently attacking official or established religion and criticizing bishops. His style is usually brilliant and impassioned but the content is uneven, a mixture of truth and exaggeration. He considered himself a prophet, had little political sense and still less humility.

Lamennais gathered around him, first in the family chateau and then in Paris, a group of young ardent Catholic men -lay and priests- for whom he was a teacher, mentor, prophet and visionary. As prophet, he was able both to understand the questions, concerns and desires of his disciples and to read the signs of the times; as visionary, he was able to paint a glorious picture of the future as well as point out the way to its realization. His conviction was that the Church alone had a cure for the problems of society. The next era would be Christian or nothing. *Adveniat Regnum tuum* was his battle cry. Transform yourself in order to transform the world: by serious study of the Scriptures and the Church Fathers, by a renewed liturgy (a rejection of over-embellished liturgies as well as of poorly celebrated ones) and the adoption of the Roman liturgy, by pastoral approaches adapted to the times. He exhorted them to bring people to the imitation of Christ and a true spiritual life, not just devotions and practices; to work to make Christ and the Gospel penetrate Society and social structures; to commit themselves, their lives and talents, to Christ, the Church and the Kingdom.

Lamennais even assigned roles to individual members of the group. Of these the best known are Gerbet, de Salinis, Lacordaire, Montalembert, Rohrbacher, Combalot, de Coux, Maurice de Guérin, Eugène and Léon Boré. With a group of these disciples Lamennais

founded the "Congrégation de St. Pierre", a religious society whose vocation was to defend the Church by the study of theological and other sciences, by propagating Roman doctrines, by teaching in colleges and seminaries, giving missions and spiritual direction. The aim was evangelization of the whole person and of society. The dominant note was faith – in Jesus Christ and the Church.

One of these disciples was Emmanuel d'Alzon. Through the *Conférence religieuse*, the young Emmanuel d'Alzon found a mentor in Lamennais. (And later, Marie Eugénie Milleret also will find a mentor in him through d'Alzon's friend, Father Theodore Combalot.)

The disciples of Lamennais, as I understand them, were a small group of exceptional young men: intelligent, educated, men of character who were above all ardent Catholics. In Lamennais, they found inspiration and direction. They were a band of disciples who were or became apostles.

1830 brought Louis Philippe, the Bourgeois king, to the throne. Very quickly, Lamennais showed his displeasure. He had struggled against those who wanted God without liberty; now he feared having 'liberty without God.' Thus, with the collaboration of Lacordaire and de Montalembert, was born a newspaper, *l'Avenir*, whose motto was 'God and Liberty.' "The majority of the French, they contended, want their religion and their liberty." The journal, which never had more than a thousand subscribers, advocated: liberty of conscience and cult, liberty of education as an essential part of freedom of worship, a kind of liberty of intelligence or mind, liberty of intellectual, industrial, moral association, absolute liberty of the press. These became the guiding principles of Liberal Catholicism which did not die with *l'Avenir*. A *courant* continued to animate the small group of Catholics who dreamed of reconciling the Church with the society born of the Revolution.

During this period, Lamennais had become both a democrat and a republican. He had become aware of the plight of the poor and had espoused their cause. He began to conceive of a Church that was not merely politically free and independent, not merely a moral guide but an agent of social change. He wanted to see the Church at the head of a movement that would liberate the peoples of Europe from the



oppression of despots and kings and establish economic justice. In the final analysis, his thought veered towards a vision of a new christendom and a kind of theocracy.

As you all know, Lamennais abandoned the Church when his ultra-Ultramontanism did not ( could not) receive the seal of approval of the Pope - who saw what his ideas meant not only for the monarchy, peace and order, but also for the Papal States. Attached to the Church despite the political implications, Lamennais' disciples did not follow him but continued their way in the various fields and vocations to which life took them. (As Professor Secondy put it: they had been branded with a red hot iron and would never be free of his mark.)

The year of Lamennais' defection, Emmanuel d'Alzon was ordained. At the age of 30, he was Vicar General of the diocese of Nîmes.

I have taken a great deal of time to present Felicité de Lamennais and his ideas because they were, for the most part, cradle and 'terreau,' the context of d'Alzon's vision of the Church and apostolate, his insistence on the need to christianize studies and minds, to take up the challenges of his society and times.

As Dom Guéranger went on to restore the Benedictines in France, Lacordaire the Dominicans, d'Alzon went on to restore the Augustinians by way of founding the Augustinians – of the Assumption. History, his personal experience and events would lead d'Alzon to original ideas and creations but the fundamental convictions and aspirations concerning Christ, the Church, the Kingdom sprang from seeds sown by Lamennais:

- The desire to bring about the 'regeneration' of society by the Gospel and the need to understand one's times in order to do so.
- The call to unite nova et vetera – the new and the old – returning to the Gospel and Apostolic times, the Fathers of the Church and a solid philosophy, *the Summa*, in order to respond to current questions.
- The necessity of higher studies and demonstrating the conciliation of faith and reason, the importance of Catholic education

- Devotion to the Church as the Body of Christ, to the Roman Church (Ultramontanism), loyalty to the Pope and the rejection of Gallicanism.
- The kernel of Assumption's educational project and pedagogy, our doctrinal spirituality and social concerns and commitment, our Kingdom spirituality and vision.
- Our love of liberty in the sense of being oneself and not conforming to the way of the world

All of this.

However, because of the ways these doctrines and ideas were integrated and incarnated by our founders, we are not Mennaisian. We are ourselves, the Assumption.

Evangelization was the challenge that Emmanuel d'Alzon took on early and never abandoned. As a priest, he was already an educator. A challenge that d'Alzon took up early in his career was formal education-schooling: education for the people and liberty for the Church to educate at all levels of instruction. Before he founded his congregation, he found himself with a school; throughout his life, he would find new means and ways to promote and defend Catholic education.

The chapter of Lamennais for the Assumption, does not finish with Lamennais' defection et *Paroles d'un Croyant*, but with the Revolution of 1848. It was not just a political revolution with hopes for a republic and better government. Many looked forward to a social revolution where the 'people' would have their rightful place- -and some hoped that a truly Christian spirit and principles would prevail in government. In the Constitutional Assembly, Lamartine is president and Lacordaire, Montalambert and d'Alzon will take their place – as will Lamennais on the far left!

The Second Republic starts off well with universal suffrage, the abolition of slavery and the creation of Workshops/Ateliers. But quickly the political incompetence of the leaders becomes apparent; the old guard just changes coats. Workers and the petite bourgeoisie are squeezed out; the rapaciousness of the rich bourgeoisie and their fear of the newly enfranchised people take over. The interests of all the little

people are trampled. “The Republicans have killed the Republic,” Marie Eugenie writes to d’Alzon. The idealistic liberal Catholics see their dreams for the Kingdom in France fade. Hopes for conciliating Christ, the Church and the Revolution are dashed. D’Alzon retires from the political sphere. “We have dabbled too much in politics,” he writes ruefully to Mother Marie Eugénie.

The name of Napoleon along with the desire for order captures the vote and the Second Republic, soon to be the Second Empire, opens the way to the industrial revolution and the world of finance. The Romantic era is over.

The century is half over. And d’Alzon, at forty, has established his path in life: priest, vicar general, founder – a churchman. The rest is history, as the saying goes. (This is an “out” for this talk as there is not time to describe more of the century: the first Vatican Council, the Franco-Prussian War....) With the same love and ardor, with the same ideals, d’Alzon- and now his congregation- will meet the challenges posed to the Church, her unity, her liberty and the mission.

From 1850 on, in the political sphere, liberal and Catholic parted ways. The working class moved away from the Church as their number increased. They did not feel part of the Catholic bourgeoisie which, by and large, substituted charity for attention to the social questions of the times. Lamennais in his way had espoused the cause of the people and left the Church to devote his energies to their cause. He was their champion by his writings. D’Alzon will serve the cause of the people in very concrete ways, above all in education. Popular education will take multiple forms among them, the *alumnats*, pilgrimages and the press.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century parting of the ways between Catholics and Liberals is well illustrated in the field of education. As universal education progressed, it tended to promote secularization often expressing an anti-clerical and anti-Catholic bias. Catholics feared that Republicanism meant laicism, modernity and atheism, while Republicans feared that Catholic education would produce anti-Republican citizens. The Loi Falloux of 1850-51 which Catholics considered just, granted excessive privileges to the Church, allowing any religious to teach with or without

a diploma and giving priests oversight of all the schools in their villages. Priests could teach in secondary schools without State diplomas. In return, the short-lived Commune in 1871, besides confiscating all Church property, forbade religious instruction even in Catholic schools. Two months later, the Falloux laws were once more in vigor until the laws of Jules Ferry abrogated them - on the eve of Father d'Alzon's death.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a united French nation will also be divided in religion, class, money and regionalisms.

Such was the period of history during which Emmanuel d'Alzon lived and labored for the Kingdom.

BROTHER JEAN-MICHEL BROCHEC, A.A.

**"Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness,"  
(Genesis 1:26)**

### **Father Emmanuel d'Alzon's vision of teaching and education**

When we begin reading the many texts of Fr. d'Alzon on education and teaching, and then we consider the testimony left by his contemporaries, we can begin to get a sense of the importance that he gave to education. Initially, the Congregation of the Augustinians of the Assumption was founded by teachers, priests and laity united in the *"Association of the Assumption," for the teaching and education of youth*. With Marie-Eugénie, the foundress of the Religious of the Assumption, Father d'Alzon developed a vision of education of great theological depth which retains all its value to this day. This is what I will try to present, briefly, by addressing successively the context in which he lived and, the practices that he put in place at the Assumption College in Nimes, and then, finally, I will provide a synthesis of the thought of our founder.

#### THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

France had just gone through an extremely difficult period of its history: the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Empire, and the Restoration of the monarchy accompanied by the dream of restoration of the former social order characterized by the alliance between the Church and the political power. Together with other Catholic intellectuals, Fr. d'Alzon was convinced that it would be impossible to return to the alliance between the monarchy and the Church. He belonged to the school of thought which believed that the Church must regain its freedom from political power, including freedom of education.

This was the time when Europe was destabilized by more or less bloody revolutions against powers which often proclaimed themselves to be of the divine law; this also included the temporal power of the Pope. An industrialized society, socialism and democracy were gaining ground, but not without violence. Just think about this for a moment: Fr. d'Alzon lived through a time of six political regimes, three revolutions and one war. He saw a middle class, materialistic and hard-working, replace the aristocracy which at a certain level he idealized. He saw the misery of common people; he knew wars, revolutions and massacres. It was a time when the philosopher Hegel developed the mystical vision of Progress, when everyone, or almost everyone, believed that positive science would provide every possible answer and would drive out all obscurantism. It was a time when an economic reading of history and the premises of Marxism were born, together with anticlerical secularism and extraordinary technical innovations.

Fr. d'Alzon repeatedly denounced the damage caused by the moral and spiritual deficiencies of families, by the liberal middle class, and even by the Christian education in place at the time. He was concerned about the growing gap between society and the Church: a society that was moving away from Gospel values to the detriment of the weakest. He was concerned about a science which criticized and undermined the traditional way of faith and about the lack of Christian scholars and intellectuals able to reformulate Christian beliefs. He was concerned that the working-class as well was moving away from the Church. He was concerned about a certain kind of freedom that led to violence and the uncontrolled power of the strongest.

Faced with this reality, Fr. d'Alzon lamented the timidity of Christians, that they had an insufficiently educated and thoughtful faith. He underlined the risks posed by a faith confined to their devotions. He deplored the fact that Christians were deserting the public square and intellectual debates. It seemed urgent for him to rise above a lukewarm and devotional concept of faith and to return to a faith that was intelligent, studied and based on solid arguments, deepened within, a faith based on Scripture and on the great authors of the patristic and philosophical tradition. For Fr. d'Alzon, as for Marie-Eugenie, Christian action based on Gospel values was the answer to the challenges of a society in turmoil.

D'Alzon thought that it was urgent to train men and women of character, in order to develop intelligence enlightened by faith, able to assume responsibilities at all levels: ecclesiastical, political, economical, scientific. What he aimed at was the holistic education of youth: the liberation of every person and social transformation through the Gospel. This is really the core, the foundation of the Assumptionist educational project.

Now, let us take a general look at how this was implemented at the Collège de l'Assomption in Nîmes.

#### COLLÈGE DE L'ASSOMPTION

##### *The Professors*

Naturally, Fr. d'Alzon emphasizes the competence and motivation of teachers. This is what Fr. Tomas Gonzalez will develop in the following presentation. In founding the College, Fr. d'Alzon worked with his teachers to develop the programs, the teaching methods, the organization of the educational process, and the educational project. At their request, he agreed to provide training sessions for them himself. Through what we know from these conferences, and also those he gave to the Religious Sisters of the Assumption, we can clearly see the portrait of the Assumptionist teacher as conceived by Fr. d'Alzon: the professional competence, the pedagogical creativity, the capacity to adapt to the needs of students, the quality of the relationship with students, a clear vision of the type of human being that the teacher is to form, and the spiritual meaning he gives to his work.

##### *To teach in order to form*

At the College in Nîmes, the goal of the education was the formation of intelligence, judgment, sensitivity, commitment, and freedom. To express this Fr. d'Alzon often used the expression "to form the men of character."

Sometimes the official curriculum was expanded in order to study the history of the Church, the Fathers of the Church, Christian authors and philosophers. Students were encouraged to take an interest in

political, social, ecclesial and international matters. Evenings of philosophical discussions were founded. Students were asked to prepare for their comrades public lectures in literature, history and philosophy on issues related to the faith. One of Fr. d'Alzon's great concerns was to show that science and intellectual pursuits are not opposed to faith and that the latter enlightens every human reality.

Fr. d'Alzon himself gave courses to students on Saturdays during the academic year 1876-1877. He presented teaching and education as realities that transform all aspects of the human person: memory, intelligence, will, passions, character, the life of faith, etc ... He likes to talk about teaching as liberation because it allows students to acquire freedom of judgment and to overcome a certain preconceptions.

I would summarize Fr. d'Alzon's thought by this expression: he wanted "an education that lifts up the lives of people". This is the exact meaning of word "to educate".

### *Life at the College in Nimes*

If the courses were demanding, the rules of life in the College were as well, at least in their broad principles. In practice, their application was subject to intelligent adaptation in specific situations, allowing students some freedom. Here are two quotes.

The first is from Fr. Charles Lawrence during the awards ceremony of 1875: "The disciplinary method which we use ourselves is rarely a question of following something *a priori*; it abhors any pre-fabricated mold that requires that everyone fit into the same form without any concern for the variety of individual differences. Although its principles are fixed its advance, our discipline does not pretend to be so as for its applications."

One year earlier, on the same occasion, Fr. d'Alzon said: "I would simply like to call to mind that we must provide our children with a great spirit of faith, of openness, of sacrifice, of initiative. After that, we give them a certain freedom to develop. We cannot crush them in order to give them some kind of identical form; this principle, I believe, is absolutely essential. (...) Let us start with the conviction that children



in our care are not perfect. If they were, why would they be entrusted to our care? Would it be in order to teach them a little bit of Greek, of Latin, of history or physics? If that were so, hired teachers who only work to make money would be quite sufficient.”

Fr. d'Alzon had established at the college a “spirit”, an “atmosphere” that one would call “family” --- characterized by simplicity of relationships, trust and delicacy; but he also insisted on transparency and openness, loyalty, generosity and strength of character. He was saying that these are the character traits of a person formed by Gospel inspiration.

### ***A solid Christian formation***

Fr. D'Alzon's goal in this area could be summarized by these adjectives: a frank and genuine faith (*that is to say a faith that is not afraid to show itself*), “enlightened” (*that is to say, educated and thoughtful*), Catholic and active.

The formation of students was based on the Bible (primarily on the Gospels, the Epistles and the Acts of the Apostles), the Fathers of the Church and the history of the Church. In these matters, teachers sought to provide a kind of culture, to make students think and to learn to perceive the beauty of Revelation. What we should teach, Fr. d'Alzon said, is the Father, Creator, the Son, Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier. Most important of all was to know Jesus Christ, to learn to love him and to act like him. There was no other model than Jesus Christ. Let's talk about Jesus Christ, let us make Jesus Christ loved! “*Faith forges souls and not the sentimental education that is in fashion today.*” There were four levels to the education system. The last, in the final year, was dedicated to a serious treatment of modern culture, to the analytical skills and to discussions.

Fr. d'Alzon insisted on the skills that adults should have. “*It is easy to repeat to children a few devotional ditties, but as for getting to the heart of the matter, to find Jesus Christ everywhere ... to show that Jesus Christ is at the heart of every single question, at the center of everything and that everything should always return to him, this requires work, prayer and a lot of instruction.*”

At the College in Nîmes, there were no special devotions. What was emphasized was the need to express and to develop the great Christian virtues: faith, hope and charity. The tradition of the Assumption is the Catholic tradition. The Roman liturgy and sacraments held an important place in college life. “Our goal is not to educate men for the cloister, but to prepare them to live in the world, who act in a way to make others love and respect their faith, who are deeply attached to the cause of God. Why then introduce them to habits, holy in themselves, that are not suited to the path that one day they will be called upon to follow? ... It’s in this spirit that we shape the piety of our students.”

Students but teachers as well, were invited to act within the framework of associations, such as the St. Vincent de Paul Society, for visits, donations of food, meals, providing means for heating and for the recreational activities of children from lower-class families. They would also support the missions in foreign countries, outreach to workers and to other associations supporting the conversion of Protestants, vocations, or the People’s Army to defend the Papal States...

#### DALZONIAN VISION OF EDUCATION

“My passion, what is very close to my heart, is the manifestation of the God-Man and the deification of humanity by Jesus Christ, and that would be also my philosophy” (letter to Marie-Eugenie, August 5, 1844).

The fundamental vision of Fr. d’Alzon is hopeful. Whatever the situation might be, nothing is lost: young people are capable of being educated, their intelligence and character formed. By means of education through teaching, it is possible to train men of character and convictions, intelligent and educated, who hold a strong and enlightened faith, who are active in debates and engaged in the life of society.

Fr. d’Alzon constantly called to mind that this task is not a job but a mission that stems from a faith commitment. In his *Saturday Instructions* and also those destined to his teachers or to the Religious

of the Assumption, we see his concern to make to all of them discover the richness of the teaching experienced as an educational mission. This is *the living out of one's baptism*. It is *like a continual Pentecost because it has something to do with the outpouring of the Spirit on youth*. It is *a mission that participates in the work of the Creator himself: "Before each child, I have to repeat the words of the Creator: 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness'"; this makes it possible to engrave the image of the Trinity in every young person: by means of "the great and wonderful work of education by which we reshape the human being. And in a certain way we come to the aid of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist by communicating the power of life by the Father, intelligence through the Son, and love through the Holy Spirit."*

The concept of education that Fr. d' Alzon has, therefore, is rooted in faith. One might risk the following summary: man was created in the image of God, but sin disfigured his features. Jesus-Christ, through his death and resurrection, wished to restore all creation in God. Christ, perfect image of God and the perfect image of the human being, allows man to reach his full humanity. Man and creation are called to communion with Christ and, through him, with the Holy Trinity. To know and to love Jesus-Christ is for man to reach humanity; to acknowledge dependency on God is to access freedom. To recognize the rights of God is for men and women the path to happiness and salvation because the truth of God is the truth of the human being; Jesus-Christ is the Truth, the beginning and the end of all knowledge. Education is, therefore, for Emmanuel d'Alzon, a form of cooperation in the work of salvation of humankind.

The Church, bearer of Christ's message and of the sacrament of his presence among humankind, transmits him from generation to generation. In order to remain free and not misrepresent its mission, the Church must not be subservient to any political regime or government. The Pope is the keeper and guarantee of this freedom and this loyalty beyond cultural and political contingencies. This is why the loyalty of the Assumption to the Church and freedom of the Catholic institutions are so important.

This faith is not just a private affair of which nothing should be expressed openly. No, it is a faith that manifests itself in individual and

collective behavior, in the public square, at many levels: social, political and ecclesial. It is like leaven in dough. For Fr. d'Alzon, as for Marie-Eugenie, the Gospel is the condition of a just society.

#### IN CONCLUSION

What should we remember from this rapid overview? We can begin to see taking shape any number of traits of an Assumptionist vision of education. This vision is not a goal in itself. It is at the service of education.....an education of the whole person that involves teaching (content and methods), life in and outside the classroom, relationships, school-wide policies, socio-cultural activities, spiritual life activities, etc...

To be more specific, the goal of an Assumptionist education is to train people with a sense of the common good, people able to get involved in those societies that are theirs, to play an active role in the social and cultural development of the people to which they belong so as to make this world more coherent with God's plan.

Education in the faith, in the Assumptionist way, goes straight to the essentials of the Catholic faith. This education aims at forming believers with a solid and thoughtful faith that enlightens their personal and professional lives. It has some special accents: knowledge of the Scriptures and especially of the Gospels, the sacraments, the prayer of the Church, a Marian piety connected to Christ, and love for the Church...

An Assumptionist education fosters collaboration between lay people and religious based on a common spiritual and theological vision: education as the way of humanization and cooperation with the salvation of humankind.

FR. RICHARD LAMOUREUX, A.A.

## “D’Alzon’s Dream of a University”

I’ve been asked to say a few words about Father d’Alzon and university education. Since only a few of you participating in the Congress are actually engaged in higher education, this topic might not seem useful. However, Father d’Alzon himself raised the question of the relationship between university studies and education at the primary and secondary levels, and, as I hope you will see, his thoughts on the topic are important for the work we do at all levels of education.

“For a long time I’ve been thinking about a Catholic university, which I know would be successful given the approach I’d take.” We might think that Fr. d’Alzon spoke these words toward the end of his life, and it is true that he concentrated most energetically on higher education from 1870 until his death in 1880. But in fact he wrote about this dream of a Catholic university when he was only twenty-four years old (in a letter to Luglien d’Esgrigny, 1 October 1834). Throughout his life, this desire to found a Catholic university never waned. He developed his thinking about such a project in the articles he published in the *Revue de l’Enseignement chrétien*, which he launched in 1871. Much of what I will say here is drawn from these essays.

You may be surprised by the importance I attach in my talk to d’Alzon’s own words. Surprised, because perhaps you are troubled by his 19<sup>th</sup> century language. But that has never been a problem for me. In the first place, because French is not my mother tongue, and it’s always an effort for me to read a French text regardless of its style. But, in the second place, because of a particular philosophical and pedagogical conviction of mine. Allow me to explain.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See C. S. Lewis, “On reading old books,” introduction to Saint Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996. “There is a strange idea abroad that in every subject the ancient books should be read only by the professionals, and that the amateur should content himself with the modern books. Thus I have found as a tutor in English Literature that if the average student wants to find out something about Platonism, the very last thing he thinks of doing is to take a

I remember being struck by the Bible of Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence (1775) here in the United States and our third President. He literally cut out from his copy of the Bible all the parts of the Gospel that told of Jesus' miracles, as well as all the accounts of his resurrection. The Jesus he believed in was Jesus as a great moral teacher, i.e. not the Jesus of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, but rather and most of all the Jesus of a Thomas Jefferson shaped by Enlightenment thought. That led me to think that in our efforts to make d'Alzon understandable to people of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we need to avoid "cutting out" those things that offend us, that we disagree with, or that we find difficult to understand. I think it is of crucial importance to read d'Alzon in order to escape for a moment from our habitual way of seeing things and any unconscious present-day bias, and to learn something that might be truly new and prophetic for our day.<sup>2</sup> (In the educational process, do we not try to "lead out," *e-ducere*, from ignorance and prejudice to understanding?) It is my hope that this exercise will be helpful for all of us who hope in this congress to rediscover d'Alzon's educational vision so as to be able to implement it faithfully in our own worlds.

Let me start by saying a few words about the great importance that Fr. d'Alzon attached to higher education. Although he invested a great deal of time and money in secondary education and especially in his school at Nîmes, he always thought of higher education as being even

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translation of Plato off the library shelf and read the Symposium. He would rather read some dreary modern book ten times as long, all about "isms" and influences and only once in twelve pages telling him what Plato actually said. The error is rather an amiable one, for it springs from humility. The student is half afraid to meet one of the great philosophers face to face. He feels himself inadequate and thinks he will not understand him. But if he only knew, the great man, just because of his greatness, is much more intelligible than his modern commentator. The simplest student will be able to understand, if not all, yet a very great deal of what Plato said; but hardly anyone can understand some modern books on Platonism. It has always therefore been one of my main endeavors as a teacher to persuade the young that firsthand knowledge is not only more worth acquiring than secondhand knowledge, but is usually much easier and more delightful to acquire."

<sup>2</sup> C. S. Lewis, "Every age has its own outlook. It is specially good at seeing certain truths and specially liable to make certain mistakes. We all, therefore, need the books that will correct the characteristic mistakes of our own period. And that means the old books. All contemporary writers share to some extent the contemporary outlook – even those, like myself, who seem most opposed to it."

more important. D’Alzon would offer three arguments to support this conviction.

The **first argument** flows from d’Alzon’s understanding of education in general. An Assumption education could never simply be a question of teaching or training, but rather one of educating. It is not simply the imparting of knowledge or information, but a genuine formation of souls. It does not produce a fine-tuned and efficiently performing machine, but a man or woman attuned to all dimensions of the human experience. This kind of education begins at the secondary level, but it is especially during the university years that a student is mature enough to think seriously about and choose the principles on which to base his or her life and work.<sup>3</sup> A university education that does not provide the opportunity for this kind of reflection and focuses only on training deprives the student of the opportunity to establish a firm foundation for living the best kind of human life.<sup>4</sup> This is how d’Alzon put it:

Education is not only a way to acquire certain skills necessary for someone preparing for a career; we need to give teaching a higher goal, moral formation based on firm principles, helped by those great truths that rest on religious truth... (*Revue de l’Enseignement chrétien*, volume 1 (new series), May 1871, pp. 60-61)

The **second argument** is based on d’Alzon’s understanding of the university as the place where ideas and rigorous reflection are the central preoccupation. But far from thinking that students and professors in the university simply lose themselves in useless and irrelevant mind-games, d’Alzon was convinced that the good ideas produced by such sound thinking can change the world.

In a letter he wrote at twenty-five years of age he explained:  
I do not see how a priest who wants to renew society can find a better way than the truth itself... The most intimate thought of my soul is that the world needs to be penetrated through and through by a Christian idea; otherwise it will fall apart and the world will not

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<sup>3</sup> See *Revue*, v. 1, #2(1871)120 and v. 9, #51(1875) 196.

<sup>4</sup> “Without in any way neglecting the acquisition of useful knowledge, a Catholic university is distinguished by its free search for the whole truth about nature, man and God.” John Paul II, *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, par. 4, 1990.

receive this idea but from individuals who will be taken up with it above all else in order to proclaim it in every form it might assume. They say the world is evil. No doubt, passion turns it away from what is good. But I believe most of all that the world is ignorant. Therefore, we need to teach it and to do so in words it can understand.<sup>5</sup>

Thirty-five years later, he continued to hold this same conviction:

It is crucial that you be convinced of the truth that the world, even in a decadent state, is governed by ideas. After the Council, religious who are sowers of ideas, provided they be true and fruitful ideas, will be the true renewers of society. You ought therefore to fill yourself with true ideas and great principles.<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps it will come as something of a surprise for you to see just how much importance d'Alzon attached to ideas. He considered himself to be more a man of action than a scholar. And today we would probably be more inclined to think that society is best changed through vigorous and militant social action. That was not d'Alzon's conviction. If he insisted as much as he did on study and education, it is because he believed that behind every human decision and action there is an idea, an understanding of the human person, of society, of how a person should live. A counselor who thinks that human beings are entirely determined by outside forces will deal with a client differently than one who considers the human person to have a conscience and the ability to choose freely. A country founded on the idea that all people are created equal will abhor the institution of slavery. For Father d'Alzon, consequently, actions are good and fruitful only if they are based on good ideas. And if ideas have consequences in the world, then the university where these ideas are proposed and debated plays a crucial role in building society up.

The **third argument** that d'Alzon gives to defend his insistence on the importance of university education is a very concrete and practical one.

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<sup>5</sup> *Pages d'archives*, ser. 2, num. 9, 1958, p. 340-341.

<sup>6</sup> *Ecrits spirituels du Serviteur de Dieu Emmanuel d'Alzon*, Rome, 1956, p. 1085-86.



In 1873, he wrote:

Some think that since primary education reaches the masses that that is the kind of education we should be concerned about. To my mind, that notion is seriously mistaken, and here is why. Primary education is nothing other than the reflection of something that comes from on high. Who will deny that teachers in their schools are deeply influenced by municipal councils, even teachers from religious congregations? ...Now, the members of these councils are, by and large, educated in state secondary schools. Secondary education depends directly on higher education inasmuch as in the high school and preparatory schools the curricula are organized according to the scheme of the baccalaureate programs.<sup>7</sup>

In other words, if we want students to be well educated in primary and secondary schools, we need to be sure that teachers at those levels and education officials in government, i.e. those who make decisions on school curricula and diploma examinations, are themselves well educated. How can we hope to educate secondary school students well if government policies dictate educational programs and methods that undermine the very education that we are trying to provide for our students?

#### THE NECESSITY OF A CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

The only solution for d’Alzon was freedom from the State University, deliverance from the yoke of the baccalaureate examination imposed by the University and from the inferior academic program that was a consequence of the intellectual anarchy reigning at the University.<sup>8</sup> Only a Catholic university, free from State control, could provide the best kind of university education. Consequently, he fought tirelessly for the passing of laws that would break the monopoly of the State over education in France. His battle cry was “Carthago

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<sup>7</sup> *Revue de l’enseignement chrétien*, vol. 5, #25 (1873), 5-6.

<sup>8</sup> The situation would have been different if the State University could acknowledge the reasonableness of the Christian perspective or at least remain “neutral” rather than take an atheistic or antagonistic position with regard to the religious question, but since this was not the case, d’Alzon could only seek freedom for a separate educational system. See *Revue*, vol. 1, #2 (1871), 117.

delenda!”<sup>9</sup>, conjuring up the phrase used by the ancient Romans in their efforts to destroy their North African rivals. He was convinced that the State-run University could not be reformed.

Not everyone agreed with him. Thinking that it would be a more effective witness to immerse oneself in the secular, State-run University, some<sup>10</sup> argued that the best way to provide a solid education would be to integrate theology professors into its faculty and for the State-run University to grant theology degrees.<sup>11</sup>

D’Alzon’s response to this proposal was unambiguous:

What sort of theology faculty would that be, I ask you, whose professors would be named by an anti-Catholic minister like the one actually responsible for public instruction, and in the name of a government whose religious faith is to have none?... And in whose name would the theological degrees be conferred? In the name of the State, you say. That would be a bit much to take!<sup>12</sup>

Still others suggested that faith could be nurtured by the presence of Catholic chaplains at the State University. D’Alzon rejected this proposal on at least two occasions:

I think that in the University (*i.e. the State-controlled University*) the least defensible position is not that of the professors who are more or less republican, more or less free-thinking; it is rather that of the priests who are still there. And if some personnel are to be eliminated, it is not the unbelieving faculty, but the chaplains. But the chaplain does some good, you say. Surely, he does. But put all the good he does next to all the harm his cassock camouflages, and you will understand what I mean. ...The University should send us back our priests, who by their very virtue are a dangerous distraction from the true cause of our problems, *i.e. state education*.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> “Pagan Rome's worst enemy was Carthage... For us, the great enemy of Christian Rome, the Church, is the University. That is why our battle-cry is: *Delenda Carthago*.” *Revue*, v. 1, #1 (1871), 5.

<sup>10</sup> For example, Monseigneur Henri Maret. His disagreement with Fr. d’Alzon is thoroughly treated in “Le Père d’Alzon et Mgr Maret,” in René Rémond and Emile Poulat, *Emmanuel d’Alzon dans la société et l’Eglise du XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle*, Paris: Le Centurion, 1982.

<sup>11</sup> *Revue*, vol. 1, #1 (1871), 62.

<sup>12</sup> *Revue*, vol. 1, #1 (1871), 62.

<sup>13</sup> *Revue*, vol. 1, #2 (1871), 116; see also vol. 5, #25 (1873), 6.

To my mind, d’Alzon’s rejection of this proposal suggests just how well he understood the nature of a university. For him, the greatest challenge to the faith and to the truth in a State-controlled University was of the intellectual order. However effective chaplains might be in addressing the specifically religious and spiritual lives of the students in the University, the absence of any Catholic presence in the classroom and in the intellectual exchange among students and professors would clearly suggest that the religious questions or the perspective of people of faith have no intellectual legitimacy and should be relegated to the margins of the University, to the church outside of the University precinct and entrusted to the care of chaplains.

D’Alzon had precise notions as to how these goals could be pursued in a Catholic university.<sup>14</sup>

“Before all else, the thought of God must be restored to education.”<sup>15</sup> (“Avant tout, il faut rétablir la pensée de Dieu dans l’enseignement.”) In other words, the university should take religious questions seriously, and above all the question of God. The apparent “openness” to these questions in the State University is in fact a masked agnosticism, even atheism, which refuses to take seriously any religious investigation.<sup>16</sup> In a Catholic university, where rational inquiry into all questions of importance is encouraged, no serious question is *a priori* forbidden as it is in the State University, where religion and faith are relegated to the domain of personal and subjective experience.<sup>17</sup>

Once the thought of God is restored to the university curriculum, then a coherent academic program can be imagined. Such a university, d’Alzon said, “is a Christian republic in which the various academic

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<sup>14</sup> See *Revue*, esp. vol. 3, #13 (1872), 27-36 and vol. 5, #28 (1873), 310-316.

<sup>15</sup> *Revue*, vol. 3, #16 (1872), 294.

<sup>16</sup> “People say: the State owes everyone an education; and since there is a divergence of opinion regarding religion, eliminate as much as possible everything that can be a cause of division. Wonderful! But we fail to remember that in education the idea that should dominate is the first idea of all: God... Consequently, you are condemned to an education without principles, since you eliminate the first principle of all.” *Revue*, v. 5, #25(1873), 6-7.

<sup>17</sup> “...by its Catholic character, a university is made more capable of conducting an impartial search for truth, a search that is neither subordinated to nor conditioned by particular interests of any kind.” John Paul II, *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, par. 7, 1990.

pursuits are the provinces, all recognizing theology as their sovereign.”<sup>18</sup> The Catholic university would include courses in the teaching and history of the Church, as well as philosophy, history, ethics, politics, mathematics, natural sciences, literature and fine arts. To this would eventually be added professional schools of law and of medicine. No study should be foreign to the faith.<sup>19</sup>

All of this gives you some sense of why Father d’Alzon thought the university, and specifically the Catholic university, should be a priority for us as educators. It also helps us to see how he planned to achieve the goals of a sound education at the university level.

So what impact does this thinking have on us as Assumption educators at all levels?

**First**, it reminds us of d’Alzon’s strong conviction that education and study at all levels can never forget its ultimate goal: the promotion of the dignity of the human person, as created in the image and likeness of God.

**Second**, it reminds us that at all levels, education is about the shaping of the human intellect. Of course, d’Alzon believed that a good education helps the student grow emotionally, spiritually and morally, but this kind of growth is fragile if it is not founded upon right thinking and good ideas. Teachers formed in a university that promotes skepticism about the God-given nature of a human being or the capacity of reason to grasp some solid truth about our shared reality will, perhaps unwittingly, have a profound and disastrous influence on the primary and secondary school students that they are teaching. Bad ideas, like good ones, have consequences.

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<sup>18</sup> *Revue*, vol. 1, #4 (1871), 211. See also *Revue*, vol. 1, #4 (1871), 211

<sup>19</sup> Careful to avoid a kind of simplistic approach that forces the truth, d’Alzon says that the link between faith and the disciplines must be made carefully (see d’Alzon’s 19<sup>th</sup> meditation for the religious, *Ecrits spirituels du Serviteur de Dieu Emmanuel d’Alzon*, Rome, 1956, p. 477). Is there a Catholic medical science? D’Alzon would find that notion odd and asserts that the technical aspect of medicine and every science for that matter is ruled by its own proper methodology. (See *Revue*, vol. 1, #4 (1871), 212.

**Third**, it reminds us of the importance that d’Alzon attached to reason. In effect, his most biting criticism of the State University is that it presented itself as “open” to all ideas, when in fact it considered religious questions to be divisive and ought therefore to be excluded from any consideration. In his Catholic university, reason would be respected, and all questions would deserve to be addressed. This genuine kind of “openness” in all Assumption schools replaces the sort of deceptive “tolerance” to be found in so many others.<sup>20</sup>

**Fourth**, it reminds us that every educational program is founded on certain principles and understandings of what is good and just and true. As we shape the academic program of our institutions, whether they be secondary schools or universities, we need to be conscious of those operational principles and of the curricular decisions that flow from them.

By placing the emphasis on education at the university level, in no way was Father d’Alzon suggesting that we should not invest ourselves energetically in the education of younger students as well. I hope that my presentation helps us understand that for him university education was like a keystone that provides stability and support for all the other elements of the architectural structure that we call an Assumption education.

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<sup>20</sup> The “openness” that d’Alzon considers important in an Assumption school is a far cry from the kind of simplistic dogmatism of which he is often accused. Read what he has to say about Roman theologians: “Does that mean that everything that comes from the mouth or the pen of a Roman doctor should be immediately and without discussion taken as Gospel truth? To say that would be absurd first of all, and besides that would deny the admirable freedom of opinion and debate that is respected in Rome more than anywhere else...” *Revue*, v. 1, #1(1871)58.



FR. TOMAS GONZALEZ, A.A.

## **A Mysticism of Education**

Fr. d'Alzon is presented to us as a great Christian educator. Influencing this is his developed personality, gifted with a personal enchantment without equal. The "charm" of this man "du Midi" (from southern France), along with his gifted character, is placed at the service of a high ideal, the defense of religion. This ideal, which unifies his personality and his action, is rendered dynamic by a solid faith rooted in Christian doctrine. His faith and his relationship with God are what energize and give coherence to everything he undertook in his life.

His pedagogical ideas are rooted in his spiritual liveliness and his experience of God.

His is not a theoretical elaboration of what man is or ought to be or has to become. It may appear that his educational works arise at random.

I rather think that he is a man very attentive to the action of God, God as a trinity. His initiatives respond to a collaboration with the action of God. He has been categorized as a providentialist, and this is true in the quoted sense. Always attentive to what God is doing to "support him". He relies on faith, God creator, God constantly creating. In every educational action the root is God, the human educator becomes a collaborator of God. It is about placing oneself under "the weight of God", as Fr. Tavad, would say, following St. Augustine.

### EDUCATION AS THE RESTORATION OF THE IMAGE OF THE TRINITY

The purification of souls through the impression of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

When God created man, he did so in his image and likeness. Man deformed this image though sin.

Our Lord then came to restore this degraded image, and not only did He return it its primitive beauty, but He made it more beautiful (*Mirabiliter condiste et mirabilis reformasti*). This first task originally takes place in Baptism, and develops itself through the work of the priest and educators. Educators exercising a certain kind of priesthood imprint the image of the Holy Trinity onto souls in order to acquire that projected resemblance.

“What must one do?”, he rhetorically asks to young women religious. Engrave onto the souls the power of the Father expanding its capacity of being within your pupils. You must make them more lively.

God the Father communicates His power to me, and facing each girl that is confided to me, I must repeat that word of the Creator: (*Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram*): “Let us make man unto our image and likeness.”

You must engrave onto the souls the power of the Father, expanding the capacity of being within your pupils. You must make them more lively. (*Ego veni ut vitam habeant et abundantius habeant.*) “I have come that you may have life and life in abundance” (Jn 10:10). Tell yourselves as well: I am sent to these girls so that life, real life, that of Christ, flow into them, full, abundant, superabundant. Thus is my mission in education. God the Father communicates His power to me, and facing each girl that is confided to me, I must repeat that word of the creator: (*Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram.*) “let us create anew under divine action, may we repair the image of the Father in His power. Just as God created the world, so can I create as a new creature in this soul, can I make her into a saint. Dear God, you who have created everything out of nothing, allow me to recreate these souls, and that there may be seen in them a divine work of restoration, the power of a divine life.” (Nimes, March 6, 1871, page 91.)

Perhaps we should surpass the very typical language of his time which talks about souls, and replace them with persons. At any rate it is clear: God the Father, creator, is operating, that there may emerge a person in His image and likeness.

Fr. d’Alzon, asks: “With which disposition do we come to you?”



We come in the name of the Father, that is to say with His power, His authority; with the authority that proceeds from God.

We come in the name of the Son, eternal truth, to speak to you of His right to illuminate you: we come to mold your minds, with the truths revealed by God the Son. That is why our teaching is filled with certainty, because our doctrine is not ours but rather the doctrine of Him who has sent us.

We come to you in the name of the Holy Spirit, that is to say, with the love that God has given us for your souls. In one word, that is our program. If you ask us what we want to do with you, make of you, I would respond: divine people, images of God in person.

You see that our intention is great: God will guide us, but God will not do everything. In return you must help us in this.

In our day it is very well accepted to talk about creativity. In the doctrine and practice of Fr. d'Alzon, the capacity for initiative has always valued --- the need for creativity.

What to do we mean by creativity? Taking initiative concerning the nature of things. Not every initiative is creative. But every initiative that respects the nature of things results in a sort of bringing to completion that brings satisfaction..... a certain fullness.

One example: taking the initiative to kick a ball in chapel is an initiative but is not creative, does not respect the nature of things. On the other hand taking the initiative to pray, to maintain silence, to praise God, to sing liturgically, is creative, and thus is a source of pleasure and satisfaction, as modest as it may be.

To promote initiative, in the distinct circumstances in which we find ourselves, is a source of enrichment and fulfillment. Expanding the being of our girls in formation, favoring their initiative, is a source of creativity, and thus making them more similar to God the Creator. The same thing happens with God the Son, Word of the Father, intelligence of the Father. Everything which develops the knowledge of things, though it be in the simplest of truths, draws us near to the Son.

One is called to engrave the image of the Son by means of intelligence. The task of education revolves around the expansion of knowledge, of intelligence whose objective is the truth. All truths are organized around the Truth. The truth of numbers, the truth of things, the truth of history, the truth of man. Another example: The truth of man.

What is the truth of my being as a person? For a moment let us look upon Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is a person who is complemented by the Father and gives Himself totally to all. Every whole person is complemented by another, and gives himself to someone else. In order to situate myself in my truth I must ask myself: Who complements me? To whom do I offer myself? From whom do I live, and for whom? Therein lies the essence of my truth. This may seem somewhat abstract. Nonetheless, it is easy to be concrete. I wish to know my neighbor deeply. Who complements him? Whom does he appreciate? To what does he dedicate himself? Whom does he live for? Quotation: "Jesus Christ is the seal of the divine substance." What do we see in this substance? 1. Power; 2. Wisdom; 3. Love.

Power belongs to the Father, wisdom to the Son, love to the Holy Spirit, and the three are but one: powerful, wise, exceedingly loving. And Jesus Christ, seal of the divine substance, possesses power, wisdom and love. Well then! This admirable seal, formed in the saintly humanity of the Savior by means of the union with the divinity, is what I offer you as a model.

I pause today on this divine seal which imprints onto Jesus Christ the adorable Trinity, and which can reproduce itself on everyone who has received the seal of baptism, and has been made a child of God, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Basically, what is it I ask of you? And where will you learn to acquire this seal? In the study of the most Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father is considered the beginning, the stream from which the divinity pours itself into the Son and into the Holy Spirit; and as far as the exterior works, to Him is attributed in a more particular fashion, creation. In the same manner, you have in yourselves a power of action, and if I may express myself in this way, a power of initiative. Weak

beings do not feel the need to act. But there is another kind: those who are lazy. They do not suspect that in a certain sense their laziness directly attacks God the Father.

On the other hand, those with strong character need to be led by great prudence and wisdom, and that belongs to the Son. Finally, I find in the will a capacity of love which corresponds to imitating the Holy Spirit.” (Assumption, Feb. 1, 1877).

Engrave the image of the Holy Spirit which expands the will and the heart in charity. “The love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which was given to us.”

Engrave the Holy Spirit: educate for love. Surely it is the most forgotten aspect of our time. We form students in skills, we form them in ways to act, but do we educate them for love? “They did not educate me for love”, is the complaint of many persons. And surely they are right. The Pope often exhorts us to create a civilization for love. Therein as well does he preach in the desert like John the Baptist.

Let us listen to Fr. d’Alzon:

“The Father gives you something of His power; the Son, a trace of His wisdom; the Holy Spirit, the flame of His love. The goal of education is to make us similar to God the Father, by means of the power to do good; to God the Son by means of Christian ideas; to the Holy Spirit by means of love of God and our neighbor, love which is the fullness of the law.”

“We must give you a beautiful seal: an intelligence open to the side of infinite beauty, a heart able to love all that is great and noble, able to tramp on vile selfishness and hurl itself into sacrifices for holy causes.”

Herein lie elements to live a mysticism of education. From the essence of God flows out strength, light, and the will to carry out that plan of God, to rebuild you according to his plan: engrave within us what has been become a deformed image of the Trinity.

But in order to do this we must reorient the task: normally we understand what Fr. d'Alzon says as something we must apply to others, to our pupils. But we can also apply it to ourselves. How can I restore in myself the image of God that has become deformed? How do I make use of the power of the Father, the wisdom of the Son and the love of the Holy Spirit in order to resemble Him? There is a hidden richness which would be good to discover.

### AN EXPERIENCE LIKE NONE OTHER?

As a contribution to this congress, I would like to offer an initiative which happened to me and which appears to have been fruitful. All of this stems from an optional invitation offered to the Emmanuel d'Alzon High School teachers to come a "Dalzonian week-end."

So as not to demand too much of those who were invited, it was decided that we not take up much time: from 4:00 P.M. on Friday, after the day's work, till 2:00 P.M. on Saturday. We took advantage of our seminar center in Suba (6 kilometers from the high school).

We decided upon a maximum of ten persons per group. We wanted each session to offer more space for dialogue, questions and commentaries. Once at the center, we were each given a room for the night. We then had a bite to eat and prepared ourselves to work. We were given folders containing some key texts of Fr. d'Alzon.

We took half an hour to work on one text: "Engrave onto souls the image of the Trinity." It was a question of reading, underscoring, internalizing the content.... that it speak not only to the intelligence, but also to the heart.

We then spent some time exchanging what the phrase meant to each of us: What did the text of Fr. d'Alzon seem to be saying to you? Something new? Something known? What does it bring to your life? Questions? Commentaries?

The exchange was fluid. For some of us it was a great new experience. There is a definition that is more known: to form Jesus Christ in souls. That of engraving the image of the Trinity is less known.

And one of the most surprising aspects to which it gives rise is to expand the being of the students, “to make your students more lively,” as a collaboration with the creative power of God the Father.

Something new appears: How are we to understand the creativity, the spirit of initiative which so pleased Fr. d’Alzon? There is a simple definition which may be of some use. Creativity is taking initiative respecting the nature of things. It is not necessary that it be about an absolute originality, something that no one has ever done before. Every initiative which respects the nature of inherent reality and its surroundings is a source of satisfaction and joy, is creativity.

A situation, an institution, a reality is all the more satisfactory as richer initiatives are allowed. A situation which prevents all initiatives becomes oppressive and a source of frustration and sadness.

Another important idea which must be taken into account: usually we tend to apply Fr. d’Alzon’s pedagogical ideas to action we must take with our students. This is normal and positive. But we can also apply them to ourselves. How can I engrave the image of God the Father onto myself? How can I engrave upon myself the image of the Son, or restore this image which has been deformed by ignorance, laziness, untruths? What place does love of the Truth take in my life?

We can ask the same about the image of the Holy Spirit, His action in me. Fr. d’Alzon insists on the idea that truth is the objective, not only of intelligence but also of the will, truth as the object of love.

From there we can draw out another important topic regarding education: to educate for love. “No one ever taught me how to love”, many complain. Does this apply to me? How can we remedy this? From the dalzonian definitions of education, all kinds of ideas emerged among the weekend participants about truth, beauty, well being and goodness, which greatly enhanced our discussions and exchanges. This lasted a little more than two hours.

At 8:00 P.M., we had dinner. After a break we gathered to reflect more spontaneously on the ideas of beauty in education. We began with

a text of Fr. d'alzon on this subject. This also brought out many incidents in our lives as teachers and educators.

What place does beauty take up in our lives? Do we appreciate it? There is a somewhat subtle distinction that we must be aware of. The difference between ecstasy and dizzied rapture. Real beauty produces ecstasy, a satisfaction which allows the collaboration, the initiative of the subject. On the other hand dizzied rapture drags one along, and allows for no initiative. What does a hard rock concert produce? Ecstasy or dizzied rapture? A classical music concert, that is known and studied: is it the same? Why or why not?

The experiences are similar, but are distinct. After a final reflection which led us into prayer, we ended the day and retired for the night.

Saturday morning, we began with breakfast in common, with emphasis on conviviality. This is why it is so important to do so outside of one's daily routine and surroundings. We then prayed a little and proceeded with our study. We set about regarding education as a development of the effects of Baptism.

The first of the sacraments introduces us to the reality of God. It makes us participate in His nature, introduces us into the Church, the Body of Christ, shapes us into His person, and makes us coheirs with Christ.

All of this and much more does Baptism set in motion in embryo. It must develop and grow. Here is where Education comes into action.....expanding and maturing all of this reality. This is Christian education. Once again let us not think of applying it to others, let us try to nurture it in ourselves. Let us make conscious what God, through means of His Spirit, following the model of the Son, is accomplishing in us. When we see Him grow in us, we will have the capacity to guide others.

We spoke of the the Eucharist as a means of correcting defects.

The truth is that we ran out of time, since we wanted to celebrate the Eucharist itself. The idea was that we confirm how the Sacrament, with

its richness of symbols and meanings, contents and strengths, helps us to pass from ideas to facts, concerning our growth.

Some results: although it took place all too quickly, for lack of time, we were able to identify some elements of what the experience allowed participants to learn. There was a consensus that the time spent was well worth it in deepening the spiritual, pedagogical doctrine of Fr. d'Alzon. Everyone expressed satisfaction and the desire that the entire teaching corps might such an experience. Several emphasized the discovery of their task as teachers and educators as an enthusiastic mission which is worth living with high ideals. (This is what I call mysticism). Everyone appreciated the experience as a beginning which would demand more follow-up in sharing within a group setting. Everyone had a hard time trying to apply d'Alzon's recommendations for others to ourselves.





SR. THÉRÈSE-AGNÈS DE BALINCOURT, R.A.

## **Marie-Eugénie and Emmanuel d'Alzon. Common features regarding education**

Marie-Eugénie (1817-1898) and Emmanuel d'Alzon (1810-1880) lived at the same rich but troubled period we have just heard about.

Yet, they lived in different ways and in very particular contexts.

Marie-Eugénie was a woman “brought up in a family of non-believers that belonged to the liberal opposition of the French Restoration”<sup>1</sup> by a father who adhered to the philosophy of Voltaire and by a non practicing mother.

She had an easy life between the mansion of Metz and the chateau of Preisch close to the border with Luxembourg. Then there followed a series of events: her father who was a banker went bankrupt; her parents split up; they moved to live in Paris; her mother died when she was only 15.

Marie -Eugénie spoke and read English as well as Dutch.

Emmanuel d'Alzon was a man who “had a happy childhood, was a wealthy young man supported by a united family”<sup>2</sup> that belong to the upper class. He grew up in the South of France except during the years he spent studying in Paris (1823-1828) in prestigious schools such as Collège Saint Louis “with its well-marked aristocratic features”<sup>3</sup> and Collège Stanislas. His family was deeply Catholic.

He was vicar general of the diocese of Nîmes for more than 40 years. He did not like the growing bourgeoisie; he remained a monarchist through and through. From his youth, he was immersed in a Protestant world. His family feared the influence Marie-Eugénie might have on him.

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<sup>1</sup> Letter to Fr Lacordaire, 13 December 1841.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Migliorini in *Croire*, 11 March 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Jean-Paul Périer-Muzet in *Le Père Emmanuel d'Alzon par lui-même*.

He was aware of the considerable differences in temperament and of perception there were between him and Marie-Eugénie to whom he wrote saying: "I sometimes wonder if our southern style doesn't scare your German and, dare I say, so Teutonic reason."<sup>4</sup>

Some of these differences disappeared during their life, others remained and maybe even became more pronounced. I would just like to mention one of them. Emmanuel d'Alzon, as a priest and a vicar general, had to face the turmoils of the Church, first in his diocese and more broadly in France. He was constantly engaged in action.

With him, Marie-Eugénie followed the situation, and sometimes suffered. Indeed, her position as a woman did not allow her to take an active part into decision-making and therefore she consecrated her whole life to the growth of her Congregation.

Yet, in her thinking, Marie-Eugénie felt close to Emmanuel d'Alzon: "I am happier than I can tell you to see the connection between our ideas. I even think there are some ways in which are characters are alike."<sup>5</sup>

Father Picard: "Both our congregations were united by the closest of bonds and the day I was called to give this faithful servant of Our Lord the last sacraments (i.e Marie-Eugénie), it seemed that one of the earliest witnesses of our own Foundation was leaving us and going to join our Founder."<sup>6</sup>

Father d'Alzon: "If, in fact, I did contribute something, I must acknowledge that I also received a lot. Our mutual communication was the source was the source of what I was able to say.

Once we Assumptionists bought a small property in the Cevennes Mountains where there were two ravines. Each one of these has a spring that leads to a common stream. When the waters come together, who can tell what the real origin of the stream is?"<sup>7</sup>

They were both concerned by the growth of their respective congregations. Marie-Eugénie used to send vocations to Father d'Alzon

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<sup>4</sup> Letter B 436.

<sup>5</sup> End of 1841/beginning 1842, Vol VII, n. 1550.

<sup>6</sup> March 1898.

<sup>7</sup> July 11th, 1871.

and he, in turn, worked for the development of the Religious of the Assumption.

They had both been influenced and nourished by the spirituality of Saint Augustine. Paraphrasing the Rule of Saint Augustine, we could say “Here are the rules we are directing you to observe in your schools: above all, live in a perfect harmony, with one mind and with one heart intent on God<sup>8</sup>... Live in unity of heart and mind”.<sup>9</sup>

Marie-Eugénie and Emmanuel d'Alzon always insisted on the primacy of the community dimension in education not only for the Religious themselves but also of the teaching staff.

They both experienced the influence of Lamennais, of Lacordaire.

#### WHAT ARE THEIR COMMON FEATURES IN THE REALM OF EDUCATION?

Let me quote what you yourselves have written: “The vision that Marie-Eugénie and Emmanuel d'Alzon had of education can still inspire men and women religious as well as laypersons around the world... It is difficult to determine who contributed what to the Assumptionist vision of education.”<sup>10</sup>

#### *The same worldview, the same sensitivity*

It seems to me that what they shared in common originated in the view they cast on the world and especially on the French society.

There are in fact, multiple ways of looking and seeing the world; it all depends on our “viewing angle”.

The 19th century provides us with several viewing angles: economic, political, philosophical... From whom or from what do we look at the world? Cf. What we have just heard from Jean-Michel...

Marie-Eugénie and Father d'Alzon looked at the world with faith and love, and we call that a contemplative standpoint nourished by an affectionate search of what God is doing and saying. A point of view

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<sup>8</sup> Rule of St Augustine, n. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Rule of St Augustine, n. 8.

<sup>10</sup> Teaching and education according to the spirit of the Assumption, p. 3.

exempt from any form of ideology. It was one, rather, that sees God in action, an attentive view sensitive to what is being born “Look, I am doing something new, now it emerges; can you not see it? »<sup>11</sup>

Both Marie-Eugénie and Emmanuel d'Alzon had in common their sensitivity towards the new world that had emerged from the Revolution, the various regimes and the development of ideas that ensued.

Here is what Jean Lefort wrote in the magazine *Le Sillon* (January/December 1902) while he was commemorating the life of Lacordaire: “In order to have an impact on one’s time, it is important to know it, to understand it and to love it. ... Lacordaire knew his contemporaries, he understood them, he loved them. This is where the secret of his long-lasting and profound influence lies. He brought to the people of his time answers to the questions they were passionate about; his soul vibrated in unison with theirs, he spoke their language... It is therefore possible to be a Catholic without disowning any of the legitimate aspirations of your time; it is therefore possible to be a Catholic without losing contact with your century... Lacordaire did it. More than anyone, he was a man of his time; more than anyone, let's be people of our time. Let us live the present in the way we were taught to do, that is, let us not remain strangers to the anguish of our contemporaries...”

As Saint Paul puts it in the Letter to the Romans, both founders experienced in their flesh, in their mind, in their soul that “creation is groaning in labour pains », that the 19th century was groaning in labour pains and they wanted to contribute, through education, to the birth of a new world. That was the way they perceived their mission in the Church and in the world.

Both Marie-Eugénie and Emmanuel d'Alzon actually had a feeling, a sense, of their times. Each one of them expresses this in his own way at different stages of their lives. Father d'Alzon wrote: “*Every young man should be in tune with his time. And if he is Catholic, he should be*

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<sup>11</sup> Is 43, 19.

*a step ahead of his time*”<sup>12</sup>. As for Marie-Eugénie, she wrote: “I felt all the misery, in Christian terms, of the class of the society I belonged to.”<sup>13</sup>

She was aware of the fact that she was a child of her people and time. She felt, in her flesh, the emptiness and the misery of the wealthy, the suffering and struggles of good people, ... of the poor. She understood from the inside the social evil of her country”<sup>14</sup>.

### ***The same zeal for the coming of the Kingdom***

An Assumptionist: “Our first aim is to work, out of love for Christ, for the coming of the Kingdom of God in us and around us”<sup>15</sup>. Our motto “Thy Kingdom come” encourages us to work for the coming of the Kingdom of Christ in us and in the world.”<sup>16</sup>.

... “Dedication for the salvation of the souls that will be expressed through education in the broadest meaning of the term”.

A Religious of the Assumption: “The Church entrusts their Congregation with a mission of education; they work all their life to make Jesus-Christ and his Kingdom known”<sup>17</sup>.

“The Congregation originates in a thought of zeal. The Religious of the Assumption are called to extend the Kingdom of Christ throughout their life”<sup>18</sup>.”

To build continuously on Christ.

### ***The same aim in education***

Father d'Alzon: “the formation of Jesus-Christ in souls is the unique aim of education”<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Letter A111, quoted by Jean-Paul Perrier Muzet in *Prier 15 jours avec Emmanuel d'Alzon*, page 84.

<sup>13</sup> Letter to l'abbé Gros, Vol VI, n. 1504.

<sup>14</sup> Sr. Clare Teresa in her report for the General Chapter of 1988.

<sup>15</sup> Rule of life of the AA, n. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem, n. 13.

<sup>17</sup> Rule of life of the RA, Prologue

<sup>18</sup> Rule of life of the RA, n. 75.

<sup>19</sup> Ecrits spirituels, July 13th 1874.

“Education consists in the formation of Jesus-Christ in souls just as teaching is the illumination of souls by the splendor of Jesus-Christ.”<sup>20</sup>

Marie-Eugénie: “to give souls the benefits of an absolutely Christian education was the intention of the Assumption”<sup>21</sup>.

“To make Jesus-Christ known as liberator and King of the world, that is for me the beginning as well as the end of Christian teaching”<sup>22</sup>.

***The same realism and hope regarding society and the young***

Their educational action is rooted in the realistic understanding of the young whom they approach without naive optimism, but with a benevolent regard and a courageous attitude.

Marie-Eugénie: “We are given a child already with a certain education, already savvy about things, most of the times bad ones rather than good ones; a child that’s already pretty self-centered...”<sup>23</sup> yet, “deep down in the worst of natures, there is always something good we should be looking for... and if we do not find it, let’s attribute that more to an idea of excellence that we possess that blinds us to it.”<sup>24</sup>

Emmanuel d’Alzon answering the question as to who needs to be educated: “a turbulent mass of children from every age and every character... on whom shines, with dismal luster, the mark of original sin... It is sad but that is the way it is. It is useless to moan and to sit back; it is necessary to get to work and clear the fields of its thorns”<sup>25</sup>.

***The same refusal to resort to molds, the same willingness to let everyone develop “his particular grace”***

Emmanuel d’Alzon: “The teacher should get to know what is particular to each child, he should see what is good in his nature in order to develop it and form characters all of a certain type though quite different. It is important to form Jesus Christ in them, but only

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<sup>20</sup> September 17th, 1868.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Origines, tome I, page 190.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Founding texts, page 118.

<sup>23</sup> Advice on education in the founding texts, page 547.

<sup>24</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>25</sup> Ecrits spirituels Father d’Alzon, p. 485.

according to the way it is possible to reproduce him: in gold, silver, bronze, marble, stone or wood.”<sup>26</sup>

Marie Eugenie: “If the girls from Bordeaux are like butterflies, it is important to give their flight direction rather than cutting off their wings.”

“At the moment that sensitivity awakens, we need not squelch it but direct it<sup>27</sup>.”

- **The willingness to open the young to the poor and teach them how to serve**
- **To take determined and clear-cut action** “in her small sphere” (Marie-Eugénie), “through humble achievements” Emmanuel d'Alzon, the search for “humble actions”.

### *Rejecting a faith that is fake/phoney*

*Marie-Eugénie*: “We acknowledge that there are pious people who have not restored within themselves righteousness, generosity, dedication, honour, loyalty, truth... these kinds of pious people are the ones that distance themselves the most from the Church and Jesus-Christ. People of the world who are not Christian would like to see in the most modest Christian a nature that is noble and find in him what they sometimes find in sinners to a remarkable degree.”<sup>28</sup>

### *The importance of educating the intelligence*

Father d'Alzon endeavoured to christianize the material taught and Marie-Eugénie to christianize intelligence itself.

### *The importance of the educational community as an essential place of formation*

*Marie-Eugénie*: “Do you know what is the most important and the most difficult thing, and something that you won't be able to figure out

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<sup>26</sup> July 13th 1874.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in An educational project during the XIX century.

<sup>28</sup> Chapter, May 26th 1878.

using your mind or studying... it is that perfect way of being at one with a child”<sup>29</sup>.

*Emmanuel d’Alzon*: “This is what you are looking to achieve in your schools: to work together to adapt the educational goal of the Assumption... teachers do well to work closely together because each student is unique and because each discipline plays a complimentary role in their formation.”<sup>30</sup>

- **An emphasis on competence:**

*Marie Eugénie*: “No teacher should go into the classroom without knowing her subject and without sufficient reflection ... we give our sisters a broad enough development of spirit that they be able to transmit this development to their students and to give them a more solid education.”<sup>31</sup>

*Emmanuel d’Alzon*: “You must be able to defend yourselves in a certain intellectual climate; I will be uncompromising on this matter.”<sup>32</sup>

- **Educating the young with a view to the world that awaits them**

*Marie Eugénie*: “An Assumption education will develop convictions above all, will sink roots that, sooner or later, will bear fruit.”<sup>33</sup>

*Emmanuel d’Alzon*: “Our goal is not to educate men for the cloister, but to prepare them to live in the world, who act in a way to make others love and respect their faith ... this institution is open to young people destined to pursue all of the careers that the world might offer.”<sup>34</sup>

- **The importance of joy and enthusiasm. A deep love that finds its source in God**

*Emmanuel d’Alzon*: “Helped by the strength of God... we will communicate to young people the strength they lack... Where does that love come from if not from God himself?<sup>35</sup> And “... the love we should

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<sup>29</sup> Advice on education, quoted in the founding texts

<sup>30</sup> In “Teaching and education according to the spirit of the Assumption”, page 24

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in *Un projet éducatif au 19eme siècle*, page 65.

<sup>32</sup> *Cahiers d’Alzon*, tome VI

<sup>33</sup> Chapter of 25 May 1878

<sup>34</sup> *Vie du Père d’Alzon de Simeon Vailhé*

<sup>35</sup> ES, page 1330.



have for them is an apostolic love, one communicated by God himself.”<sup>36</sup>

*Marie-Eugénie*: “Your faith will be passed on to the child... He will come to love this faith that will maintain his respect for you”<sup>37</sup> and: “when our charity is exhausted, when boredom, weariness, suffering seem to sap, let us approach him... He will teach us that no effort of ours should be the last and that dedication, just as the divine love from which it flows, never says: ‘That's enough’.”<sup>38</sup>

- **The aim of education: to transform society. Education in and of itself has a transforming power.**

*Marie-Eugénie*: “Education is a process of liberation of the person in view of the transformation of society.... Education at the Assumption is at the service of the building of a society made up of much diversity, difference and complementarity. The realization of one’s individual vocation can never be separated from the building of society where everyone is invited to share his skills and to take up his responsibilities.”<sup>39</sup>

*According to Emmanuel d'Alzon*: “Helping others acquire knowledge, developing convictions and a capacity to judge, teaching them how to act according to Christian principles and not to resign themselves to something less. An Assumptionist education aims at transforming the students and society. Both of these aspects are in reality only one in the eyes of Emmanuel d'Alzon: it represents the same movement of liberation and of transformation that Christ proposes to everyone.”<sup>40</sup>

- **To educate the whole person:** heart, mind, and soul. They had the same serious reservations about a certain saccharine sentimentality that one might call “preciousness.”
- The importance of the **formation of character** and the development of what Marie-Eugénie calls “the natural virtues”.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibidem, p. 1336.

<sup>37</sup> Founding Texts, page 548.

<sup>38</sup> Advice on education.

<sup>39</sup> Education at the Assumption.

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Teaching and education according to the spirit of the Assumption, p.

***By way of a conclusion that would rather be a springboard ...***

It seems to me that we could confidently say that Marie-Eugénie and Emmanuel d'Alzon drew from the same source: passion and zeal for the Kingdom.

From that source, several common features regarding education flow: a certain appreciation of looking at the world from the viewpoint of faith, emphasis on the community as the fundamental locus of formation, loving the young the way they are, formation of the whole person, attention paid to the specific character of each person, willingness to continually search for new means of education, need for skills, ongoing formation, and enthusiasm.

Both Marie-Eugénie and Emmanuel d'Alzon call us to dedicate ourselves to becoming aware of the world from the inside, of knowing well the society in which we live, without fear.

May we all be like them and become both their heirs and pioneers in the field of education.

PROF. MARY ANN GLENDON

**Putting Out into the (New) Deep  
Challenges Facing the Church and Catholic Educators  
in the Globalized World**

Introduction: Putting Out into the “New Deep”

Challenges of the “New Deep”

A (social) environmental crisis

A perfect storm: faith illiteracy and indifference, militant  
secularism, relativism

Formation for “The hour of the laity”

Meeting the Challenges: How are Our Boats and Nets?

The Catholic intellectual heritage

Catholic Social Teaching

Truth and Beauty

Globalization: Friend or Foe?

“Making a difference”

**INTRODUCTION: PUTTING OUT INTO THE “NEW DEEP”**

I am greatly honored to have been asked to address you today, especially since it gives me the chance to express how much I appreciate the work that Assumptionist educators do in transmitting the Catholic faith to the next generation in every corner of the world. I am also grateful for this opportunity to exchange ideas with you about my assigned topic: “Challenges Facing the Church and Catholic Educators in the Globalized World.” It seems to me that those challenges are much the same whether we teach in religious schools or in secular settings. Indeed, they are much the same for Catholic parents who are, after all, the first teachers of children. And in fact they are the same for every Christian who takes seriously his or her baptismal vocation to

“profess before men the faith they have received... and participate in the apostolic and missionary activity of the People of God.”<sup>1</sup>

Whether we like it or not, we are all religious educators. We are all in the same boat. Like Peter, James, and John, we’ve all been called by Our Lord to take our boats and “put out into the deep.”<sup>2</sup>



## CHALLENGES OF THE “NEW DEEP”

### *A (Social) Environmental Crisis*

As I understand it, the purpose of this World Congress is to help each other steer our boats through the challenges ahead. Many of those challenges are not very different from challenges Christians have always faced. But others seem genuinely new, at least in their scale and in the speed with which they are advancing around the globe. If I were to try to put a name to what makes the “new deep” different, I would say that we are in the midst of an environmental crisis. No, I am not referring to climate change. I am referring to a deterioration in our social ecology that is every bit as serious as, and a good deal further

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<sup>1</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, Par. 1270.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 5:5.

advanced than, the threats to our natural habitats. Pope Francis recognized this in *Laudato Sì* when he said:



*We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental (Pope Francis, Laudato Sì, 139).<sup>3</sup>*

All three of our most recent Popes, in fact, have warned us that we are in a social crisis. Pope Saint John Paul II called it “the culture of death.”<sup>4</sup> Emeritus Pope Benedict spoke of “a dictatorship of relativism.”<sup>5</sup> Pope Francis often refers to what he calls the “throwaway” culture, characterized by materialism, instant gratification, relativism, and “rampant individualism.”<sup>6</sup> Put that all together and it means our little boats are in a perfect storm.

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<sup>3</sup> See also, Address to Participants in the International Colloquium on the Complementarity Between Man and Woman, 17 November 2014, where the Pope said: “[S]ocial environments, like natural environments, need protection. Although humanity has come to understand the need to address the conditions that threaten our natural environment, we have been slow — we have been slow in our culture, even in our Catholic culture — we have been slow to recognize that even our social environments are at risk. It is therefore essential that we foster a new human ecology and make it move forward.”

<sup>4</sup> *Evangelium Vitae*, 12.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, April 18, 2005, Homily at Mass before Conclave.

<sup>6</sup> *Laudato Sì*, 162.

***A PERFECT STORM: faith illiteracy and indifference, militant secularization, relativism***

Each element of this furious storm accelerates the others. A relativistic mindset fosters an atmosphere where more and more people feel free to “do their own thing”--regardless of the effects on others or on society as a whole. Relativism acts as a kind of moral anesthetic; it numbs the conscience and provides a rationalization for all kinds of behavior at variance with time-tested moral norms. Faith illiteracy and indifference encourage an increasingly militant secularism. This deadly combination of bad ideas with bad practices is hammering away at the rule of law, the marriage-based family, and every religion that makes strong truth claims and strong moral demands. No wonder that when we “put out into the deep” we often feel like the terrified disciples on the Sea of Galilee.

“Lord, Save us, we are perishing!”<sup>7</sup>



Delacroix, Christ on the Sea of Galilee

These changes in our social ecology are most advanced in the Western countries where they originated. But they are being carried everywhere on the winds of globalization, with the aid of mass media and international organizations. Cardinal Robert Sarah has forcefully

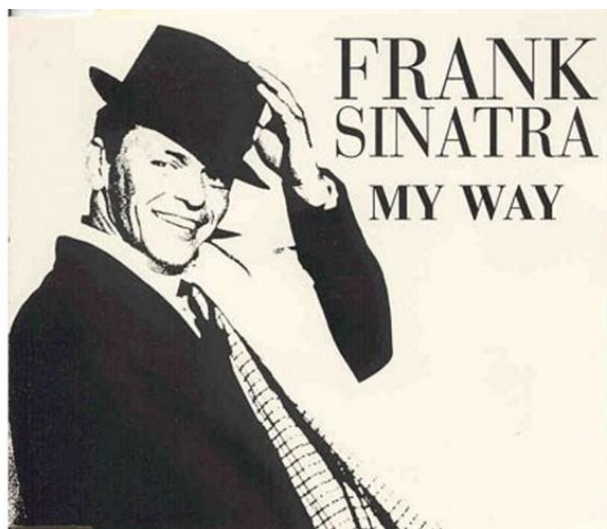
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<sup>7</sup> Mark 4:38.

denounced the spread of moral pollution from the West, saying, “At the risk of shocking some people, I think that Western colonialism continues today, in Africa and Asia, more vigorously and perversely through the imposition of a false morality and deceitful values.”<sup>8</sup>

Hardly anyone has remained untouched by the effects of living in what Pope Francis calls the “throwaway society.” The ripple effects have spread from the fraying of family ties, to the weakening of the traditional support systems that families once relied on in times of need, and to all the mediating structures of civil society--schools, churches, and workers’ organizations. The cost of unlimited personal liberties for some has fallen mainly on the poorest and most vulnerable.

(In the United States, as the early enthusiasts for liberty without responsibility have started to die off, many have requested that the song “I did it my way” be played at their funerals. I must say that if I were their lawyer, I wouldn’t advise that as the best tune to be singing as they approach the Last Judgment.)



“Hello, Saint Peter”

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Cardinal Sarah, *God or Nothing* (Ignatius Press, 2015), 158-59.

It is strange, is it not, that we hear daily warnings of long-term damage to humanity's natural environment, while hardly anyone speaks of the deterioration of our social ecology that is taking place all around us, right here and now. And there is no mystery about whether the crisis in our social environments is due to natural or human causes. It is entirely man-made!

What concerns us as Catholic educators is that these are the stormy seas into which we are called to cast down our nets. This "new deep," this new mission territory is even more challenging than the pagan lands that Christians evangelized in former times, because paganism was at least open to transcendence. St. Paul could stand in a public square crowded with temples to various deities and he could preach to the Greeks about the "unknown God." But today all religion has been increasingly banished from today's public square. Pagan wonder and Christian faith alike are increasingly being displaced by a crippling relativism and militant secularism.

And a society that has banished transcendence, as Assumptionist Founder Emmanuel D'Alzon well understood, can be a pretty frightening place. All the developments against which he struggled in post-revolutionary century French society--increasing state control over education, hostility toward religion in some quarters, and a discouraging degree of ignorance and indifference toward the faith among Catholics themselves—have now spread far and wide.

#### FORMATION FOR "THE HOUR OF THE LAITY"

At this point, I must acknowledge that many of you have come here today from places where you face far greater challenges than those I have outlined thus far. Having served for four years on the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, I am painfully aware that there are parts of the world where Christians live every single day in fear for their lives. I know that many your friends and fellow workers have lost their lives. I am deeply moved by your presence today, and humbled by your courage in putting out into the deepest of deep waters.



There is one challenge, however, that we all share, wherever we find ourselves. It is the challenge of forming a new generation of men and women who can play a leading role in the transformation of cultures that are bringing death and degradation to so many people around the world. We have been told by Church leaders that this is the “hour of the laity.” Ever since Vatican II we have been reminded with increasing urgency that this the time when the laity must “take a more active part, each according to his talents and knowledge and in fidelity to the mind of the Church, in the explanation and defense of Christian principles and in the correct application of them to the problems of our times.”<sup>9</sup> Time and again, we have heard that, where public life is concerned, the job of bringing the principles of Catholic social teaching to bear on contemporary issues belongs primarily to the laity. But so far as I can see, the laity has been slow to respond to that call.



The answer to “Who, me?” was, of course, made clear over 2000 years ago.

YES, YOU!

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<sup>9</sup> *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 6.



Caravaggio, The Calling of St. Matthew

If we Catholic educators examine our consciences on this matter, I think we have to admit that no small part of the responsibility for the scarcity of laypersons who are ready to answer that call belongs to us.<sup>10</sup> Pope Saint John Paul often emphasized the urgency of training “men and women who, in keeping with their vocation, can influence public life and direct it to the common good.”<sup>11</sup> In *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, he addressed himself directly to the role of Catholic universities, urging them to prepare students to “become people outstanding in learning,

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<sup>10</sup> See Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion* (2014).

<sup>11</sup> *Ecclesia in America*, 44.

ready to shoulder society's heavier burdens and to witness the faith to the world."<sup>12</sup>

We all know that is easier said than done. But we can take a cue from Father D'Alzon who reminded his congregation that we have to meet people where they are. He told them that we need to teach in words that people can understand and to "be attentive to what is special in each student, ...identify what is good in view of developing it, and mold character so as to give each person a certain stamp, while respecting the individuality of each one."<sup>13</sup>

A century later, Saint John Paul II would give us similar advice. He said: "We must not hide the radical demands of the Gospel, but we must present them taking into account the needs of listeners."<sup>14</sup> He advised us to try to learn from the example of Saint Paul who said, "I have become all things to all men so that I might by all means save some."<sup>15</sup> Paul didn't mean that he had to pretend to be something he wasn't. He meant that he had to put himself imaginatively in the place of the pagan Greeks and other non-believers. That enabled him to find the openings through which he could begin introducing them to Jesus Christ. Just as St. Patrick used the shamrock to teach the Irish about the Trinity, and just as St. Paul found a small "temple to the unknown God" amidst the pagan temples in Athens, we teachers need to keep our eyes out for openings even in surprising places like the films, music, and literature of modern society.

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<sup>12</sup> *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, Introduction, 9..

<sup>13</sup> D'Alzon, 7<sup>th</sup> Letter to the Congregation, 13 July 1874.

<sup>14</sup> *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 40.

<sup>15</sup> 1 Corinthians 9:19.



Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.”<sup>16</sup>

In a sense, the challenge of faith illiteracy is nothing new, but I would suggest that it represents a special challenge today where education in other areas is relatively advanced. It’s hard to dispute what a prominent Catholic educator wrote recently: “Someone can attend years of ostensibly Catholic schooling yet end up knowing little of what it is all about and often not knowing that one does not know.”<sup>17</sup> How often do we encounter well-educated Catholics who are going through life with a kindergarten level apprehension of the Catholic faith! How

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<sup>16</sup> Acts of the Apostles, 17:23.

<sup>17</sup> James V. Schall, S.J., *The Theological Foundation of Catholic Education*, Crisis Magazine, February 11, 2016. The portrait of Catholic teenagers that emerged from a recent large-scale survey in the U.S. showed an alarming degree of ignorance and indifference concerning the core teachings of the Church. Christian Smith and M.L. Denton, *Soul Searching: the religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers* (Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 194, 272-91.

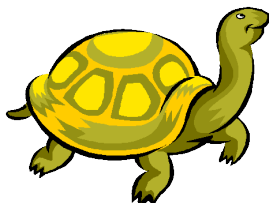
many have spent as much time deepening their knowledge of the faith as they have on exploring the wonders of information technology?

Meanwhile, other teachers of values in our societies are not standing still. There is intense competition for the hearts and minds of young people from the mass media and aggressively secular government schools. Our students are bombarded every single day from all sides by messages that undermine much of what we are trying to accomplish. Today's culture contains so much that is hostile to the principles that we are trying to pass on that we often feel overwhelmed.

Parents, too, often feel overwhelmed. Many parents for one reason or another are unable to be as supportive as they should be of the work that teachers do. Many parents lack an adequate faith formation themselves. As those of you who teach youngsters already know, when you provide children with a sound Catholic formation you may also be helping those children to evangelize their parents!

The combination of faith illiteracy with sophistication in other areas leads to further problems. If religious education does not come up to the general level of education in other areas, people are going to run into trouble defending their beliefs—even to themselves. They are apt to feel helpless when the acid rain of relativism pours down on them and when they are mocked by militant secularists.

When that happens, many Catholics drift away from the faith. Many others start to keep their spiritual lives completely private, in a separate compartment from the rest of their lives. They are like turtles: they hide everything that's most important inside their shells.



*“Nothing to see here, folks”*

Others are more like chameleons, that little lizard who changes his color to blend in with his surroundings. He accepts the teachings that suit the times, and ignores the ones that don't.



*"Nobody here but us plants, folks"*

#### MEETING THE CHALLENGES: HOW ARE OUR BOATS AND NETS?

So how do we combat faith illiteracy and the timidity or indifference to which it often leads? Well, we might take another cue from Father D'Alzon who knew all about what he referred to as the "free-thinking Catholics, half-Catholics, Catholics of their times, Catholics by accommodation, and Catholics who think they are Catholics" that abounded in his day.<sup>18</sup> The advice he gave to the Assumptionists is still sound: "Avoid all those accommodations; attach yourselves to the Catholic, apostolic, and Roman Church."<sup>19</sup> The world, he said, "needs to be penetrated through and through by a Christian idea; otherwise it will fall apart."<sup>20</sup>

Now you can imagine some 19<sup>th</sup> century Assumptionist saying, "That's all very well to say, Father, but just exactly how do we do that?"

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<sup>18</sup> D'Alzon to the Religious Sisters of the Assumption, IV *Cahiers d'Alzon*, pp. 42-45.

<sup>19</sup> D'Alzon, *Aspects de la pédagogie chrétienne*, p. 45.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Fr. John L. Franck, "Penetrating the World with a Christian Idea," in *Teaching After D'Alzon: Essays on Education Today* (Bayard, 2011), p. 1.

And one can imagine D'Alzon reminding him that we Catholic educators are not without equipment. When Our Lord told the disciples to "put out into the deep," He didn't expect them to be putting out in leaky boats. And when He told them to put down their nets, He knew they wouldn't be using nets with great big gaping holes in them. So, how are our boats and nets?

### *The Catholic intellectual heritage*

To start with, and most importantly, our boats are equipped with a sure compass in the words of Our Lord Himself. But we also have some very good equipment in our Church's intellectual heritage and in her social teaching. Our intellectual inheritance is a cornucopia of resources that can help us to deal with the challenge of tensions between faith and reason, religion and science. The mere fact of knowing such a tradition existed made a huge difference to me when I was a high school student in a small village in western Massachusetts. My encounter with modern secular thinkers like Freud, Marx, and Darwin raised many questions that troubled me. Then one day I happened to read an article in our local newspaper by the President of Notre Dame University where he said, "When you hear about a conflict between science and religion, you are either dealing with a bad scientist or a bad theologian." That one sentence helped me to become a more discerning reader and a more critical thinker.

But it has to be said that like any other patrimony, an intellectual heritage needs attention and replenishment if it is to remain fruitful. That, it seems to me, is a challenge that Catholic educators can and must meet. But we will not succeed if we follow the path taken by those Catholic schools that have tried to model themselves on today's elite secular institutions. Those secular institutions are not enjoying their finest hour. Their leaders are increasingly unable to articulate a purpose for their enterprise. They cannot even maintain the atmosphere of tolerance, civility and free inquiry that once was the pride of liberal education. What D'Alzon wrote in 1871 could easily be said today: "In the name of tolerance we have tragically downgraded the sublime mission of teaching. With the pretext of making allowances for a variety of beliefs, all beliefs have been set aside. What a singular

system, which in the name of respect for individual convictions produces indifference and scorn for all convictions!”<sup>21</sup>

In the world today, where relativism and political correctness rule the secular academy, this is the moment for Catholic universities to take the lead by insisting on excellence and preserving the spirit of free inquiry. This is the moment to take Father D’Alzon’s advice to the early Assumptionists: “Try to restore true wisdom by the demanding and serious study of the disciplines.”<sup>22</sup> We Catholics have inherited a great tradition of fearless engagement with ideas. We should rejoice in that tradition—and resolve to build on it!

### *The Church’s Social Teaching*

Fortunately for us, our intellectual heritage today includes a tremendous asset that was scarcely developed in D’Alzon’s time. I am referring to the social teaching of the Church. What a gift! But it is a gift that is only a starter kit, because the social teaching, like the Gospels from which it is derived, does not prescribe specific programs or policies.<sup>23</sup> What it does is provide us with a moral framework that helps us to form responsible judgments regarding the whole range of contemporary social problems. Its great principles of solidarity and subsidiarity, and its injunction to keep the human person at the center of concern often provide us with a fresh perspective. They often enable us to break out of the sterile political categories of left and right, liberal and conservative. And this body of thought is very accessible. One of the great joys I’ve had as an advisor to Catholic law students has been introducing them to the social encyclicals. They often say that this is just what they’ve been searching for—a vision and a set of principles that they can draw upon as they grapple with the challenge of living a lay vocation in the modern and postmodern world.

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<sup>21</sup> *Revue de l’Enseignement Chrétien*, vol. 1, May 1871), pp. 60-61.

<sup>22</sup> D’Alzon. Letter to the Assumptionists in Nîmes, 11 April 1870.

<sup>23</sup> The social doctrine aims "to help form consciences in political life and to stimulate greater insight into the authentic requirements of justice as well as greater readiness to act [in accordance with justice] even when this might involve conflicts with situations of personal interest." *Deus Caritas Est*, 28a.



### *Truth and Beauty*

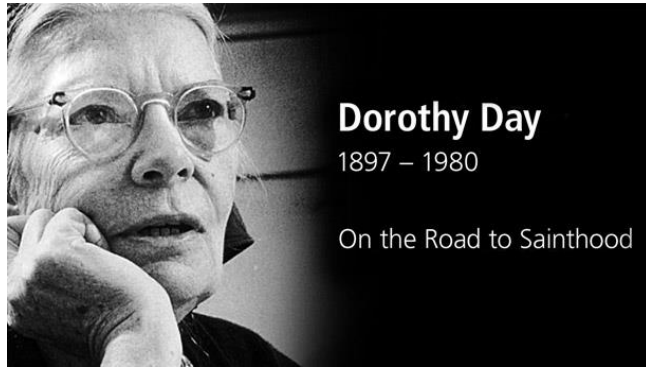
Even though I am a professor, I would not wish to over-emphasize the role of our intellectual tradition. We who labor in academic settings occasionally need to be reminded that, as Cardinal Newman put it: “The heart is commonly reached, not through reason, but through the imagination, by means of direct impressions, by the testimony of facts and events, by history.”<sup>24</sup> Truth has a power of its own. It was not without reason that Emeritus Pope Benedict once said that the best arguments for the truth of the Church’s teachings are its art and its saints.<sup>25</sup> It may seem surprising that such learned theologians would defer to other ways of leading people to truth. But I am pretty sure that everyone here knows that the heroic lives of the saints and the great works of Christian art have a special power to change the way we see the world--and thus to change us!

Speaking of heroic lives, a teaching tool that I urge you to consider if you’re dealing with older teens is the film based on the life of Dorothy Day, the founder of the Catholic Worker movement. What makes this film so pertinent today is that in the early part of her life, Dorothy Day drifted into a lifestyle that has become all too common in our own times. In the 1920s, while living the kind of life that was then called Bohemian, she became pregnant and had an abortion at the insistence of the father of the child who then left her in the lurch. Later, still drifting, she had a child out of wedlock by another man. She was a struggling single parent when she came in contact with some religious sisters who were feeding the poor during the Great Depression. It was while helping those sisters that Dorothy found her true vocation and her true love—the “love beyond all telling” that is Jesus Christ. Her life became one of such holiness many are now urging her cause for sainthood.

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<sup>24</sup> John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (Notre Dame Press, 1979), 89.

<sup>25</sup> Elizabeth Lev, *Pope Benedict Sees Beauty at the Service of Truth*, <http://www.ncregister.com/site/article/pope-benedict-sees-beauty-at-the-service-of-truth/#ixzz47GNqs92U>



Those who knew Dorothy Day personally say that she would have been mortified by this film because she hated to think about the life she lived before her conversion. But I believe that a posthumous blessing from her life will be to give hope and encouragement to many of today's young women who have been caught up and cast out by the throwaway society--and who feel that God doesn't want anything more to do with them. These girls need to know about Dorothy Day and the power of God's love in her life. So please think of that film—it's called Entertaining Angels"; and it's available in video.

***GLOBALIZATION: Friend or Foe?***

As I have mentioned, globalization has facilitated and even accelerated the spread of many harmful practices and ideas that make our role as educators increasingly difficult. It is one of the many factors that have contributed to the breakdown of the fragile social environments upon which human beings around the world depend for dignified living. But we should not forget that we Catholics are old hands at globalization. Today's globalization has provided us with a more vivid sense of what we already knew: that every one of us is linked in the mystical body of Christ with men, women and children of every race, nationality and walk of life in every corner of the world. Our Church's vast network of health care, educational and relief agencies circles the globe, serving mainly the poorest people in the poorest countries. Each of you here today is part of the world's largest educational system, a system that has brought hope, learning and opportunity to generations of men and women, often in places where

women would have had no opportunities for education at all. And it is no coincidence that a Church whose embrace is so capacious has become the foremost institutional defender of human dignity and human rights in international settings. So from one perspective, increased globalization has amplified opportunities for spreading the Good News to all the nations.

At the same time, however, no one should be surprised that a world-wide Church with a message that challenges habits of indifference to human suffering, self-indulgence, and excessive attachment to worldly goods is often the target of attack. It is precisely because of her courageous stands on key, culture-defining issues that a strong and united Catholic Church is the last thing some people want to see.

Yet too often we simply keep quiet when the Church is attacked. Consider the shameful silence in the West concerning the violent persecution to which Christians are subject in many parts of the world. We Catholic educators also need to help our young people to recognize and deal with more subtle forms of anti-Catholicism that are so pervasive in Western societies. My late husband, who was Jewish, used to ask me: "Why do you Catholics put up with that kind of thing?" I think that is a question we educators who live in places where we enjoy considerable freedom really have to ask ourselves. Why are we so careless about the faith for which our ancestors made so many sacrifices? What's wrong with being proud to be a Catholic? I sometimes think it would be a good idea to bring back the old confirmation rite where the bishop slapped us on the cheek to remind us that there are times when we're supposed to defend the faith!

Make no mistake: The militant secularists who are getting bolder every day will not be satisfied until they silence Catholic voices in the public square and force Catholic institutions to give up their own identity. They are rewriting history as fast as they can, making the Church the main villain at every wrong turn.

I am not suggesting that we Catholics should ever be afraid of legitimate criticism. But there is such a thing as exaggerated self-criticism. At a time when the Church is under siege from many directions, including violent persecution in many parts of the world, I

believe that we Catholics do a great disservice when we fail to contest the myth that the history of Catholicism is a history of patriarchy, worldliness, persecution, or exclusion of people or ideas. When I hear these rants against the Church, I find it helpful to ask: Compared to what? Is there some other institution that has done more to advance human freedom and dignity?

To sum up, then, it seems that we really have all the equipment we need for putting out into the new deep. What we sometimes forget is what the disciples forgot when their boat was being tossed about the sea and Christ was sleeping peacefully in the stern. Like them, we sometimes feel as though God is just sleeping while we are perishing. Like them, we sometimes forget that the battle is already won. We need to remember what Jesus said to his terrified friends: “O ye of little faith, why are you so afraid?”



*A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?” He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet!*

*Be still!” The wind died down and it was completely calm. Then, He said to his disciples, “O ye of little faith; Why are you so afraid?”<sup>26</sup>*

#### “MAKING A DIFFERENCE”

It is time to bring these remarks to a conclusion, so let me offer just one final reflection about our vocation as teachers. Many teachers will tell you they chose the teaching profession because they wanted “to make a difference.” But the awful truth is that we will make a difference, for better or for worse. The only question is what kind of difference we will make. That is the question we should ask ourselves with fear and trembling. That is why we should say a little prayer every day before entering the classroom.

On days when things get tough, I like to remember these words of encouragement from Saint John Paul II: “There is a temptation which besets every spiritual journey: that of thinking that the results depend on our ability to act and to plan. God of course asks us really to cooperate with His grace.... Remember that when the disciples after toiling all night and catching nothing were told to put out in the deep, Peter said, ‘At your word I will let down the nets.’<sup>27</sup> That was the moment when Peter opened his heart to the tide of grace and allowed the word of Christ to pass through him in all its power.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Mark 4:40. This and the previous image of Christ on the Sea of Galilee are two of at least nine renderings of this story by Delacroix.

<sup>27</sup> Luke 5:6.

<sup>28</sup> *Novo Millenio Ineunte*, 138.



I close with the hope and the prayer that today and always we educators will seek to open our hearts to that “tide of grace.” It only takes one good teacher to liberate a person’s mind. Only one good teacher can make an enormous difference in a person’s life. I pray for all the Assumptionists that your numbers will increase and that each one of you will touch thousands of lives. Thank you for being here today.

## CLOSING REMARKS OF THE SUPERIORS GENERAL

SR. FELICIA GHIORGHIES, O.A.

### « Until Christ be formed in you... » (Gal 4:19)

First of all, let me thank those who first had the idea to organize this education congress at the Assumption, Fr. Richard Lamoureux, Sr. Claire Rabitz, and Br. Jean-Michel Brochec; they had the courage to dream big for our two congregations. In 2011, when we began our terms as superiors general, Fr. Benoît Grière and I discovered the plans for this event and considered it necessary to bring this wonderful dream to reality. It is the challenge of us all to maintain and develop the spirit of the Gospel and of the Assumption in our institutions, in the socio-cultural context of our day.

Today, in spite of all the ups and downs we have had to face along the way, we have no regrets. To the contrary! It is wonderful to see how some sow, others work the earth and water it, and still others bring in the harvest... let us hope for an abundant harvest for the Kingdom of God.

Likewise, thanks to the members of the steering committee who have been working for five years laying the groundwork so that this project could see the light of day! It was a painful childbirth but the child is beautiful and healthy!

To dispel any questions you may have, I am not speaking to you as any kind of specialist in the field of education, as you yourselves are, but rather as the one responsible for the Congregation of the Oblates of the Assumption. Although, at the beginning, I had to get used to your codified professional language, I have been able to listen to you, to discover your diverse world, and to stand back and see things with a certain objectivity. Our presence, that of Fr. Benoît and me, from the very beginning of this Congress, is a sign of appreciation, encouragement, and commitment!

As you are aware, Fr. d'Alzon loved to speak in threes. As a good daughter of our founder, I have decided to share three points with you: experience – spirit/vision/a fresh impetus – encouragement.

THE EXPERIENCE: WHAT HAVE I DISCOVERED?

***Educators who are enthusiastic, serious, and competent.***

I am happy for having had the opportunity of meeting you, for the opportunity that you all have had to get to know one another and for all the sharing that has taken place among us. I am all the richer for the mosaic of faces, institutions, realities, and experiences ... from four continents. I stand in admiration of your efforts, for the pains you have taken to carry out your mission with competence and to transmit the value of the Gospel and of the Assumption to those who have been entrusted to you. Thanks to each one of you for having accepted the responsibility to represent your various institutions, for having taken the time to plunge into the writings of Fr. d'Alzon, and for the investment you have made by actively participating in the work of this Congress.

I am sorry, however, that certain scheduled participants from Oblate institutions (in France, the Congo, and Tanzania) were unable to make it for various reasons such as health or visa issues. They were able to follow the proceedings on the Congress blog.

Another discovery: the history (1904) and the dynamism of the educational activity here at Assumption College – strengthened by the presence of the Assumptionist community. My thanks as well to you, Mr. President, Francesco Cesareo, who with your staff have offered both a warm and refreshing welcome! Thank you very much!

A special word of thanks to Fr. Miguel Diaz, Provincial Superior of North America/Philippines, and to all his brothers for their welcome, at once fraternal, well-organized, and detailed!



THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS FIRST EDUCATION CONGRESS FOR THE OBLATES OF  
THE ASSUMPTION: A NEW VISION AND A FRESH IMPETUS

Certainly history will record how this Congress will have had a long-term impact on the educational enterprise of our two congregations and in them. I would like to underline a few aspects that seem important to me:

- A reminder of what is fundamental in the matter of education:
  - the Trinitarian and Christological foundation
  - the importance of a Christian anthropology ---the locus of the encounter of the less religious man and the man wounded by life
  - the aim of our mission: to educate and evangelize through teaching and the witness of one's life
  - the role of the holistic formation of man and woman capable of standing up and assuming responsibility in society
  - the welcoming of differences – ecumenical, interreligious, and intercultural openness
  - social outreach to the neediest, etc.
- The joy of discovering ourselves even more as an Oblate educational family and as an Assumption educational family. An educational family that features different rhythms of development on each continent, and even within the same country. A reality that underlines the need for greater communication and communion at all levels! And this is true within the same school, between and among Assumption schools, in general, and those of the Oblates of the Assumption, in particular, in the same region, the same country and within the Congregation. If we wish to move forward with a new vision and a renewed spirit, we must join our forces and our competencies, and to do so in a true spirit of family where everyone has his place and role.
- The complexity of the educational realities of our Congregation. This is true at at least two levels:
  - that of organizational and management structure:
    - a) the direction of schools, orphanages, etc. undertaken by the Sisters in Africa, Latin America, and Europe
    - b) The Board of Directors (« la Tutelle ») with an Oblate delegate, in France. In both cases the mission is carried out in close collaboration with our lay collaborators and, wherever possible, with our Assumptionist brothers.

- and that of quite different socio-cultural-political contexts that deeply influence or affect the way one proposes Christian-dalzonian values, as well as their implementation.

This demands of us courageous decisions both in the short and the long run. I pledge my commitment and that of the general council in collaboration with the Council of the Congregation to encourage and support:

### **1. Formation**

- to form Oblates with the pedagogical aptitudes necessary to transmit and sustain our spirit and our educational project at the Assumption
- to assure the Christian and Assumptionist formation of those who head our institutions (whether they are for older or younger students) and of teachers within our network of schools
- to take into account required qualities: team-work, adaptability, open-mindedness, vision.

### **2. Animation – Evaluation**

- I request that the Regional Assemblies concerned and Continental Chapters analyze the actual way we are carrying out the apostolate of education and make concrete proposals for the 2017 General Chapter.
- to ensure the effective implementation of the orientations of the Education Congress and their periodic evaluation. I envisage what would be an ongoing dialogue between the document of reference and the educational project of each institution with concrete applications that are adapted to each context.
- to establish an OA-AA Education Commission at the level of each region/country that would foresee workshops, themes, speakers, etc. If possible, foresee a regional councilor responsible for follow-up. – One special point of attention: avoid changing the heads of our institutions too frequently and to look into possible rotations of leadership.
- The Congregation will take care to appoint heads of institutions who nourish a concern for the charism of the Oblates of the Assumption in the education of young people and who are individuals with vision.

- Wherever possible in our schools, and in collaboration with our Assumptionist brothers, to establish Assumptionist pastoral ministry programs.

### **3. A network of collaboration**

- to establish local and regional networks – right now in our evolution, this is absolutely necessary. One simply cannot remain alone doing his own thing! We need one another!
- to encourage exchanges of experience (teachers, students), twinning of institutions within the Assumption at a national and international level.
- to enrich one another with regard to our experience in the domain of the Protection of Minors. In this regard, we Oblates have some serious work to do in our institutions.

It would be advisable to use the methodology employed during the Congress in the particular context of each school: observe, judge, act, in view of a holistic education that aims at excellence, but also a formation to Christian values. There is always the risk of being satisfied with the minimum.

How can one foster a family spirit between the faculty and the student body? How will our students become responsible agents of change in tomorrow's societies? Having a sense of responsibility in our societies in crisis and a sense of solidarity in our societies caught up in the search for personal interests are elements that might give direction to Oblate initiatives on the ground.

In the face of so much violence and division in our societies, how can we provide our young people with an ability to live peacefully with others? Or with an ability to manage conflicts or to embrace intercultural differences? Don't our schools have something to contribute in this regard? I also believe that we must seek ways to emphasize networking among our AA/OA institutions with practical guidelines that respond to the challenges of the societies where we are.

In this context, a Catholic school with an Assumptionist character can offer a really original educational project featuring the synthesis

between faith and culture where knowledge, situated within the horizon of faith, becomes wisdom and a way of looking at life. In so doing, it would offer the whole world a way of mutual assistance.

#### AN ENCOURAGEMENT FOR ALL THE ASSUMPTION

An encouragement for all the Assumption, especially for my Sisters and those who collaborate with us in our schools:

- to be proud to be an Oblate, to belong to the Assumption Family and to the vast educational family of the Assumption!

- to take care of our own interior life so as to cultivate that of our students, colleagues, etc.

- to cultivate a sense of service and of humility in a true spirit of family.

- rooted in this awareness, to envisage possible collaborative efforts between Assumptionists, Oblates, and our lay colleagues networking locally and regionally, by country, continent, or between continents.

- to ensure a high level of enthusiasm, not to get discouraged in the face of so many challenges (an example: During a visit of my Sisters across the world, I met an elderly missionary who had been stationed in 5-6 countries. He confided in me, "I pray every day that the Lord may keep my enthusiasm up. Pray for me that I may never lose my enthusiasm".) Do not lose your enthusiasm and sense of joy!

#### HOW TO TRANSMIT THE WORK OF THE CONGRESS?

The document of reference is important (and you have dedicated lots of work to it, especially the synthesis committee; let me thank you). Nevertheless, the way in which we integrate it into our lives and work, the way we live it out, is even more important!!!

It is necessary and important to have general Assumptionist educational guidelines. However, the spirit with which you will implement and adapt them in each of your particular institutions is where the rubber will meet the road! It will be up to you to envisage how to foster dialogue and reconcile the new guidelines and the

educational project of each of your institutions. Our Congregations will be there to help you evaluate this implementation.

I am convinced that if a change of mentality is to take place, it must begin here: with a renewed spirit! We are aiming high, but we must begin in our concrete day-to-day lives... so that our educational choices and decisions, both personal and community, may be inspired and characterized by the Jesus Christ of the Gospel and by the dalzonian spirit.

#### CONCLUSION

This Congress has been a time of fraternity and communion between Assumptionists, Oblates of the Assumption, and our lay friends and collaborators. We also enjoyed having our sisters, the Religious of the Assumption, present. May we continue strengthening our ties and allow ourselves to be inspired, one and all, by the Teacher *par excellence*, Jesus Christ, until he be formed in all of us! May we become more and more disciples and educators consumed with a passion for encountering man and the Kingdom on the byways of the 21<sup>st</sup> century!



FR. BENOÎT GRIÈRE, A.A.

**“Education means more than just Teaching.”**

We have just experienced an important moment in the history of the Assumption. Thanks to the work accomplished during this congress, we have been able to reinvigorate one of the apostolic priorities of our congregations, namely, education.

The Assumption is a diverse family. There are, as you know, the Religious of the Assumption. The charism of our elder sisters in the Family is rooted in the thought of St. Marie-Eugénie de Jésus who demonstrated a great love for the education of the young. For Fr. d’Alzon, the friendship he enjoyed with Marie-Eugénie gave him the support he needed to pursue his dream of providing a Christian education that could renew the society of his time.

The commitment to teaching among the Assumptionists is modest today, but together with our Oblate Sisters it is more substantial. The desire to contribute to the renewal of the world through education, however, is also borne in large part by our works and communities, beyond involvement in schools. I am thinking of Bayard Press’ priority to educate. I am thinking as well of social initiatives like our orphanage in Saigon and our involvement in the training of lay-people in our parishes and of the young people who live in our youth residences. The media and other works are for us Assumptionists a privileged arena where our passion for education takes place as well.

The point has been well made, “education means more than just teaching.” A deeper appreciation of the thought of Fr. d’Alzon will contribute to a renewal of our mission of education. It is not a question of merely engaging in some archaeological exercise – that is to say, reconstructing an often idealized past so as to apply it to today’s world without any sort of adaptation. No, it is a question of rediscovering what is original and innovative in the vision of Fr. d’Alzon so that it can be adapted in our time and give birth to new initiatives. In 1980, at the time of the celebrations marking the centennial of Fr. d’Alzon’s death,

the cardinal-archbishop of Paris, Cardinal Marty, told us clearly, “you are heirs; now become founders.” That is what fidelity consists in for us: pursuing our founder’s work as we live in the present time. The wealth of a Congregation’s charism can be found in its capacity to do new things, in its ability to take root in the here and now. The willingness to undertake new challenges is a sign of those who are filled with zeal and ever-ready to be ‘founders.’

Let me quote a Jesuit priest who died some forty years ago, François Varillon, so as to capture the major orientation of an Assumptionist education: « God divinizes what man humanizes ». François Varillon wished to insist on the task that falls to every Christian, namely humanization. Our vocation is to become more human each day, that is to say, more faithful to the will of God who created us free like him because we are in his image. To be sure, man is fallible, but he is above all capable of improving. In our work of education we must return again and again to the Christian hope that allows us to believe that nothing is ever definitively lost. Humanizing man – that might appear to be a tautology. However, in today’s world, where humanism is challenged by certain thinkers, because the 20th century would have revealed its bankruptcy, « the century of iron and blood, » it is all the more urgent to return to a healthy understanding of man. For us Christians, it is the conviction of our faith that we are created in the image and likeness of God and that the fullness of our stature is to be found in Christ, true God and true man. Humanization requires a long process. It is something that occurs over time with the help of the Holy Spirit. It is an ongoing labor of creation that makes of us cooperators with God.

So, who is our guide in humanizing man? Christ --- who must be known, love, and imitated as Fr. d’Alzon said. And in order to know Christ, one must deepen his knowledge of the Scriptures; he must pick up the gospels over and over again. As St. Jerome said, “ignorance of the Scriptures means ignorance of Christ.” We must keep coming back to Christ and to the gospels. Knowledge of Jesus comes over time and we must be willing to accompany him along the way as did the disciples of Emmaus. Not everything is evident at first sight; we need time for our eyes to be opened. We are also, as St. Augustine says, «lame men *limping* along the road.” But what is important is that we are actually on the road even if progress is not easy. Each at his own pace!



Discovering Jesus Christ and his Father takes time. That’s probably why Emmanuel d’Alzon called for the virtue of patience among his teachers, a virtue that we still need to cultivate today. God himself is patient with us. Knowledge of Christ is never complete. It takes place little by little thanks to the community of believers that received the tradition and that desires to live it today. Therefore, the Church is necessary for knowing Christ. It is the community of men and women who find their heritage in the apostles. It is the Body of Christ. The Church today is poorly loved, criticized, misunderstood, and often maligned. At the Assumption we love the Church because she is our mother. John XXIII said with lots of finesse that she is holy but always in need of sanctification. This affirmation was once again made in the Second Vatican Council document, *Lumen Gentium*. The Church is subject to many acts of infidelity, but she is the institution that allowed us to discover Jesus’ message. We owe her much. She is our mother and therefore our teacher.

Let us return to our congress and what it has helped us to learn. The work that we have done over these past ten days has given us an opportunity to learn more about the spirit of the Assumption. You have probably noticed that the Assumptionists have a really hard time defining their spirit and the charism of the Assumption. But this charism, this family spirit, is something we live day in and day out. I truly believe that we shared that spirit during our work here. Together we have breathed the spirit of the Assumption.

First of all, what we are talking about is something humble. At the Assumption, we don’t have the pretention of being the best, even if we seek excellence. We maintain a certain modesty that makes us recognize that around us there have been things achieved that are not only interesting but even superior to what we ourselves have accomplished. But we have high goals ---- to make progress day after day.

Secondly, we don’t have a corner on the market of the truth. Our labor is the fruit of collaboration and, just as it was at the very beginning of the Congregation, the presence of lay collaborators is primordial. This congress was a vivid illustration of that: the full participation of lay teachers and directors of schools is a reminder that we religious

cannot forget that the success of our educational project necessarily depends on our partnership with them.

Thirdly, the spirit of family of the Assumption allows us to say that we are men and women of our time. We do not have a desire to live nostalgically in the past. We are called to work in today's world and to prepare tomorrow's. Needless to say, that can't happen without remembering the past, but we do so without regret or bitterness.

Fourthly, we love the world we live in. To be sure, we aren't naive; we are aware of its limits and weaknesses. But in order to transform it we must first love it. As we read in Psalm 85:1, « You have favored your land, O Lord.»

Fifthly, we are tolerant. Our profound conviction is that, as Cardinal Tauran said a few days ago in Rome, education is the best protection against hatred. We wish to contribute to universal fraternity because Christ is the brother of all and because we have but one Father.

As for myself I must admit that the congress has been a time to discover just how important the mission of education is in the mission of the Assumption. I wasn't totally unaware of that, but coming from a province where we handed over all of our schools some forty years ago I was never introduced to this apostolic reality. I must tell you that I am the product of two types of education. First of all, a Catholic one with the Christian Brothers who formed me from ages 6-11. Later, I was in public schools. I experienced teachers in both, men and women who were zealous to give the best of themselves in the field of education. Both contributed to the man I am today.

I leave this congress with the conviction that we must rekindle the flame of education at the Assumption and that our apostolic plans must give it pride of place. I personally commit myself to leading a renewal of our presence in education. Our Rule of Life says it quite clearly, "From the very beginning, our apostolate has taken on various forms, in particular teaching, *'understood in the broadest sense of the word'* (Rule #18)". We need to encourage provinces to rediscover a solid educational commitment. How? It seems to me that we need to take the text that we've elaborated as a 'document of reference' to guide us in

the educational animation of our institutions. We need to return to the booklet edited some years ago, “Educating and teaching according to the spirit of the Assumption.” It offers many pertinent ideas. We need to revivify the Assumptionist presence by forming more educators and by visiting our institutions. We need to establish networks among our institutions and bring educators and directors of institutions together from time to time to reflect on the mission we have received. Our two congregations must renew their commitment to education in the upcoming provincial and general chapters.

Before I conclude, I would like to thank all those who made this congress possible. I think first of all of the steering committee that hasn’t spared any efforts over the past two years right up to now. I think of Sr. Claire de la Croix and Fr. Richard Lamoureux who had the common intuition of the importance of organizing such a congress. I am particularly grateful to President Francisco Cesareo for his unflinching support and steadfast commitment. The success of the congress owes much to him. A special word of thanks to John Franck, my assistant responsible for education who has worked very hard and experienced plenty of stress in making this wonderful event a reality. Nor do I wish to forget to mention our American Assumptionist brothers who put themselves totally at the service of the congress participants. Their fraternal welcome added immeasurably to the experience of the congress. Let me thank the Religious of the Assumption, Sr. Clare Teresa and Sr. Thérèse-Agnès. Their own experience in the field of education shed light on our work. We are truly members of a family. A word of thanks to the translators who labored daily to afford us the opportunity of understanding the discussions in spite of the speed with which we spoke. Finally, I want to warmly thank all the participants. You took time to form yourselves that required leaving your families, your land, your institutions, and your vacations. In this way you have demonstrated your desire to see Assumption move forward. We all share this mission of education and this mission, beautiful and at times hard to achieve, is our honor and our joy.

I end my remarks recalling that Christ alone can be called Teacher. St. Augustine insists on this: Christ is the one who teaches us, who transforms us, and who raises us up. I am convinced that the Assumption wishes to enter into this divine mission. It will do so with

the help of everyone, lay and religious together, and even if we only find ourselves limping along the way, we are making progress.

## FINAL DOCUMENT OF THE CONGRESS

**For an Assumption Education Today**

*The Augustinians of the Assumption, the Oblate Sisters of the Assumption, and their lay friends and partners, gathered at Assumption College in Worcester Massachusetts, USA for an International Education Congress from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup> of July 2016, propose the following principles and convictions meant to inspire the educational institutions sponsored by these Congregations.*

## CHAPTER I

***Knowing the aim of education in Fr. d'Alzon's eyes***

*"We are all called to communicate the truth and love through education. Make this the object of our meditation, of our desires, of all our efforts. May we be passionate about this apostolate and become worthy of it."*

E d'Alzon, E.S., p. 1332

1. The educational vision of Father Emmanuel d'Alzon grounds our Assumption educational project. This vision is inspired by the Gospel and animated by the passion of Father d'Alzon for the Reign of God and his desire to respond to the intellectual, moral and spiritual challenges of his day.

2. This vision is shaped by its 19<sup>th</sup> century context, an era, like our own, marked by ignorance, indifference and unbelief. It seeks to know, love, and imitate Jesus Christ in the conviction that knowledge of Christ draws us closer to God and enables us to become free and fully human. It is Jesus Christ reveals the true face of God and the vocation of every man and woman created in his image and likeness.

3. The Assumption educational project welcomes and accepts each person. It strives to build an academic community where all belong to a single family. In an Assumptionist institution, teaching and learning move the student toward greater freedom, responsibility, justice, and community.

4. Faithful to Fr. d’Alzon, the Assumption is devoted to the cause of God and humankind, in service to Truth, Charity, and Unity.

5. The academic community regularly offers opportunities both to explore the thought of Fr. d’Alzon and the foundations and goals of the educational project of the Assumption by means of workshops, readings and retreats, led by the Assumptionist Congregations and lay partners and to assess their practices in their light.

## CHAPTER II

### ***Announcing the Christian faith in an Assumptionist institution***

*“By means of the great and wonderful work of education..., we communicate the power of life through the Father, intelligence through the Son, and love through the Holy Spirit.”*

E. d’Alzon: 50<sup>th</sup> Conference to the Religious of the Assumption, 6 March 1871

6. An Assumptionist education is founded on a vision of the human person which is rooted in Christian revelation.

Assumptionist education is an integral part of the Church whose mission it is to announce the Good News that is Jesus Christ himself.

7. In an Assumptionist institution the Gospel is announced and practiced. An Assumptionist education seeks to help people live as Christians and as members of the Church. In its academic communities, it does so especially through the sacraments and the study of God’s Word. It nurtures the development of interiority in each person.

8. In an Assumptionist education, faith, hope, and charity hold pride of place. It draws attention to the spiritual and social consequences of

these theological virtues and believes that faith and reason together make possible a deeper understanding of the realities of the world today.

### CHAPTER III

#### *Educating in today's world*

*“The Apostle loves the one who sends him, but he must love the one to whom he is sent, since his is a mission of love and of mercy.”*

E. d'Alzon, E.S., p.781

*“The most intimate thought of my soul is that the world needs to be penetrated through and through by a Christian idea; otherwise it will fall apart..... we need to teach it and to do so in words it can understand.”*

E. d'Alzon, Letter to Alphonse de Vigniamont, 28 March 1835

9. Knowing and loving the world is at the heart of an Assumptionist education.

10. Such an education looks at the world through a Christian perspective. In order to reach this world, it uses a language that is accessible and comprehensible to the men and women of our time.

11. An Assumptionist education teaches people to discern the good, the true, and the just, in dialogue with the contemporary world. It forms one's judgment and brings together what is often separated: heart and mind, faith and reason, the acquisition of a certain expertise and the ability to use it wisely.

12. An Assumptionist education promotes serious reflection on the fundamental causes of racism, exclusivity, and extremism. It invites women and men to recognize the inherent dignity of each person as created in the image and likeness of God. It nurtures a sense of community, characterized by respect and genuine encounter with others.

13. An Assumptionist education favors openness to internationality and encourages the study of languages as well as exchanges among Assumptionist institutions throughout the world.

#### CHAPTER IV

##### *Living the family spirit*

*“How might we further define the spirit of the Assumption? (...) It is easier to sense it than to define it. It’s that which makes an institution sui generis; it’s that which characterizes such an institution and not another (...). And yet being formed in this general spirit is essential because it helps students to join together, to become one, to love one another, to support one another, and to pursue, once they have left the institution and set out on life’s journey, a common goal with a greater sense of meaning.”*

E. d’Alzon, *Aspects de pédagogie chrétienne*, pp. 45 and 137

14. An Assumptionist education fosters ‘a family spirit,’ characterized by love, trust, generosity, simplicity and genuineness in one’s relations.

15. This family spirit family spirit requires a continual search for unity, despite differences; an attention to each person; and the formation of a true academic community where all experience a spirit of belonging to the Assumption family and to the body of Christ that is the Church.

#### CHAPTER V

##### *Studying at Assumption*

*“Young people are not simply empty canvases on which you have only to apply a few colors. We do not shape them like clay on which the artist leaves an imprint that is more or less inspired.”*

Report by Fr. d’Alzon to Assumption College, Nîmes, 1847



16. The ambition of an Assumptionist education is to form men and women who are free, responsible, daring, imaginative, and committed to their full development in order to find their place in the world and to contribute actively to the work of creation. While encouraging excellence, an Assumptionist education recognizes the uniqueness of each student and the need for free development at his or her own pace. Fr. d’Alzon calls us “to encourage in our students a certain freedom in their own growth rather than to force them all “to assume the same form”.

17. The search for the truth, the development of the capacity to judge in a deep, balanced and intelligent way their own culture, a sense of dialogue—all of this is at the heart of the goals to be pursued.

18. Training and education should not be opposed; there is a time for acquiring expertise and a time for acquiring wisdom. The different disciplines taught are not meant simply for the acquisition of information, but for the assimilation of certain life principles and the discovery of certain truths.

## CHAPTER VI

### *Teaching at Assumption*

*“It’s not enough to teach. We also need to educate, and education is a task considerably more difficult than simply teaching.”*

E. d’Alzon, E.S., p. 481

19. Teaching at an Assumptionist institution requires meeting the young students where they are in their lives. As Father d’Alzon wrote: to teach is “to be attentive to what is special in each student, to identify what is good in order to help it develop, and to shape the character in order to give to each student a certain quality, while respecting his or her individuality.”

20. Educators at Assumption are personally convinced of the mission of their institutions and are conscientiously devoted to its realization. Deeply committed to their own discipline, they continue to pursue

knowledge in their respective fields and to deepen their knowledge of Fr. d’Alzon’s educational vision.

21. Consistent with Assumption’s educational vision, teachers are invited to exercise a breadth and openness of spirit, as well as patience, perseverance, generosity, enthusiasm, and a capacity for collaboration.

22. At the Assumption, religious and lay people are partners in service to the same mission, loving their students and witnessing to them in an authentic and joyful way.

## Chapter VII

### ***Being welcoming at Assumption***

*“One feeling growing in me is love for my fellow man... Humanity in our day sins in two ways: we love too little, and our knowledge is so deficient. Humanity needs to be taught, but first we need to give humanity a heart of flesh...”*

E d’ALZON: Letter to Luglien d’Esgrigny, 1 October 1834

23. An Assumption institution is open to all. Assumptionist institutions welcome all regardless of their origin or ability, displaying great respect for the cultural and religious affiliations of each student.

24. Assumptionist institutions seek to provide a holistic education to support the human and spiritual growth of each student.

25. Assumptionist institutions acknowledge the realities of the contexts in which they operate and seek at all times to be attentive to the poor and the weak. They demonstrate a particular attention to their own students in need, whether they be personal, family, or social needs.

26. An Assumptionist institution maintains its Catholic identity while educating students to Gospel values and introducing them to ecumenism and intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

## CHAPTER VIII

***Forming students to solidarity and social responsibility***

*“Education is not simply a theory; it has practical consequences for each day and at all times.”*

E. d’Alzon, E.S. p 237

27. An Assumptionist institution seeks to help students realize and live their vocations. It fosters a particular fidelity to the Church

28. It invites its students to seek what is “true”, “good” and “beautiful”. It is best understood as a part of God’s plan for his creation. Fr. d’Alzon encouraged students to “acquire a heart able to love all that is great and noble and ready to set aside all self-centeredness.” (November 15, 1876, Conference on Christian Education)

29. It insists on the unity between thought and social action. It teaches people to be responsible, in view of forming them to become involved and to serve, whatever work they assume in society or in the Church, with a particular sensitivity to those in greatest need.

30. It encourage social service programs joined with serious reflection on these activities in order to understand their meaning and importance. All are taught to care for our “common home,” the earth.

31. Assumptionist institutions teach students about peace, the equality between women and men, and the meaning of the common good. All of these perspectives are brought to bear on the important political issues of the day. Students are taught to use the media, especially the internet, in a responsible and critical way.

## CONCLUSION

Teaching was an essential part of the Assumption at the time of its founding by Father Emmanuel d’Alzon and continues to hold an important place in the mission of the Oblates of the Assumption and the

Augustinians of the Assumption. The religious of these Congregations desire to involve in this work as many lay people as possible who share the same educational vision.

- It is a vision that seeks to educate the whole person, at every level.
- It is a search for the truth, a way that is profoundly humanizing.
- It helps young people to assume responsibility for their own lives, in solidarity with others, in order then to build a society that is more fraternal.
- It has a spiritual and theological dimension in the sense that it educates people to participate in the work of salvation, the work of the Word of God made flesh, truth, and life.
- It is a place where religious and lay people share the same mission, establishing in that way a partnership in the spirit of the Assumption.

FATHER D'ALZON ON EDUCATION

**An Anthology of Texts**

**SOME INSIGHTS**

1. The importance of ideas (1)
2. The importance of ideas (2)
3. The dream of a Catholic university

**EDUCATIONAL CONVICTIONS**

4. The meaning of a Christian education
5. The aims of education
6. Teaching is not enough
7. Education must be more than utilitarian
8. Education, the unfolding of the effects of Baptism
9. Education and social responsibility
10. Form Christians who will assume responsibility in society

**The SPIRIT of the COLLÈGE de l'ASSOMPTION**

11. The moral foundation of the Congregation
12. Who ought to be educated?
13. The tradition of Assumption College
14. A spirit that is broad
15. Frankness

**An EDUCATOR at ASSUMPTION**

16. How should we teach?
17. The qualities of an educator
18. Teaching with love
19. The work of professors

**WITNESSES**

20. Relations with the students
21. Discipline at Assumption College, Nîmes
22. The students' social involvement
23. Beyond the official program



01

## The importance of ideas (1)

Letter to Alphonse de Vigniamont, 28 March 1835

I wonder if, when I have the pleasure of seeing you again, you will find that I have changed. I frankly think that a revolution is going on inside me, not from evil to good, but in the sense that I'm seeing things from a different point of view. As I study religion, I discover, in the depths of Catholic dogma, such a great wealth, such a rich vein, a life so powerful that, on the one hand, I do not see how a priest who wants to renew society can find a better way than the truth itself and, on the other hand. I think the only way to strengthen flagging spirits or heat the moral fatigue that everyone laments today is to expose society to the brilliant light that guides all people coming into this world, to warm them all with the rays of the eternal Word.

Also, the more I look at the world from this point of view, the more I am disgusted with politics, which I consider to be a dead end. There is no life there, only death convulsions, powerless attempts to organize, vain efforts, unless Catholic thought penetrates it with charity, justice, and the spirit of Christian liberty, which regardless of what they say is completely suffocated in our day. I have made up my mind, and it is confirmed each day as I read the second psalm, which I urge you to meditate. I am convinced that both the people and the kings are at fault; let them chasten each other. It is clear to me that what the priest must do is work with whatever strength he has to establish the reign of Christ without getting lost in useless arguments. His king is Jesus of Nazareth; his tribunal, Calvary; his flag, the cross. Attach no color to this flag; the cross that Jesus hung upon, the one that appeared to Constantine was neither red nor white, and yet the former saved the world, and the latter conquered it. The most intimate thought of my soul is that the world needs to be penetrated through and through by a Christian idea; otherwise it will fall apart. And the world will not receive this idea but from men who will be taken up with it before all else in order to proclaim it in every form that it might assume. They say the world is evil. No doubt, passion turns it away from what is good. But I believe most of all that the world is ignorant. Therefore, we need to teach it and to do so in words it can understand.

## The importance of ideas (2)

Letter to the Assumptionists in Nîmes, 11 April 1870

My dear brothers,

During the Easter season, you will be enjoying some leisure time. Let me say a few things about that.

1. Remember that the special aim of our Institute is teaching at every level. Cardinal Reisach used to say to a friend of ours that the most powerful effect of the Council would be to revive ecclesiastical studies. That is true, but for it to be successful two things are necessary: men and time. As for time, see whether or not you are losing any. And then see if you are working in view of studies that will be useful. Make no illusions, academic work all over is disastrously mediocre. This is due in large measure to the discredit into which theology has fallen, based as it is on current philosophy. Theology, the queen of the disciplines, has fallen drastically; the other disciplines as well, except for the physical sciences. But even these have lost a sense of their divine origin.

What should you do? Try to restore true wisdom by the demanding and serious study of the disciplines and seek to enlighten the learning that has created things as its object and is the aim of the lower reason, with higher reason, which has wisdom as its aim, i.e., a knowledge of divine things. You will reach this goal in two ways: through intellectual work and through prayer. A good indication that we are not praying well is provided when, if after having prayed, we obtain so few results. The conclusion is that our prayers and our studies are routine and mechanical. If we really apply to both the effort of our intellect and of our heart, we will achieve results that are superior from every point of view.

It is important that you be convinced of this truth, since then as religious you can make your spiritual growth and your intellectual growth advance together.

2. It is crucial that you be convinced of the truth that the world, even in a decadent state, is governed by ideas. After the Council, religious



who are sowers of ideas, provided they be true and fruitful ideas, will be the true renewers of society. You ought therefore also to fill yourself with true ideas and great principles. Where are these to be found if not in the treasury of divine learning, entrusted to the Church, whose mission it is to communicate it to the world? I suffer from the fact that I express this all so badly because what is at stake is the salvation of those who are led astray by false ideas, whose power to mislead is so disturbing to those who love the reign of God and the triumph of Our Lord in the people...

Good-bye, dear Brothers. Yours in Christ, Emmanuel d'Alzon

## The dream of a Catholic university

Letter to Luglien d'Esgrigny, 1 October 1834

...I travelled from Florence to here with two French republicans. Do you think they were wrong when they said: "The only weapon being used today to attack religion is indifference?" "And also ignorance," I added. Indifference and ignorance imply a total lack of faith, and you know how deeply humanity is wounded by both.

De la Mennais writes to me about the state France is in: "There couldn't be less thought about Rome than if it didn't exist. Neither resentment, nor anger, nor even scorn—scorn would at least be something—but instead the most absolute and the coldest indifference." You can eliminate from this sentence what de la Mennais' personal feeling might have added, and it remains terribly true. Do not think I am so discouraged that I have no more hope. But I can say with the prophet: "Is there no balm in Gilead, no physician there? Why has no new skin grown over their wound?" (Jeremiah 8:22). One feeling growing in me is love for my fellow man. I can't see an unbeliever or even a corrupt man without being attracted to him like a doctor to his sick friend. I know, I'm not yet a doctor, and yet I have given it a few tries. I've been successful a few times. And don't think, dear friend, that I'm unaware of the power of hope. But the stronger mine is, the more it is obliged to stretch the limits of its desire.

Humanity in our day sins in two ways: we love too little, and our knowledge is so deficient. Humanity needs to be taught, but first we need to give humanity a heart of flesh, as Scripture says, to replace the one becoming like stone in its chest. On that score, my thoughts are confused. My projects and plans grind to a halt. The heart is the hearth, the center of warmth and of life. Only God can supply these when they are lacking. For that reason I am convinced we will need to suffer great evils before our minds are compelled to return and find their rest in truth. For the moment, political movements engross everyone's thinking. God has to hit very hard for us to seek refuge in a place of rest. Good God! Look at me, telling Providence how to handle the situation. I don't really know what I'm saying by all of this.

Tell me what you think about young people today, what you expect of them, what thoughts they have, if you think they are sincere. These are important questions for me. What do you think of the clergy in Paris? My future depends on my bishop. I'd like to be a priest in the Church of the Holy Trinity. I'd return to France, study a few more years, then work as my superiors ask. For a long time I've been thinking about a Catholic university, which I know would be successful given the approach I'd take...

Adieu, adieu! Be happy and good. Emmanuel

## **The meaning of a Christian education**

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Address to the faculty at Assumption College,  
Nîmes, 1 February 1846

We must steep ourselves thoroughly in Christian thought by the strength, faith and love that derive from a knowledge of God and His Church. Wherever we go, we must spread this Christian thought in the minds and hearts of young people and influence them thoroughly, never getting discouraged by their seeming ignorance and superficiality.

How can we fill our students with this strength, faith and love? How will these things grow in the student? The Christian enters into communication with God, connects himself with God. His soul now becomes like a battery: to be charged and vitalized with what only God can give. In God the Father he finds his strength and in the Son, understanding. And the more truth he discovers, the more attracted he becomes to truth; the more he pursues the truth, the more he loves it. Then the Spirit of God comes to him, takes hold of him, and lifts him up. Without this threefold influence of God, his spiritual life will be incomplete. Without it he will never acquire the perfection of his destiny. So the Christian must allow God to act within him. He must welcome and give free access to this divine life which flows into his soul from the God who is both one and three.

### **We Need Strength**

...This is how God acts and reveals Himself in the world. He creates and restores. We must endeavor to imitate God in His redeeming action, and so we will reveal in ourselves His strength. We must mend the little world inside us, then turn our efforts to the little world around us. God will use us in this work of redemption and wants us to cooperate with Him in a joint effort. So why tremble? Why hesitate? Fortified by God's own strength, placing our own feeble resources under His supreme command, we forge ahead. We communicate to our young people the strength in which they are sadly lacking, but it is strength we now possess, since God has transmitted it to us. We need such strength in order to fight against the multiple obstacles we come across in our students: their obstinacy, evil, and every influence of the power of

darkness. The strength we require is superhuman, but we find it in God, and God will fight on our side. Prayer, perseverance and good example! And thus we conform to our divine model, our Lord Jesus Christ who “began to do and to teach” (Acts 1:1).

### **We Need Understanding**

A powerful means of communicating the power and strength of God lies in the hands of the teacher. It is by teaching, in the classroom, that we make the truth known... And once the truth has become a part of us, once we have well and truly assimilated it, then we need have no fear of whether we will be able to put it across to our listeners. Our mouth speaks from the abundance of our heart. The truth which has taken possession of our hearts will erupt from us. We will find ourselves urging our young people towards God, delivering them from what is false, raising them to the level of truth, transforming them into vessels of truth, convincing them that nothing but truth is real or good. Our love for them will render us ingenious in the conquest of their souls. We will present the truth to them in all its forms and discover hidden in characters that are disordered flammable matter that lacks only a spark to be set afire.

### **With the Love of God**

Christian truth is not only to be systematized or reflected on. It is especially something to love. When the person who searches for truth and longs for it, when he finds it, it becomes his consuming passion. Where will we find this truth, except in God himself, by delving into the very depths of God, by assimilating that true life which is the life of God, who is to be found in the Church? If we ourselves love the truth, we will spare no efforts in teaching our students to love it too. We will fight with all our might against whatever evil influences prey upon their weakness, against whatever evil tendencies lurk in their hearts. We will be ardent in our endeavor to save them and set them free. We will lead them up to the heights of truth. Truth will become their friend and the whole purpose of their lives.

## **The aims of education**

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47<sup>th</sup> Conference to the Religious Sisters  
of the Assumption,  
Nimes, 23 February 1871

### **To form Christ in souls**

Yesterday we finished the second of our talks. Now, we'll treat of a few questions that touch directly on your vocation. First, I will talk about education.

I begin by stating that the goal of education is the formation of Jesus Christ in souls, and the religious who teaches should say like Saint Paul: "My children, for whom I am again in labor until Christ be formed in you!"

How should we go about this:

### **First by faith**

#### ***...which alone shapes the student in the crucible of truth***

For this to happen, you need to draw on the light of faith, instructing in the faith, providing a perspective of faith, wholesome and solid doctrine which is not the kind of Christian sentimentality that can be found in Protestant pietism. What is needed rather is strong and solid doctrine by which, as Montaigne said, the soul is formed. Your task is to shape souls in the fire and the light of truth.

#### ***...which alone allows one to act like Christ in the light***

Jesus Christ must be known. You must preach in a sound and systematic way the mysteries of Creation, which have Jesus Christ as their center, Jesus Christ, in whom all is renewed. There's still something else to be done: you need to help students to act like Jesus Christ, to teach them to model their behavior on that of Jesus Christ.

***...which alone reunites all the powers on earth and harmonizes all learning split apart by the spirit of impiety***

And that is not all. All branches of learning, whether historical, philosophical, scientific or literary, find their first and beautiful unity in Jesus Christ. They remain distinct, but are not separated from each other, no more than our body and our soul are separated from each other. Consequently, in your teaching, I would like you to make every effort to seek unity, in every branch of learning and in the judgments that you lead your students to formulate; show your students that Jesus Christ is the principle behind all things.

**Then, by Hope**

***...which alone fosters the spirit of prayer and detachment from the goods of the earth***

Form students to the virtue of hope, for this is what will teach them to be detached from the things of the earth. The more hope is complete, the greater will the detachment be. It is from this point of view that the vow of poverty is related to the virtue of hope.

As you can imagine, the difference between a disinterested teacher and one concerned about her own interests is that the disinterested teacher, after having given everything then gives herself; this is a true religious. A religious who holds onto nothing at all will have an enormous influence on the students in terms of their Christian formation and will fight against the worst fault of our day: egoism and cupidity. But the students must sense that you are disinterested, that you are entirely free from that little spiritual treasure, so tender, so delicate, which is to say, self-love.

***...which alone inspire detachment from all self-love***

Form your students to be strong and display the same kind of strength yourselves.

***...which alone forms virile characters***

And then you should study the character of our Lord in order to form beautiful characters in your students. The foundation of such a character, as I have already said, is to avoid being “personal”: “Christ did not seek his own personal interest.” (Romans 15:3)

**Finally, by charity*****...which alone communicates the Spirit of Our Lord***

Our Lord is the source of charity. He send the Spirit of Love, which proceeds from the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit flows therefore from our Lord.

***Education is like a continual Pentecost***

From this point of view, education is, if I may put it this way, a continual Pentecost. The Holy Spirit was sent by Our Lord to his Apostles. In an instant, he came to rest on their heads. Likewise for us, he comes to us at the moment of our Baptism, of our Confirmation. But in addition to that there is the work of time. This is done by means of the ministry of the priest, but it is up to the Christian teacher to continue the work. It is up to the teacher to continue this distribution of the Spirit.

***Educate by example***

That is not all. You have an even greater means of action than your teachings. Yes, your classes are wonderful, full of truth, tact and deliberation. You have on your lips everything that is needed to win over souls. But believe me you have something even better than your words, namely, your example. "Words can move, but an example draws the student ahead."



**Teaching is not enough**

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7<sup>th</sup> Letter to the Congregation, 13 July 1874

My dear Brothers:

...Let it be understood from the outset that the students entrusted to our care are not perfect. If they were, why would anyone entrust them to us? To teach them a smattering of Latin, Greek, history or physics? Hired professors who teach for nothing else but money would suffice in that case. The Creator shaped the first human being from a bit of clay. Yes, college students are this unformed mass, unfortunately viscous at times, into which the Christian teacher must, in imitation of Cod, blow “the breath of life” (Gen 2:7). But to transmit this breath, one must have it. What a pity that so many teachers do not have it and are not even aware that they lack it!

...We must know Jesus Christ. As I mentioned elsewhere, we can speak adequately only of what we know well. We discover Jesus Christ through study and through meditation. Without these two means, it is impossible to learn enough about him to speak of him fittingly. Together, study and prayer provide fruitful results. ...Why is it that, as a rule, students love Our Lord so little?

...Is it possible that students do not love Jesus Christ because their teachers love him so little? ...The measure of our love for Jesus Christ should be, and in fact will always be, the measure of our influence on souls in the Church and in school.

...I need not recall the specific virtues which characterize the spirit of Assumption. Since I wrote on the subject elsewhere, I need not come back upon it here. Suffice it to remind you that we should emphasize both for ourselves and for our students a spirit of faith, frankness, sacrifice and initiative. Beyond that, we should allow them a certain freedom in their development and not crush them by trying to force them into a uniform mold.

At any rate, let us return to the three important principles that we must constantly try to inculcate in our students: love of Christ, love of the Blessed Virgin, the guardian of their purity, and love of the Church, that noble cause for which we must set them on fire...

Obviously, there are many topics I have not mentioned about education. I have said nothing about how a teacher should be attentive to what is special in each student, uproot certain vices, identify what is good in view of developing it, and mold character so as to give everyone a certain stamp, while respecting the individuality of each one. Jesus Christ is the epitome of all perfection; the saints, though reflecting the divine model in many ways, possess only certain virtues to an eminent degree. What is true of the saints is true of our students. The saints had to fight against certain innate tendencies and reject certain temptations, acquiring thereby their own special merit. The same holds true in the field of education. We must form Jesus Christ in our students, but according to the raw material at hand: gold, silver, bronze, marble, stone or wood.

...The notion of Christian beauty, studied in its highest form, is obviously a powerful means of education. Once someone falls in love with truth and experiences emotions of a purer order, he becomes more pure himself, is improved, and discovers that he has less taste and drive for lower desires. It would take too long to explain here the relationship between Being, Truth, Good and Beauty as they constitute the substance of God and are revealed in Jesus Christ. Yet, we get a taste in these brief considerations of what is developed at great length in a literature that is wholesome, invigorating, superior, and which can serve as a precious vehicle for the kind of education we would like to provide. I beg you, my dear brothers, to think of teaching in these terms; you will be surprised by the results.

07

**Education must be more than utilitarian**

*Revue de l'Enseignement chrétien*, vol. 1 (new series),  
May 1871, pp. 60-61

...In the past the French spirit was a military and knightly spirit. We have replaced that with a spirit that is utilitarian, mercenary, egoistic, and materialist. Formerly our spirit rested on dedication, and dedication itself on the strong convictions of faith and everlasting hope. We knew how to sacrifice ourselves, to suffer, to die even with joy, because we could count on a better world. In this regard, where are our spirits and especially our hearts to be found now? With few exceptions, like in small groups still made up of believers or in a few organizations made up of members who will risk anything because their only hope is in anarchy, could France be in a greater state of collapse? Whom can we call the really honest people, especially in the big cities? All of them have been paralyzed by personal interest; vital inspiration has been lacking.

The harsh lesson that divine Providence has inflicted upon France should make us understand that education is not only a way to acquire certain skills necessary for someone preparing for a career; we need to give teaching a higher goal, moral formation based on firm principles, helped by those great truths that rest on religious truth, by which the great truths can ennoble us by teaching us about our relationship with God and everyone like us under the watchful eye of God. In the name of tolerance, we have tragically downgraded the sublime mission of teaching. With the pretext of making allowances for a variety of beliefs, all beliefs have been set aside. Such a singular system, which in the name of respect for individual convictions, produces indifference and scorn for all convictions!

Well, if there is one clear fact today, it is the great hatred against Rome that is due especially to the fact that Rome never colluded with these revolutionary compromises, of the tolerant or liberal sort. Rome has always proclaimed the rights of truth, and she has not been forgiven for that.

When you understand the chasm into which the tolerance and liberalism of the University have plunged us, you would be blind if you refused to see the need for a radical reform that society needs in its educational system. The first act of that reform will be the destruction of the University.

We should not delude ourselves; Catholics must choose. A war unto death is declared between the Church and the University. I could even say between the University and France. Do we want the Catholic Church? Then eliminate the University. Allow it to continue, and soon France, without conviction, without faith, without a truth with which to oppose the appetites of the Commune understood in the most frightening but most logical sense of the word, will capsize in the storm. Therefore, radical educational reform in France by the destruction of the University and its teaching of skepticism!



## **Education, the unfolding of the effects of Baptism**

Conference to the Religious Sisters of the Assumption,  
6 March 1871

When God created man, he made him in his image and likeness. Man destroyed this image by his sin. Our Lord came to reform this adulterated image, and not only to give it its first beauty, but to make it still more perfect. This first effect comes about principally through baptism. It grows thanks to the work of the priest and the religious. The religious is the helper of the priest in this work of restoration, imparting to souls the image of the Holy Trinity...

Therefore, what must you do? You must mark souls with the power of the Father, by developing in your students their capacity to be; you have to make them more living. "I have come to give life and to give it in abundance." (John 10:10) ...

You must mark souls with the image of the Son through intelligence... It is easy to repeat to the students a few words of devotion, but if your goal is to go more deeply, to find Jesus Christ everywhere, the author and fulfillment of all things, to show that Jesus Christ is at the heart of every question, the center of everything and the one to whom we must direct all things, that requires a good deal of work, of prayer, of teaching...

What can I say, by way of conclusion, regarding the mark of love of the Holy Spirit? "The charity of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us." (Romans 5:5) We must impart this love of God, and with it mark the souls of our students...

In addition to communion by which man is transformed into Jesus Christ, there is the great and wonderful work of education by which we reform the being of our students and in a sense come to the aid of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, by communicating the power of life by the Father, intelligence by the Son and love by the Holy Spirit.

**Education and social responsibility**

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6<sup>th</sup> Letter to the Congregation, 2 July 1874

My dear Brothers:

...Allow me to suggest a few guidelines that will always make it possible, if not easy, for you to find your way in the labyrinth of so many problems which, to the best minds, seem insoluble.

1. God is the sovereign Lord of all things: "The Lords are the earth and its fullness, the world and those who dwelt in it" (Ps 24:1). The world and its inhabitants belong to him. The best thing these inhabitants can do is submit to his eternal Majesty. If people started from that principle to regulate their behavior, their social relationships, and their politics, how many evils would be avoided! Since the Revolution is essentially a radical denial of the rights of God, does it not constitute a perpetual revolt of man against God, a revolt over which God, after a patient wait, will ultimately triumph? From this we must conclude (1) that the Revolution is committing a crime when it denies the rights of God, (2) that we have a strict obligation to defend these rights when they are attacked...

2. ...God became man, first miracle; the God-made-man died on the cross to save the human race, second miracle; this God-made-man was established by his Father as master of all nations, third miracle; the God-made-man ordained all things as he pleased, calling some men into his light and leaving others in darkness, fourth miracle; this same God-made-man charged certain chosen servants to defend or extend his rule throughout the world and to the ends of the earth, fifth miracle. What is most surprising, however, is that these miracles, by dint of striking our eyes with their brightness, no longer surprise them.

...If Jesus Christ governs the world, there is a very simple policy that should be followed: that of Christ himself. This policy asserts itself especially and unimpeachably in the society he founded and to which must rally those who are more particularly his own. I am speaking of the policy of the Church... And the goals of this policy, like those of

the Church, are twofold: (1) to preach the truth, and (2) to teach the moral law which comes from divine truth and which is none other than the law of God...

Today's society does not understand the matter in this way and, like Pilate, does not want the truth to serve as its bedrock. Ever since society ceased to rest on this doctrinal foundation, we can see from the resulting turmoil what further troubles are to be feared. Our own policy is, above all, to defend the social truth of which the Church is the sole depository. Accordingly, it is our strict duty to re-introduce the notion of truth within a society that wants no part of it.

But no less important is the defense of the law of God. It has been repudiated by human reason as an odious yoke to be broken. We must defend all that is connected with the divine law, because any human law that contradicts this superior law is evil in itself, pernicious and subversive; it leads nations to their death. If we could only establish ourselves as the relentless defenders of God's law, what evils would we not ward off! How imminent and assured would be the healing of sick nations!...

**Form Christians who will assume  
responsibilities in society**

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1846. Siméon Vailhé,  
*Vie du P. Emmanuel d'Alzon*, vol. 1, p. 474

Our goal is not to educate men for the cloister, but to prepare them to live in the world, who act in a way to make others love and respect their faith, who are deeply attached to the cause of God... In this sense, we preach piety as forcefully as we can to our students. But, I repeat, our goal is not to make them seminarians. Why then introduce them to habits, holy in themselves, that are not suited to the path that one day they will be called upon to follow? ... We know that this institution, if it is to develop in fidelity to the aims of its founders, is open to young people destined to pursue all of the careers that the world might offer. It's in this spirit that we shape the piety of our students.



**The moral foundation of the Congregation**

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Letter to Mère Marie-Eugénie de Jésus, 16 August 1844

“The moral foundation that I would like to give to a new Congregation would be the following:

- 1) The acceptance of everything that is catholic
- 2) Frankness
- 3) Freedom

I know of nothing that can do away with self-centeredness and self-love that the acceptance of everything that is truly outside of oneself; I know of nothing that wins people over today like frankness; and I know nothing stronger to fight against the actual enemies of the Church like freedom.”

**Who ought to be educated?***Aspects de pédagogie chrétienne*

To this question, we must respond: a restive mass of students of all ages and characters and of all abilities, on whom shines, with the saddest brilliance, the mark of original sin. I admit that in many baptism has had made some real impact, but it would be more than foolish to think that on those sweet faces, in those clear eyes and apparently innocent manners, a kind of evil or more precisely a tendency to evil is not often hidden.

It's sad to say, but that is the case. It's useless to complain or twiddle your thumbs. Instead, get to work and clear away the thorns from the field.

Begin by grouping the students according to their age. A part of the work will be done: the youngest, the middle group, the older students.

The youngest are the most ingenuous and have a kind of naïve faith. They also have hidden faults, depending on their first, family education. They are less in control of themselves. They can be guided by the supernatural thought provided by their first Holy communion, as long as their parents don't get in the way and lead them astray.

The middle group is at a critical and awkward stage. This is generally when they suffer a crisis of temperament. You need to be very vigilant, watch them carefully, their conversations, their readings, their games, their habits. No doubt you should avoid concluding too quickly that they are simply beyond the pale, suffering a violent, interior turmoil that a young teacher should avoid interfering with, but that he should instead monitor carefully in view of making a lucid report to his Superiors.

Finally, the oldest need to be dealt with on their own. They are no longer children, but they are not yet adults. You need to help them enter into life. They need the guidance of those in authority. They should be monitored, but most of all they need to feel your confidence. Most of all, loyalty touches them, and perhaps this is the best way to reach them.

## **The tradition of Assumption College**

*Aspects de pédagogie chrétienne, pages 45 et 137*

You're aware that people say, to blame or to praise, that Assumption is an institution *sui generis*. We need to be aware of this trait and preserve it as much as we can.

You're also aware what Assumption is: Catholic before all else, and that its professors are the instruments of Catholic truth.

Assumption's tradition is therefore the Catholic tradition, a kind of outgrowth of Catholicism. Therefore, we need to be simply and completely catholic, apostolic and Roman; nothing else. Today there are all kinds of Catholics: devotional Catholics, free-thinking Catholics, half-Catholics. Avoid all of those accommodations; attach yourselves to the catholic, apostolic and Roman Church. That is the foundation of teaching at Assumption...

How else might we define the spirit of Assumption?

It's easier to sense it than to define it. It's what makes an institution *sui generis*; it's what makes it this institution and not another.

People note that Assumption has certain special characteristics: a sense of duty, loyalty and frankness, a readiness to sacrifice and to disinterestedness, a supernatural spirit. These and other things are what are readily noticeable, without being able to be mathematically precise, just as you might know the characteristics of a face without being able to measure them with a compass.

And yet, formation to this general spirit is what's most important because, thanks to this spirit, our students constitute a body, are united, love and support each other, and as they grow pursue a common goal with more and more intelligence.

**A spirit that is broad**

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Address to the students at Nîmes,  
*Ecrits spirituels*, pages 1390-1391

A broad spirit seeks to see things as they are in themselves; a narrow spirit sees things in their relationship to itself... The broad spirit devotes itself to a cause; the narrow spirit is devoted to itself in whatever cause.

A broad spirit makes an effort to see things from above, whereas a narrow spirit focuses on mole hills and is quite content to find refuse in a hole. The main goal of a narrow spirit is to avoid every commitment, calling that prudence.

Prudence is a virtue that helps to govern things and people for the common good. The prudence of the narrow spirit is concerned only about itself and its own things...

An “esprit de corps” is a beautiful thing... But if it’s narrow, you can expect to see this narrowness reflected in the members that make up the body. A narrow spirit can do stupid things, but imagine how many stupid things a body infected with this spirit would do? ...Happy are those whose spirit is broad and who are blessed with a beautiful character! Pray that those whose spirit is narrow be not also mean-spirited, unaware of the evil that they are doing.

## Frankness

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Among the bad ideas given to us by the Revolutions, there is one excellent principle to guide our actions, namely, frankness.

This is a great need of the world today in our relations with each other. If today we can say that we are sincere, with no hidden agendas, then we have won the esteem and confidence of others, not to say their sympathy and their approval. This kind of frankness is particularly appropriate for a Catholic. It is his character, his duty. Thanks be to God that we have been given the opportunity to recapture this frankness and this liberty. Today, a Christian can manifest his faith publically, without being suspected of serving his own interests or promoting himself, a suspicion perhaps justified when religion was protected by the power of the State. Today, we are not protected at all. On the contrary, we have to protect our faith and insist that it be respected. The duty to show publically that we are Christian is serious. The situation today makes this appropriate. We should be frankly and openly Catholic.

15 November 1846 – *Ecrits spirituels*, page 1296

Frankness and an open heart ought to be characteristics of our project and one of the most powerful weapons to be used. I will preach this kind of frankness and openness in all my reports to the brothers, but in such a way that I take great care to see what should be said in public and what should be said more in private. What would be beneficial to some could be harmful to others.

Rule of life, December 1845 – *Ecrits spirituels*, page 785

...I would simply like to remind you that we should make every effort and encourage our students in the same way to have a great spirit of faith, of frankness, of sacrifice and of initiative. As for the rest, allow among the students a certain freedom to grow and avoid trying to fit them all into the same mold. This, I think, is absolutely indispensable.

The spirit of the Assumption – *Ecrits spirituels*, page 242

From faith flows a love of truth, you might even say the worship of truth. One of the ways to honor living reality is to be frank, and this virtue will be one of our distinctive traits.

To the Adorers of the Blessed Sacrament, 10 May 1859 – *Ecrits spirituels*, page 1250

## How should we teach?

### 19th Meditation

We must teach with respect. Woe to a teacher whose teaching is nothing more than bad entertainment. This doesn't mean excluding a note of enthusiasm or a spark of humor that will endear students to us... We shouldn't impose on them some farfetched ideas on the pretext that they're mysteries. It's enough to require faith where the Church demands it. Go as far as the Church, but where the Church does not wish to impose a burden, we must not only permit but encourage individual liberty. Such liberty in non-essentials disposes us to obey all the more promptly when it comes to essentials... Instead of trying to force a person to believe, why not indicate the various options the Church would be prepared to admit in given circumstances?...

We must teach with conviction. The teacher who his students sense is unconvinced is the worst of all teachers... For them, teaching is just a job. They are being paid to say certain things whether or not they are true. They are mercenaries, and one senses it. Alas, you cannot deceive young people. It's as if they have an unerring sixth sense that lets them know them whether they are sitting in the presence of a believer or a cynic...

How different are those individuals whose deep convictions burst forth and are revealed in their every word, in their every gesture, in their very appearance, in their whole life! How you can see them carefully tending what has been entrusted to them. It is the greatest of treasures, and they know it, and their students become as convinced of it as they are...

We must teach with love... Allow me to emphasize that there is nothing in the whole of creation so worthy of our admiration and love as divine perfection and its manifestation in God's dealings with His creatures. What and who is so admirable as to compare with our God, our creator, our redeemer, our sanctifier? ...We must love truth. We must love those to whom we communicate the truth. And we must love the various means whereby truth is communicated. When our hearts are aflame with this fire of love, our students will feel it, and they will come to catch fire as well.

## **The qualities of an educator**

*Aspects de pédagogie chrétienne, pp. 130 to 135*

It's not enough to teach. We also need to educate, and education is a task considerably more difficult than simply teaching.

*What are the qualities of a good educator?*

A Christian professor who is worthy of that name should have all the virtues and teach them more by example than by words. That being said, I would insist on four of these virtues:

*1) He must be patient*

To be an educator and not to expect disappointments is the deepest sort of illusion. "O faithless and perverse generation, how long will I be with you?" (Matthew 17:17), cried our Lord, the teacher of all teachers. Yes, you need patience and a lot of it. The words of Saint James are especially applicable to education: "Let your patience be perfect, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." (James 1:4) It's only after having waited a long time that the gardener begins to see the seed growing in the flower beds. They are bound to grow, and students are the same. At times, they are slow in growing, and at times it is precisely these who give the most surprising results...

*2) He must be intelligent*

The intelligent professor is exposed to all the problems. No one judges his teachers like the students. For him, the teacher is the ongoing object of a not very benevolent scrutiny, and if he is lacking in intelligence he can expect all kinds of failure. There is only one remedy: overflowing holiness; that will elicit admiration...

I'm not saying that you need to be a genius... You need a man who is tactful with a good deal of common sense, which disarms the irritation of the students by its coolness...

Often silence is the most powerful weapon of the teacher...

Directors should back up the teachers, but unfortunately by their sensitivity they can be difficult to support. What's the remedy? In the intelligence in which they are lacking. In that case, there is no other



remedy than to replace them, without divulging all of this to the students who are complaining.

3) *He must be conscientious*

The main point is the formation of the students' consciences, and the teacher who fails from the point of view of conscience and Christian honor does an enormous amount of damage to these young people... In almost forty years, I have seen only one hypocritical professor about whom the students failed in their judgment...

4) *He must be persevering*

I said that in the best schools, there is something like a permanent struggle between teachers and students. If the teacher is persevering, without anger and in full possession of himself, who can say what victories he will achieve?

The student can, in general, be healed, as long as you know how to deal with him appropriately. It all consists in a persevering courage.

This is what young professors often lack...

They must conclude that having failed, they need to do better, and it's from this point of view that experience is for them an invaluable gift. But experience comes late and is often the result of failed attempts.

5) *He must be inspired with true zeal*

The task is hard, but what good results might we not expect! He can find this zeal in his love for our Lord and for souls. He should love his students the way the Lord himself loves them...

This is the result of patient, intelligence, conscientious, and persevering zeal of a Christian professor.

## Teaching with love

*Aspects de pédagogie chrétienne, pages 135-136*

At our last gathering I spoke about the faith and the knowledge a Christian teacher must possess. I had no time for a third consideration, that of love. Love is very important for us: the love of learning; the love of those whom we teach; and last but not least, the love of God, in whose name we teach. These are the three forms our love must take.

### 1) The Love of learning

Let me distinguish between “fundamental” knowledge and “instrumental” knowledge. There is really only one kind of fundamental knowledge, and that is religious knowledge, the knowledge of God. Saint Thomas Aquinas declares that all other branches of knowledge must be subject to theology. He likens theology to the parable of the strong woman in the Gospel, who “calls her handmaids and sends them to the citadel.” Is it not a privilege for the Christian teacher to become the instrument of one of the branches of knowledge that serve divine wisdom and truth? And does he not deprive his words of all their force and energy if he utters them without the love of what he is teaching? And this love of knowledge entails, as I have told you time and time again, much serious preparation. For if we love the knowledge it is our task to impart, we will work hard to present it in its most attractive light...

### 2) The Love of Students

To this love of what we teach, we must add the love of those whom we teach. The human soul was created “to the image and likeness of God” (Gen 1:27). So how can we possibly fail to love fellow human-beings? It’s beyond my comprehension! So every teacher (whatever he is teaching) can, within the two hours of his lecture, pronounce at least one word of faith, one word that can do some good... So whatever branch of knowledge you teach, you can always, by means of your teaching, inculcate a greater knowledge of God. A certain Canon once remarked to the Bishop of Digne: “The more I study, the more astonished I become that God has chosen to share with us the joys and delights of learning, so much so that they give us a foretaste of the

beatific vision.” ...So the teacher of mathematics and the philosophy professor can and ought to arrive at a similar conclusion in their teaching.

Likewise the Greek professor. Greek is useful in allowing us to read the decrees of many a Council and to savor the exquisite beauty of many a Father of the Church. The Latin teacher still more so. As for the professor of Hebrew, thanks to him we can study the Bible in the original.

### 3) The Love of God

And above all, the Christian teacher must love the God of all truth, the truth for which our students long. Do you know why so many Christian teachers, so many Catholic teachers, succeed in conveying so little truth to the younger generation? Why their instruction is so often no more than so much “cats soup”, if you will pardon the expression? It’s because they themselves are not “interior” men, men of prayer... We do not give ourselves sufficiently to meditation on the Word of God; this is why we succeed so badly in making it enter into the hearts of our pupils, by way of their ears. As Saint Paul puts it: “Faith comes through hearing” (Rom 10:17), and he adds, “and hearing comes through the word of Christ.” So we can create faith in the souls of our students, by teaching them, and this creation sets them free from both ignorance and sin. We enlighten them and set them ablaze with the love of God... Teaching is, indeed, a creation. It gives human beings a new birth by immersing them into the riches of everlasting truth. The Christian teacher imitates God the Father: “He spoke, and it was made.” Teaching is also redemption, since thereby we free souls from the double yoke of ignorance and sin, In this we are imitating God the Son: “He commanded, and it was accomplished.” Your instruction illuminates the souls of men, warms them, and sets them on fire. And in this you are imitating God the Holy Spirit. You are thus the imitators and instruments of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. What you can imitate in yourselves and reproduce in others is nothing less than the Blessed Trinity, more wonderful, more beautiful and more glorious than anything in the world!...

## The work of professors

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“When you want to get others to work, you have to give the example and work yourself. It happens too often that we say to a student: you’re lazy. But then we don’t have the courage we need to correct their papers and homework. I don’t know, friends, up to what point a conscientious teacher can give class without having prepared. You have a duty in conscience, and when Mr. Durand, with his experience and talent, admits that he never goes to class without having prepared for at least three quarters of an hour or a full hour, it seems that young teachers and others should give at least that much time to preparation.

8 October 1867 – *Ecrits spirituels*, p. 1381

To try to give a class without preparation is to want to do the impossible. All you’ll produce, how should I put it, is broth for the cats. The fact is we are not blessed with infused knowledge; you need to acquire the knowledge, and our Lord gives us the two categories in these words: *vetera et nova*. We need to impart ancient as well as new things.

What do we mean by “*nova*”? These are the latest developments in learning. If you teach the way they did at the time of Louis XIV, you’ll hardly be up to date, that’s clear. But to give the “charm” of what is new to your teaching, you’ll have to make a constant effort... If a religious wants to teach seriously, she’ll have to keep up with a quantity of ideas in order to convey the *nova*.

...A religious who is a teacher also needs the gift of invention and must deepen her knowledge of the subject in order to discover what is new... A little seed of originality would be a good thing too. Yes, an excellent thing!

Now, let’s see where you can find ancient things, the “*vetera*”. First, in the tradition. The building you hope to construct needs a foundation, something solid and permanent. We follow each other in a Congregation; others come after us. It’s important that you seriously establish a tradition. You’re aware that people say, to blame or to

praise, that Assumption is an institution *sui generis*. We need to be aware of this trait and preserve it as much as we can. You're also aware what Assumption is: Catholic before all else.... Today there are all kinds of Catholics: devotional Catholics, free-thinking Catholics, half-Catholics. Avoid all of those accommodations; attach yourselves to the catholic, apostolic and Roman Church. That is the foundation of teaching at Assumption.

Conference to the Religious Sisters of the Assumption, *Cahiers d'Alzon*, IV, pages 42-45

## Relations with the students

*Sketches of Father d'Alzon*

### **Canon Galeran** (*former student*)

This is what our Father and Teacher was in the habit of saying:

“The innocent student is the temple of the Holy Spirit; respect him like a tabernacle. Pray often to the guardian angels; you share “*ex officio*” in their solicitude for these young people.

May your students see in you something more than an everyday school-teacher.

Have a true and supernatural understanding of your vocation. Be convinced that education and that caring for and watching over students is not a ministry below that of the priest, since it is the ministry of the angels themselves.

See in your students people who have been marked by the blood of Jesus Christ. Think of what Joseph must have felt vis-à-vis the child Jesus.

Do not discourage them by untimely reproaches and avoid causing them to lose a sense of their own dignity.

If we often treat a student with contempt, it will begin to have an impact on him. He will start thinking that his reputation is lost. He will become stubborn and protect himself against all counsel; things will go from bad to worse. Be very careful.

When the student is young, he will allow himself to be shaped like wax. These first impressions will solidify and become permanent. Consequently, see how tactful and wise a good teacher must be in his teaching.

Be watchful over yourself. The students see clearly and quickly discover your weak side and your faults. Be yourself, avoid playing a role. Those who play roles are ridiculous and detestable.

Always be even-tempered. Nothing causes a teacher to fail like strange moods or emotions that are not contained.

Above all, respect the student! Ancient writers used to say: “*maxima parvulis debetur reverentia.*” These ancients were pagans. Should we not rise to a higher level and see the souls that God has given to our care as people who are dear to Him like his most precious jewels?

Avoid rigidity, as well as excessive familiarity, playing favorites and particular affections.”

**Discipline at Assumption College, Nîmes**

Address at Commencement, 31 July 1875

**Fr. Charles Laurent, a.a.**

“The discipline that we practice requires more than a day or a year to produce good results. It is rarely a priori; it avoids imposing ready-made molds, applied to everyone without a necessary variety in style. Though guided in advance as far as our principles go, that is not the case for our discipline in practice...

Our graduates, from 1868 to 1875, were models of good spirit, of good habits, and of behavior. An important result which honors them and which, at the same time, justifies our saying that our discipline is effective since it is producing, every year, such fine results.”



## **The students' social involvement**

Letter of Fr. Vincent de Paul Bailly to his sister

### **Fr. Vincent de Paul Bailly, a.a.**

“When I came to Assumption, I found the poor people of Saint Vincent de Paul... I became vice-president of a small organization like that of “la Persévérance,” except that it was much bigger, counting more than 60 members. We never gather together this whole family; that would be unmanageable. But we choose around 20 members that we call head-visitors and who alone take part in the weekly meeting of people that we call the Committee. The major source of revenue is the store. Those who work there buy in town at the lowest possible price all kinds of things, at times on order, and resell them at the house at a higher price, where good management has enabled us to capture the market.

Fr. d’Alzon has purchased for the students, fifteen minutes from Assumption, an enormous property. Every Sunday we gather together more than a hundred apprentices from the city. We’ve organized them in groups, each with a leader, and each of the leaders distributes toys to his group. We have pins for bowling, balls, hoops, etc. We begin by playing, then we serve a sumptuous snack made up of leftovers from the school and of desserts contributed by the students when baskets for the poor are passed around. That is followed by study and a class, and finally the Conference of Saint Vincent de Paul. We distribute books and clothing as well. In the morning, we draw a curtain in the seniors’ study hall to reveal an altar, a small chapel, where a priest celebrates Mass every Sunday... And so more than a hundred children are saved from street life by the good services provided by Assumption.”

**Beyond the official program***Sketches of Father d'Alzon*

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**Canon Galeran** (*former student*)

“During the school year of 1848-1849, Father d’Alzon decided to do a course on Church history, every Thursday at 11 o’clock, for the students of the first division. Those who were lucky enough to attend always regretted that so many important responsibilities kept such a distinguished and interesting professor, whose vast learning astounded them, from continuing the course beyond just a few months. One thing that all of us nonetheless gained from this: we learned the best way to study history, by going beyond the details to a view of the whole, to a general understanding of the action of God, who holds in His hands the source of all human events, never abandoning his supreme royalty, always remaining master while respecting in man living in time the freedom that He has given him.”



