



ASSUMPTIONISTS IN PARISHES

Some Guidelines



PREFACE

In the history of the Congregation, little has been said about the work of Assumptionists in parishes. Some of what has been said has not been very helpful. The absence of any substantial reflection on parochial ministry in the Congregation is especially unfortunate now when so many religious are engaged in this mission. In one sense, the Congregation has not taken this work seriously. But in another sense, it should be said that the Congregation has not invested more, in terms of man-power, in any other work.

I think we are making some important advances in terms of our thinking in this regard. This handbook, prepared over many months by a group of religious working in parishes, who took into account the reflections of others involved in other apostolates as well, has succeeded in going beyond a simple justification of an Assumptionist presence in parishes and has grappled with the question of how we can live as Assumptionist religious and do a genuinely Assumptionist work in parishes today. We can hope that a renewed focus on Father d'Alzon during the 2010 bicentenary celebration of his birth will further enrich this reflection.

My recent letter on the priesthood of religious (*A Prophetic Power – Religious Apostolic Vocation and Priestly Ministry*, October 2008) dealt with prophetic and missionary nature of religious life in general and of religious priesthood in particular. Given the needs of the Church today, religious do well to respond to the call to serve in parishes, but if I am right they should do so as religious, not only with respect for their commitment as men living the vowed life in community, but also with a special missionary focus. This is the particular gift they can bring to the local Church. To do differently might still

be a valid contribution to the Church, but it is the contribution that the diocesan clergy is called to make.

This handbook is an attempt to animate our brothers working in this important Church ministry. It is certainly not the last word on the subject, but along with my recent letter it provides some important orientations for the future in an area in which we will continue to be invested in an important way. It is my hope and that of the authors of this work that in every parish community, Assumptionist religious and lay people will reflect together on this question, remaining open to the direction in which the Spirit may be moving us in the years ahead. This kind of effort is particularly appropriate for us now in the context of the General Chapter to be held in 2011.

In your name and in my own, I would like to thank Father Emmanuel Kahindo Kihugho, who piloted this project from the beginning, and to the brothers with whom he collaborated: Fathers Guy Clerc, Luis Ramón Rendón, Protais Kabila, and Daniel Tedeschi. May so much good work bear fruit for the Kingdom.

Richard E. Lamoureux, a.a.,
Superior General

Rome, 25 October 2009
Mission Sunday

INTRODUCTION

History of parish ministry at the Assumption

1. Our spirituality and apostolate find their roots and strength in the Gospel, the work and example of our father Saint Augustine, and our founder Fr. Emmanuel D'ALZON.
2. Augustine dreamt of a community life that was fraternal, centered on God in prayer, passionate in its search for wisdom, meditating the Holy Scriptures day and night. This dream became a reality after several trials of community life before and after his baptism at age 33. One day he was taken by surprise, in the course of a trip to Hippo, as the people of God acclaimed him to become their bishop. In spite of himself, being compelled and forced, he accepted this heavy task through love of the Church. However, he organized everything so that he could continue living the common life with other priests until his death.

As a diocesan priest, Emmanuel d'Alzon was very involved in the local Church of his diocese of Nîmes, which he served as Vicar General for most of his life. However, his vision was as large and universal as the Church. As Fr. Richard Lamoureux notes, his goal was the renewal of the Church (and not only the diocese of Nîmes) and the transformation of society (well beyond the limits of France). Impelled by this vision, Emmanuel d'Alzon felt called to religious life and founded the Congregation to reach this goal. While remaining Vicar General, he moved to Assumption College in Nîmes and pursued his "world-wide" campaign with his brothers through several works and foundations. Among all of these foundations, there is only one parish (at Alès), where the Assumptionists led a "life of diocesan

missionaries: as coordinators of apostolic projects for the whole region, and especially with the youth¹. With a knowledge of the diocesan realities and religious life, he appreciated their difference and underlined the importance of respecting the distinction between these two vocations².

3. It was especially with the Assumptionist General Chapter of 1906 that parish ministry became one of the strategies by which Assumptionists hoped to implement Father Emmanuel d'Alzon's vision.

From that moment on, this apostolic orientation in the service of local Churches is well confirmed through the involvement of many Assumptionists in parishes³:

- old parishes and more recent ones founded by Assumptionists,
- parishes or parochial districts entrusted by different Bishops,
- old parishes with an entirely new membership,
- parishes linked to a shrine, a school, a medical center, a house of formation,
- country and city parishes,
- Assumptionists sent as curates or "priests *in solidum*" as part of a diocesan team or religious priests and brothers working full or part time...

4. The decision by the Chapter of 1906 relative to parishes and the local church could be seen as abandoning the broad apostolic vision of Father d'Alzon and his concern of not confusing the work of religious with that of the diocesan clergy. Nevertheless, "the creative fidelity" to which we are called by Vita Consecrata helps us to understand the

¹ Fr. Richard Lamoureux, *A Prophetic Power: Religious apostolic vocation and priestly ministry*, Rome, October, 2008, p. 11.

² See Appendix I, the two letters of Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon to Mother Marie-Eugénie, 07 and 10-07-1853.

³ In 2008-2009, some 80% of the religious are involved in a parish apostolate.

tension that existed between these two orientations that seemed apparently contradictory but also helps us to see how the decision of the Chapter can be a faithful and creative answer to the intuition of the founder: “creative”, in the sense that it pushed the Congregation into an apostolic field that the founder had not foreseen; “faithful” in the sense that Father d'Alzon was open to the needs of the Church.

The involvement of Assumptionists in parishes is therefore part of their life; but at the same time it raises two questions:

- what justifies this parish involvement and give it a solid foundation?
- how does the Assumption stamp this parish involvement with the gift entrusted to its care, namely the Assumptionist charism?

Taking into account these two questions, the present document seeks to instruct and orient Assumptionist religious working at the Church's mission in parishes.



Sanctuary of Lourdes at Santos Lugares (Buenos Aires)

I. ASSUMPTIONISTS IN PARISH MINISTRY: THE REASONS FOR THIS OPTION

“Our spiritual life, our very religious substance, our reason for being Augustinians of the Assumption is found in our motto: ADVENIAT REGNUM TUUM. The coming of the kingdom of God in our hearts [and] in the world ... what is more simple! What is more vulgar, if I daresay, than this form of loving God... If, to this main love, you add the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Holy Virgin His Mother and the Church His spouse, you will know under its most succinct expression the spirit of the Assumption.”⁴

5. Our motto “ADVENIAT REGNUM TUUM” in ourselves and around us is the basis of our apostolic involvement in the world, *“this world that God loved so much that he sent his only-begotten Son... not to condemn the world, but that through Him the world be saved”* (John 3:16-17).

6. At the start of this 21st century, in the world in which we live, we are aware of rapid evolutions, deep changes that shape the ways of thinking and behaviors of everyone: children, adolescents, and adults⁵. These changes have both positive and negative aspects. Among others, they include:
 - the profound transformation of the structure of the family,
 - the increased importance given to the person and to freedom,
 - the insistence on justice and human rights,

⁴ Emmanuel d’Alzon, “Closing Address to the General Chapter”, 1868, in *Foundational Documents*, p. 78.

⁵ See Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, #40-#45.

- ethical questions regarding the beginning and the end of life,
 - technological advances that facilitate communication,
 - globalization and international solidarity,
 - the growing wealth of some and the increased poverty of others,
 - the spread of Islam in all its forms,
 - the dechristianisation of our societies and secularism,
 - the multiplication of sects and evangelical groups,
 - the continued strength of popular religiosity and devotion to regional saints, the popularity of pilgrimages, of shrines and chapels,
 - a decrease in vocations to religious life as well as priestly life.
7. Whether they be universal or proper to each country, these changes represent challenges and call for a response on our part. In order to respond, Assumptionists are guided by the Word of God and by the Church's mission in the world:
- To proclaim the Kingdom of God and Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Savior of the world,
 - To celebrate the sacraments and liturgical life
 - To serve in charity and promote human life.
8. This mission was conferred by the Father to his Son; Luke describes its program in the following terms:

The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favor. He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the assistant and sat down. And all eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to speak to them, "This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen" (Luke 4:18-22).

For His part, the Son entrusts this mission to the Church with these words: *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time”* (Mt. 45:18-20).

9. As the Vatican Council reminds us, in the spirit of Saint Paul, this mission is not only reserved to the pastors; it is the work of all those who are baptized⁶.
10. The parish, as a community of believers who witness to Christ in the world, is one of the places where this fundamental reality of the Church, the Body of Christ, takes flesh and becomes visible in the midst of the world⁷, oftentimes looking and sounding differently according to the cultures and traditions proper to each country: “Parish community”, “Christian community”, “Community made up of communities”, Family of God”, Family of families”, “People of God”...
11. In this way, being faithful to the broad apostolic vision of our Founder, our involvement in parishes should be seen as part of this mission of the Church, received from Christ, that is to say “to assemble all women and men into the People of God: by proclaiming “the Kingdom of God in us and around us”⁸, the Kingdom of prophets priests and kings. However, faithful to the intuition of the founder, the Assumptionists will always have, even in a parish, a broad heart and eyes open to the works of evangelization that are

⁶ *Apostolicam actuositatem*; *Lumen Gentium*, #30-#38; *Christifideles Laici*, #27.

⁷ I Corinthians 12:4-29; *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, #42; *Christifideles Laici*, #26.

⁸ *Rule of Life*, #1 & # 13.

often overlooked or unusual in the local church⁹, for example:

- working with young people,
- apostolates that favor dialogue with other Christians and other religions,
- missionary apostolates or the evangelization of those who are far from the parish community or do not know Jesus-Christ,
- a mission in a difficult social context (for example, among immigrants. “squatters” or street children)...¹⁰

⁹ Cf. *Vita Consecrata*, 78.

¹⁰ Fr. Richard Lamoureux, *A Prophetic Power*, op.cit, p. 16.

II. THE ASSUMPTIONIST WAY OF BEING IN A PARISH

Assumptionists. We are religious living in an apostolic community. Faithful to our founder, Father Emmanuel d'Alzon, we commit ourselves above all to work for the coming of the Kingdom of God in us and around us¹¹.

1. Community Life

12. An Assumptionist parish is entrusted to the Assumptionists, among whom one confrere is designated as pastor, as in every parish and according to Canon Law, by the bishop upon the proposal of the Provincial. He is a member of an Assumptionist religious community, which gathers together and lives in the spirit of the first Christian communities (Acts 2:42-47) and according to our Rule of life, #1 to #12.
13. Also,
 - a) The community is under the responsibility of a local Superior, whether he is pastor or not.
 - b) The local Chapter and community meetings continue to be of the greatest importance:
 - to organize and evaluate community life,
 - to determine common prayer times (Office, eucharistic celebrations, retreats,...), table fellowship, leisure times,
 - to foresee meetings focused on the Word of God, on texts proper to the Assumption, on the life of faith, prayer, the apostolate, the sharing of goods,

¹¹ Rule of Life, # 1.

- to encourage continuing formation and a well-balanced life for each member,
 - to organize the apostolic life and project of the community, with the participation of all the religious, brothers and priests, and associating if possible lay Assumptionists and pastoral agents.
- c) It is important to see to it that:
- the finances, the goods, and even the spaces of the community and parish are clearly distinguished,
 - the employees of the community and the parish are well managed, according to the laws in effect in each country.

14. Our community life is a grace given to us to live and to share. It gives a special character to our mission in a parish and orientates us toward apostolates that gather the lay faithful in the spirit of the Acts of the Apostles, chapters 2 and 4: *“the whole group of believers was united, heart and soul.”* (Acts 4:32). It is thus a good thing for us and the whole Church. In this way community life and apostolate enrich and complete each other.

2. Life in Apostolic Community – “Apostles for the believers, believer with the believers”

We choose as our motto these words from the Lord’s Prayer: ADVENIAT REGNUM TUUM. And these words from the Office: PROPTER AMORE DOMINI NOSTRI JESU CHRISTI. The coming of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ for us and the neighbors, that is what we propose before all else¹².

15. At the service of the local Church, the Assumptionist community elaborates a pastoral project geared toward the mission, with the members of various councils, pastoral

¹² Fr. Emmanuel d’Alzon, Constitutions of 1865, *Chap. I, #1-#2*

teams, and parish offices, taking into account the whole Christian community. However, all apostolic, liturgical, and spiritual initiatives are also to be nourished by the traits of our spirituality¹³.

16. a) **family spirit and communion:** in the parish, this is expressed and is developed notably by:
- the concern for unity and fraternity. An Assumptionist community in a parish is there to promote communion between the laity and the religious on the one hand, and among the laity themselves on the other. This demands first on the part of the religious that their fraternal life be a witness to others.
 - the responsibility of lay people in the pastoral project of the parish: they must take part in the discernment, in the decision-making, and the implementation.
 - the taking into account, in every pastoral initiative, of the family as a cell of the Church, the awakening of religious and priestly vocations, and the issues and the future of young people.
 - celebrations and times for conviviality that gather together all the members of the religious community with the parishioners, at important moments, such as important liturgical feasts and the feast of the Church's patron.
17. b) **doctrinal spirit:** proclaiming the Word of God, the Good News of Christ is at the heart of our spirituality, of our work, our liturgy, our preaching and all of our initiatives. Each parish community will seek to develop this doctrinal spirit:

¹³ Acts of the General Chapter of the Augustinians of the Assumption, *Many gifts in one body... so that the world may believe*, Rome, 1-22 May 2005.

- through the continuing education of the ministers themselves (*Ratio Institutionis*)¹⁴,
- by the catechesis of children as well as of adults,
- by Bible study groups or courses,
- through the preparation of children, young people, engaged couples, and parents in view of the reception of the sacraments,
- by the reading and explanation of the texts of Vatican II and other important texts of the Church,
- through evenings or sessions on augustinian and assumptionist spirituality.

18. c) **ecumenical spirit**: this is expressed in dialogue and in openness, in the welcome given to members of other Christian confessions and non-Christian religions, in the enlightened affirmation of the Catholic faith, inspired by the long tradition of our presence in Eastern Europe (among the Orthodox faithful) and in Turkey (an Islamic country). The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is a special opportunity for dialogue and gatherings in each parish and in each diocese.

19. d) **social spirit and attention to the poor**: local events, experiences and sometimes personal initiatives are numerous and long-standing, as are the difficulties.

They fluctuate:

- between helping others or accompanying them on the one hand and educating them to independence on the other,
- between gratuitous services that are often indispensable and the taking charge of one's life,
- between the respect for rights and that of duties,
- between earthly food and spiritual food.

¹⁴ *Ratio Institutionis*, #171 to #182; read in the Appendix the text of E. d'Alzon on the continuing education of priests.

The commitment to solidarity with the poor also includes the participation of the religious and the laity in movements and organizations that promote social justice. Each religious community in charge of a parish is thus invited:

- to create a group or a commission of “Justice and Peace”,
- to work with the diocesan services (Catholic Aid, Caritas, Migrant and refugee ministries...), associations of international solidarity or organizations proper to each country.

An Assumptionist parish is also attentive to the active participation of the poorest people as effective members of the parish or the Church.

20. e) **Internationality**: The Assumption is an international Congregation. This reality, a gift from the Lord, must be lived and deepened, in various ways:
 - by twinning with another parish,
 - by welcoming other young religious in formation as collaborators,
 - by encouraging young volunteers and facilitating the exchange of volunteers,
 - by visiting and meeting Christians of different countries.
21. f) Animated by passion for the Kingdom, an Assumption parish is **missionary** and reaches out to those who are furthest away from the Church.
22. This responsibility is to be shared between religious and lay people alike and could develop into and find expression in the direction of the **Lay-Religious Alliance**.



Church under construction,
Parish of Saint Monica (Nairobi)

III. ORIENTATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1. For Major Superiors

23. At the time of a new foundation, if the Bishop asks us to take on a parish, the Provincial with his Council will study the request, taking into account the following criteria:
24. Community life will be a fundamental consideration for discernment and in the decision to take on or leave a parish.
25. The Major Superiors should consider parish ministry as an opportunity to fully live certain dimensions of the Assumptionist charism and mission, according to the orientations of the Chapters.
26. For all nominations of a religious to service in a diocese, the Major Superiors must see to it that a contract is established between the Diocese and the Province. This contract, with respect to both time and place, spells out the duties and the rights of each. It is accompanied, in some Dioceses, by a letter of mission from the Bishop of the Diocese, elaborated in accord with the Provincial.
27. As for any mission, the charge of Pastor does not last indefinitely. In this regard, the Major Superiors in dialogue with the local Bishop will see to it that the duration of the Pastor's mandate be spelled out.
28. They will see to it that our parish missions are places that favor the formation of young religious, deacons and new priests, in the practical aspects of ministry and for the

acquisition of sound pastoral qualities. They should also permit older religious to remain involved in a way that is satisfactory to all.

29. The Major Superiors will encourage collaboration among parishes, as well as pastoral experiences that open the religious to the international dimension.

II. For the religious community in charge of a parish

30. During the local Chapter, the community will see to it that it defines its community and pastoral orientations and plan the implementation of these while taking into account the diverse apostolates of its members and remaining attentive to the orientations of the Diocese, as well as the priorities of the Province and the Congregation.
31. The religious who has been named pastor or moderator coordinates the liturgical, spiritual and pastoral life of the parish, in concert with his religious community, with the lay persons with particular responsibilities, and with the orientations of the Bishop. The religious who are named to work in the parish share responsibilities and projects in a spirit that is at once open, frank, and fraternal, with a genuine desire to collaborate with the laity.
32. To the extent possible, each community in charge of a parish will strive to develop an aspect of our charism and become in that way a reference within the Province.
33. In a context where the faithful do not feel tied down geographically, the parish community will see to the quality and the beauty that characterize hospitality in the

parish, the services rendered, the liturgical celebrations and the formation programs, so that the parish be a place of gathering and of mission, with a particular concern for young people.

34. As part of a local Church, the religious community in charge of a parish must know and implement the pastoral orientations of the Diocese, participate in clergy meetings, and cultivate good relations with other pastors.

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APPENDIX 1

LETTERS OF FATHER D'ALZON AND HIS DISCIPLES CONCERNING THE EVENTUAL TAKING IN CHARGE OF A PARISH

1. To the Rev. MOTHER MARIE-EUGENIE DE JESUS, 7 July 1853, *Lettres*, Vol. 1, p. 308 (CD B20277)

My dear daughter,

Since yesterday Fr. Jerome has been here. I ask you to have your community pray, so that we will know the will of God in this matter. We spoke at length. We understand one another on almost everything, except that he would like to found a Congregation that would be in charge of parishes, where two or three priests could live in community. This seems absurd to me, except for the case of foreign missions and a few rare exceptions.

Note: 1. Parish ministry is in the view of Fr. d'Alzon the specific ministry of the secular clergy: "We will not interfere (as it is said in the *Rule of the Assumption*) in the works to which the secular clergy seem to have a special right." It is a simple fact, namely the exile from France after the condemnation of the Congregation in 1900, that will open the debate, in the General Chapter, for or against accepting parishes and admitting this ministry in the Constitutions of 1923. See the typewritten study made concerning this point for the Chapter of 1964.

2. To the Rev. MOTHER MARIE-EUGENIE DE JESUS, 10 July 1853, *Lettres*, Volume 1, p. 309 (CD B20278)

My dear daughter,

Fr. Jerome left last night; forgive me for not having written sooner. At the same time as his visit, I had exams at the bishopric; again today, the ordination of Mr. Roux-Lavergne, and I just got up from bed, after having remained there from 11 o'clock till now. We

understood one another on all points: the same philosophical and theological ideas, no politics; the same goal, accepting the same means. Regarding the Office, I think that we'll have to accept his idea or recite it only in houses with a substantial number of religious (a number would have to be set). Their article on poverty seems better written than ours. Fr. Jerome suggested that I organize convents to take charge of parishes with large congregations. I refused in very clear terms, because of the probable battle with the secular priests and the Bishops. I agreed only in the case of foreign missions where, strictly speaking, there are no parishes. The only problem concerns the (Superior) General. Will he serve until death or for a fixed time? His opinion agrees with mine, but his people think otherwise. This will have to be debated. On both sides, we were very frank. I think that he must have been satisfied with me. He will come back to Nîmes in October. He will possibly go to Paris from here, because of you. He suggested a general meeting, next year. He wanted it to be at Nîmes. I suggested Paris, so that we could have you close by, and he agreed for the same reasons that made me make this suggestion. However this does not depend only on him. That is the result of our conversation, which I'll say more about when I see you. It was understood that if we meet, one of his Priests will be at the disposition of your Sisters. He would also have serious subjects to discuss with you. But what will take place between now and a year from now? Will the devil wage war against us? Will he see to it that we are chased out of Paris?

So long, my daughter. I have written quite a lot for today. I have to write to Fr. Laurent to tell him that I am short on funds and that, at the present time, it is impossible for me to give my signature.

E. d'Alzon

**3. From Fr. GALABERT to Fr. François PICARD,
Constantinople, 25 September 1882.**

My very Rev. and beloved Father,

I received your telegram of the 23rd in Constantinople. I was there after three days of having no other companions than a Bulgarian Brother and one of our children who also wants to be a Brother.

We are busy with work on our house. We advance modestly; but as you know, a project like this in a city without resources always incurs great expenses, no matter how modest we try to be. I will probably be obliged to have the Lazarists lend me five or six hundred francs; I'll remit to them a promissory note payable in Paris, which will be presented without costs unless they can give me a certain number of mass intentions [...] I am at a loss for the organization of our new house. It is important that you send me two or three religious. It would be better if they were priests [...] Tomorrow I have to go to dine with Msgr. Vanutelli; we will read an agreement regarding our house in Constantinople. He will leave us free to act as we wish.

Please give me your opinion on a major question, concerning the future. Should we aim to have a parish at some time? It will soon be necessary to found one in the area in which we plan to settle.

Old Constantinople has no Catholic Church other than the Armenian church of Psammata, a train station of the suburb between the first and second station of Adrianopolis. Several Catholic families from diverse oriental rites and even from the Latin rite are scattered in the surroundings of our house. They will not delay to solicit us to visit the sick; we'll even have to visit them without being called, for there are many mixed marriages, and the Catholic priest could very well not be called unless he presents himself on his own. As you can see, parish work will happen automatically. Without seeking it, should we "*reject*" it and have as a principle that we never accept *parishes*, or else without seeking to have a parish given to us, should we let it come if it presents itself? [...]

Receive, my beloved Father, once again my best wishes for a happy feast; I think constantly of you in my prayers. Do not forget in yours the one who is always happy to be yours devotedly in O.L.J.C.

APPENDIX II

EMMANUEL D'ALZON AND THE FORMATION OF YOUNG PRIESTS

**1. To Dom Guéranger, 23 February 1857,
Lettres, Vol. 2, p. 202 (CD B20798)**

My Very Reverend Father,

I cannot suppress any longer the desire to express all my admiration for the beautiful teachings in theology and ecclesiastical history that you give to Mr. De Broglie. I presume that after finishing them you will publish them in book-form, and that *l'Univers* will suggest them to the clergy not only as a model of the genre, but especially as a specimen of the way that today we must cultivate a certain precision or knowledge of juridical sources, today almost totally lost.

When you have finished with your present adversary, don't you think, my Reverend Father, that it would be useful to do something on theological studies: either that you write a treatise *ex professo*, or that you take up an inadequate work and say what you think must be said today to young theologians? Most of the seminary professors, if they know the details of theology, will not have penetrated the substance and above all this reliability of judgment and this clarity of expression that Providence has given you to such a high degree, and of which you would do well, I believe, to use it to teach the young clergy sacred science beyond the seminary courses.

[...] This is the position in which I place myself: I suppose that I have just been ordained to the priesthood and named curate in a small parish. Except for the vigils of feasts, I can dispose of seven or eight hours each day to study. I belong to a diocese where the system of six-year examinations for young priests has been established. Also, my Bishop has obtained from the Pope the faculty to confer the baccalaureate and licentiate degrees in theology. I propose to go later to Rome to receive the doctor's hood. I want my six years of studies to be useful. I want to profit of my free time to become a true theologian. Given all of that, how should I go about it? Don't you

think that to furnish indications to a young priest in a similar situation would be to render an immense service to the clergy?

I present you humbly these reflections and I am, with the most respectful devotion, my Very Reverend Father, your humble and obedient servant.

E. D'Alzon
23 February 1857
La Thuillerie, at Auteuil, near Paris

P.S. Let me suggest another form for the advice that I ask of you. This will no longer be a hypothesis, but truly the pure and simple truth. Since a few years, I am in charge of presiding a bureau of examinations for the young priests in the diocese of Nîmes. I am struck at once by the intelligence of most of the young candidates and the lightness of their theological baggage; for several, no doubt, there is a real dislike for studies, a love of distractions, the ease with which to lose one's time; for many, there is an ignorance of a sure method that will permit them to obtain the benefit of work too often poorly directed. This is the advice that I come to ask of you for them.

E. D'Alzon

2. Second Circular, Nîmes, 1 June 1874 (Ecrits Spirituels, 199)

My very dear Brothers,

[...]

III. -- Science

Science makes us pride, but the spirit of science and that of piety go together. They protect and sustain one another. But, considering the condition of holiness that I have just laid down, science seems to me to be indispensable.

I recognize some in our midst do not have the necessary learning, but they stay with us nonetheless. But at least they will be able to learn each day, unless secular priests who, in general (and I know this because of the examinations that I have been administering to young priest for the past twenty-five years), have nothing more urgent to do

than to forget in parish what they learned at the Seminary. Religious priests have, by virtue of their vow of poverty, the strict obligation to earn their bread with the sweat of their brow, and studies are an essential part of the work to which they are compelled by the very power of their holy vows. It's up to us to dissipate the illusions that several have concerning this matter.

To obtain this result, besides the courses that are being set up bit-by-bit, very demanding examinations are indispensable. One of us, in charge of preparing a plan of studies, will soon present to most of you the means to take to maintain the Congregation on a sufficiently elevated level.

However, let me present an observation to which I attach importance. Taking into account the inadequacy of some among us, which we will have to accept as a consequence of difficult beginnings, it would be very dangerous to admit that generally we don't study. This is a concession that is absolutely impossible for me to make. We haven't always studied regularly; some people are by nature lazy, incapable, sickly; we have them, we must support them and draw from them the best we possibly can.

But, when I look at all of the work done by most of us, I cannot admit that we do not study, and many do. That studies must be directed and structured, in order to avoid the problems posed by excessive casualness, by stubbornness, or by confused thinking, is evident and that is why a plan for studies is being prepared. That which we have applied for the past two and a half years has produced very encouraging results, and gives us hope for what we will obtain later on. This is what I must insist on, in the face of against certain fears, which I believe to be untimely and even dangerous. I think that we have arrived at a time in our history where to go slowly can only be useful. We can fall back on ourselves and gather our thoughts. And, taking into account that most of the young people that we might judge severely are novices for whom strictly speaking studies are forbidden, we should be severe with regard to the ignorant, the lazy, the incapable. We will punish some and warn the others; there will even be those who are excluded, if necessary [...]

E. d'Alzon

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