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Signos de Dios

Signs of God

Signes de Dieu

A Word from the Postulator

This sheet is intended to connect all those who are collaborating, or are simply interested, in the cause of Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon's beatification.

Its contents aim at providing information on what is happening in different countries, at passing on testimonies of those who have received favors and of possible miracles obtained through Fr. d'Alzon's intercession, and at proposing certain texts to assist in doctrinal or pastoral reflection on this cause.

It will appear every three months in French, English, Spanish and Dutch. And in order that it have a truly international character, we have to maintain continual communication with all those collaborating in the cause.

The title « Signs of God » came as a result of the text for reflection in this first issue: God speaks to us by way of « signs. » The Church asks of us a « sign » in order that Fr. d'Alzon's holiness be recognized.

Fr. d'Alzon himself is for us a « sign », who «wakes us from our spiritual drowsiness».

May Fr. d'Alzon accompany us in this endeavor !

Fr. Julio Navarro Román, a.a.

The Holiness of Fr. d'Alzon

« He died like a saint", thus reads the dispatch which announced this sad event to us, and there is nothing, it would seem, that captures better the life and the death of this man of faith, of this athlete whose noble and energetic spirit did not cease for one day to fight for and act on behalf of the Church and the rights of God. This war that he waged throughout his life (and our readers know with what courage), Fr. d'Alzon never abandoned, not even on his deathbed, whence he held in check, by his mere presence, those who wished to execute decrees against him.

(Newspaper, *L'Univers,* November 30, 1880)

… Christians may not prejudge the decisions of the Church, but no one can prevent children from believing in the perfection of their father and count on his protection, even after his death. How many souls do not go to the tomb of Fr. d'Alzon to ask for strength and consolation. How many souls do not believe that they have gained favors through his intercession. They were simply following what came naturally to their heart. Are we, too, not invited to follow our heart's instinct, which can hardly betray ? Are we not called to be convinced by so many rapidly occurring events, by such growing fervor, by such attachment --- all of which makes us rejoice ? Do we not owe all of this to the God who has given him to us as a father who continues to watch over his children … ?

(Fr. Picard, *Circulaire* # 7, November 5, 1881)

Fr. d'Alzon speaks to us

It seems to me that holiness consists in applying one's natural energy without allowing oneself to be overcome by it, and in coloring it with a Christian humility capable of removing whatever may be too inflexible.

THE MEANING OF MIRACLE

Here is an extract of an article by Fr. Marcel Neusch, A.A., "The meaning of miracle in the thought of St. Augustine". It's a beautiful text for meditation, one which could be used with communities or small groups.

What is a miracle? Here is what a children's catechism gives as an answer: « A miracle is something out of the ordinary and marvelous. Moreover, it is a sign from God ». This definition pulls together three distinct, but more often than not separated, aspects which were quite familiar to St. Augustine : a physical aspect, a psychological aspect, and a theological aspect. With regard to the physical, a miracle is something out of the ordinary, something which happens, Augustine says, *« counter to the ordinary course of nature »*. With regard to the psychological aspect, it is something that elicits awe on the part of the onlooker by virtue of its unusual, rare, and marvelous nature: *«I call miracle, »* writes Augustine, *« every unusual event that clearly exceeds the expectations or the capabilities of the one it astounds»*. Finally, a miracle has a theological meaning, inasmuch as it is a sign from God (*admonitio*) which tends to wake an individual from his spiritual torpor and arouse in him a sense of faith.

For St. Augustine, these three aspects were closely linked, but must be prioritized. Augustine gives little attention to the physical aspect other than to underline that nature is always providing miracles except that we are no longer attentive *« The miracles which God works daily do not strike you, not because God has ceased working them with utter facility, but because he, in fact, continues to work them »* (*Sermon* 126, 4). […]

Miracles, a support to faith in God

What is the purpose of miracles if not, exactly, to help us better perceive the glory of God reflected in creation? They are signs God offers to man. Marvel should arouse the spirit of a person to an awareness that a miracle is but a sign in nature meant to draw one's attention to the Creator. Augustine writes : miracles are signs the purpose of which is « *to convey to our senses a divine message* » (*De Trinitate,* III, 10, 19). If God works « miracles » which suspend the ordinary course of things, it is because they are first of all meant to address the weakness of our faith. God is *«always and entirely everywhere present »*, except that we have lost our awareness. Miracles have as their primary purpose to awaken us to this universal presence of God the Creator.

« But since men, intent on a different matter, have lost the consideration of the works of God, by which they should daily praise Him as the Creator, God has, as it were, reserved to Himself the doing of certain extraordinary actions, that, by striking them with wonder, He might rouse men as from sleep to worship Him. A dead man has risen again; men marvel: so many are born daily, and none marvels. If we reflect more considerately, it is a matter of greater wonder for one to be who was not before, than for one who was to come to life again » (*Tract. in Jo.* 8, 1).

Augustine was especially interested in Jesus' miracles the purpose of which was twofold. If he worked miracles, it was first of all to open the eyes of men to the ever present action of God in the world. *« Since all of this had lost value for*

Drawing of Fr. d'Alzon in the mortuary chapel of the College of Nîmes, November 22, 1880

you, (Christ) came to accomplish unusual things so that you could recognize your Creator even in things to which you had become accustomed » (*Sermon* 88, 1, 1). The miracles also have a second purpose, namely to prove Christ's divinity, just as his sufferings were meant to prove his humanity. So, miracles are signs which must lead us to what they attest. This is the meaning of Jesus' miracles : they attest to his divine nature at the heart of his humanity […]

All in all, with regard to miracles, Augustine is particularly sensitive to the spiritual dimension. Miracles convey a lesson ; they are *« works which speak »*, he states when speaking about the multiplication of the loaves (*Sermon* 95, 3). What is left is the material dimension ; this is a question of behaving like someone who does not know how to read and is just happy to admire in a manuscript the beauty of the letters […] Miracles are signs that refer to a spiritual sense : the smallest detail bears meaning. Therefore, it is a question of constantly passing from the marteriality of things, which is not insignificant, to the spiritual sense, that is, to that to which it points. Thus it was that the three visible resuscitations worked by Christ were the sign of the thousands of invisible dead he has raised and continues to raises.

« Jesus Christ… did not work miracles just for the sake of working miracles, but, by stirring up the admiration of those who witnessed them, he wanted them to perceive the fullness of the truth behind them » (*Sermon* 98, 3).

Marcel NEUSCH, A.A.
(Magazine "*Itinéraires Augustiniens*",
36, July 2006, p. 5-12).

Questions for small group discussion

- For me, what is a miracle ?
- What are the signs from God that I have experienced in my life ?
- Which of Jesus' miracles speak to me the most ?

A request for collaboration

We need people who can work with us to promote the cause of the beatification of Fr. d'Alzon, our founder and spiritual father. It would be good that many religious and lay-people, male and female, in the Assumption Family, take initiatives in this area.

What do we mean by « promoting the cause » ?

1. Recalling, wherever and whenever possible, and making one's own, the recommendation of the recent General Chapter of the Assumptionists:

The General Chapter requests that: religious, communities and Assumptionist laity ***become better acquainted*** *with the person of Fr. d'Alzon as a model of holiness* ***and to make his holiness better known****; to be* ***intent on imitating his Christian and apostolic virtues*** *so as to live our vocation and our mission; and to* ***promote prayer*** *to obtain graces by his intercession.* (Acts, 152).

2. Recruit and mobilize collaborators who take this cause to heart (knowing and making Fr. d'Alzon known, imitating him, promoting prayer).

3. Invite these collaborators to work in groups and in tandem with communities of the Assumptionists and the Oblates of the Assumption.

4. Make local initiatives known and spread the news of persons who receive graces through the intercession of Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon (send this news to the Postulator, publish them in provincial newsletters, etc.).

Thank you for this collaboration !

Fr. Julio Navarro Román, A.A.
Postulator

Favors and Graces Received

Buenos Aires. Lay Assumptionists visit the sick and pray for them through the intercession of Fr. d'Alzon.

Alexis Yamil REYNOSO VICK was born on July 21, 1995, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. When he was 13 years old, doctors diagnosed him with Hodgkin disease, a cancerous tumor of the lymph nodes in the neck. He was operated on and received chemotherapy. What is extraordinary is the way in which he experienced his illness: he led a normal life, without discomfort; his hair did not fall out; he did not have to leave school; no other lymph nodes were affected. He himself wrote: *I always felt good, happy… I went out with my friends, went dancing, and I felt healed… In fact I never felt sick. I prayed with my friends… My friends always prayed for me… And this happened a lot because it seemed like everyone was helping me…. Without a doubt, I believe God worked a miracle in me…*

Alexis' mother, Silvana, gives this testimony: *From the time he began all of this, I went to pray at the Shrine of Lourdes, which is only four blocks from where I live. I am a believer, I had been a catechist… I began to pray for Alexis' health from the very first moment… I knew that a group of people had begun to pray for Alexis imploring the intercession of Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon, whom I knew at that time only by name…. On Good Friday, 2009, I came to the shrine. Fr. Luis Ramón called me over and said to me: "these are the people who are praying for Alexis". And after the introdution, I asked them: "pray because on the 21st he has an examimation". Then I noticed that Cristina Berardi smiled and stated: "the 21st is the feast of Fr. d'Alzon". From that moment, every day there was a treatment, I went to pray to Fr. Emmanuel for an entire year…There were some striking coincidences: The examination took place on a 21st and Alexis' treatment ended as well on a 21st (October 2009). Lots of things happened on the 21st. It also happens to be Alexis' birthday…As his mother I believe that his healing was miraculous… I was asking Jesus: "Sanctify your Servant Emmanuel d'Alzon granting me the grace that Alexis be completely healed"...I have no doubts… I believe Fr. d'Alzon worked in him.*

For his part, **Alexis' father**, a doctor, wrote: *I am a man of faith, but not as faithful as my wife. In my mind, it was a miracle… We know God acted…* (Buenos Aires, August 2011).

A publication of the Secretariate for the Cause of the beatification of Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon.

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Verónica Leal Mena, a young 21 year old woman of our parish in Lota, Chile, was diagnosed by doctors as suffering from nodules in the thyroid, which were growing and needed to be removed. Here is her own account: *So my pilgrimage started. With my mother the first thing we thought of was to put ourselves into the hands of Fr. d'Alzon, and so, the two of us alone every night raised our prayer. Some lay Assumptionists joined this prayer and we formed a prayer chain, with a novena from Nov. 13 to 21, imploring the intercession of Fr. d'Alzon* (the community in Rome joined with us as well). The operation was on the 18th. *I always felt Fr. d'Alzon and the Virgin were with me*–continues Verónica. *I entered the doctor's office without fear and full of joy… After the operation the doctor told my mother that there weren't as many nodules as had been detected on the ultrasound…. God's work? This already minimizes the risks. It's clear that prayer is powerful. Today, with this same faith, we await the results of the biopsy, without my ever ceasing to raise my voice in prayer to Fr. d'Alzon… I have every reason to be confident because my family is of the Assumption… My gratitude to and prayer for the Assumption. With much love, Verónica.* (Lota, November 2011).

Others favors and expressions of gratitude

** A week ago I received word that the father of a friend for whom I had prayed to Fr. d'Alzon was back home with her after having been gravely ill for nearly a month. I was happy to read that daily you receive word of favors of this sort from people eager to share their stories* (Worcester, USA).

** I can testify that, while invoking (Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon), I received a great grace… I give thanks to God and I say, « Thank you, Fr. d'Alzon » !* (St Germain en Laye, France).

**I pray to Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon often. He is a great saint !* (Poitiers, France).

*Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon has already been helping me for 50 years. He is for me my great benefactor ! (France).