

A Word from the Postulator

We noted in previous issues of Signs of God how, for Fr. d'Alzon, the virtue of mercy is, first and foremost, an attitude of the heart that every Christian, who truly believes in the generous and gratuitous mercy of God, is called to imitate himself: Be merciful as your Father is merciful (Lk 6:36). But mercy also has an apostolic dimension, rooted in charity and in the love of one's neighbor (Parable of the Good Samaritan). We find the best example of mercy in the attitudes of Jesus himself.

In Fr. d'Alzon, mercy is often translated by "compassion", especially when it refers to the poor, to those neglected and scorned by society, to those exploited by 'big money'. So it is that Fr. d'Alzon would make use of lessons drawn from the Fathers of the Church, as we will see in certain of his texts.

The cause of the beatification and canonization of Fr. d'Alzon is making its way. There are many people who are requesting his intercession and informing us that they obtained graces and favors after having had recourse to him in prayer. Twenty-five years ago, on December 21, 1991, Pope John-Paul II proclaimed him Venerable, recognizing that our founder had led a life of holiness and practiced, in a remarkable fashion, the virtues of the Christian life. We hope that the Lord will soon grant us the grace of his beatification.

Fr. Julio Navarro Román, a.a.

How Fr. d'Alzon treated the poor of Jesus Christ

At Assumption College there was, and still is, a Conference of St. Vincent de Paul. Students visited the poor in their homes. To Paul de Pèlerin and his friends was entrusted the section of Nîmes where the weavers lived, between the roads leading to Uzès and Avignon. An old paralytic and his daughter lived there in back of a dilapidated house, beyond a yard filled with junk and manure, in a dirty, damp, and airless cave. The cripple slept on the only bed while his daughter slept on a pile of old rags and mildewed straw. I've seen Paul de Pèlerin airing out the rags in the courtyard. I've seen him bathe the old man and make his bed. I once took part in a sort of little family feast brought in by my friend. Seated on a wooden box, Paul tried to encourage the old man and his daughter to eat the food. Their joy was a pleasure to behold. They laughed until

they cried, laughter of happiness, tears of gratitude. That's how Fr. d'Alzon trained his students.

It was decided to find more suitable lodging for the couple. The Conference would pay the rent. Finally, a second-story room was found, not far from the school. How could the paralyzed man be moved there?

Someone suggested laying the old man on a dumpcart and covering him with a horse-blanket. Hiring a carriage was out of the question as soon as the coachmen discovered what it was for. Fr. d'Alzon heard about his students' project. "What," he exclaimed, "An old wagon? Never! We must treat the poor with greater respect than that. Aren't they Jesus Christ's friends? Give me a few moments and I'll find a solution to your problem." He hurried immediately to the home of Countess de B..., to ask her to lend her

Fr. d'Alzon speaks to us

You are ever with me, O my God!

*With me in my free time, at my meals,
when I study, and when I sleep to protect me;
and when I desire to speak to your infinite mercy,*

I find you ever-ready to listen to me.

(Écrits Spirituels, p. 627)

What Fr. d'Alzon teaches us

About mercy toward the poor

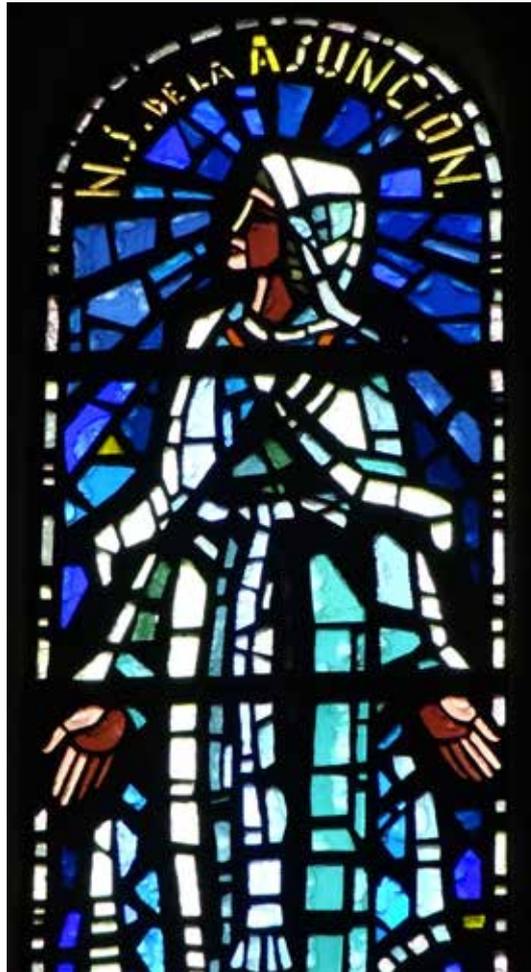
Estote ergo vos misericordes [So be merciful] [Lk 6:36]. Words drawn from the gospel of the First Sunday after Pentecost. Words that can be used at a meeting where people who are giving of their time to the poor are seeking relief for those who don't have time to visit the down and out.

Why must one be merciful?

Almsgiving is either a restitution to one's neighbor, or an expiation for oneself, or act of adoration with regard to God.

1. Restitution. St. Jerome, and after him Bourdaloue in the presence of King Louis XIV, said: *Omnis dives, iniquus aut iniqui haeres* [Every rich man is wicked or the heir of one who is wicked]. I am not saying that you have stolen --- if you have, pay restitution --- but are there not things that bother you in all your financial speculation? It is the poor whom you hurt and to whom you must make restitution.

For, in the order of providence, what the wealthy possess can be divided into two categories, what is necessary and what is superfluous. Keep what is necessary; the superfluous doesn't belong to you. Listen, I can't dismiss the question of the superfluous and the necessary; it exists after all. Let me appeal to



Stained glass window of the Assumption, by Gabriel Loire, in the basilica of Lourdes in Santiago, Chile

your conscience. Should we really dismiss it?

2. Expiation. The age we are living in is an age of pleasure and one of money. People want money so that they can enjoy pleasures. And how do you reconcile the love of pleasure with the Word of the Savior ---- do penance? Would you like to see where pleasures bring you,

what your insatiability produces? You have become self-centered. You need to expiate your pleasures, and your self-centeredness. Atone for all this by almsgiving.

3. Adoration. Here is the central idea (a few words are unreadable after this phrase in d'Alzon's text): that we must adore God, that is to say to acknowledge his supremacy in all things: *Domini est terra* [the earth is the Lord's]. If you are not landowners, then you are but farmers. That is why the poor have no right to take from you, because they would not be stealing from you but from God. But you, farmer, you must render your take of the sharecropping to the poor and in so doing you will acknowledge God's supremacy.

Paul before Felix speaks of these three great questions: *Disputante autem illo de justitia et de castitate et de judicio futuro* [he set about speaking about justice, temperance, and the judgment to come] [Acts 24: 25]. The same law applies.

How must one show mercy?

Sicut et Pater vester misericors est [as your Father is merciful] [Lk 6:36]. Three characteristics: power, mindfulness, love. God's attributes are equal; however, in our regard, the most precious is mercy and since it finds its source in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,

sedan-chair which, incidentally, was no longer being used. He explained why he wanted it and she immediately gave permission.

We therefore saw this poor old paralytic, revoltingly dirty, seated on fine green velvet cushions, in a gilded chair with beveled glass. The exterior paintings showed winged genii, plump as ortolans, floating and wandering amid garlands of flowers.

On the door was emblazoned the coat-of-arms of the Count. It was so rich and brilliant that part of the chair had to be hidden by a rug as it was carried across Nîmes, amid an escort of Assumption College students. That's how Fr. d'Alzon treated the poor of Jesus Christ (Canon Galeran, *Sketches*, p. 85-86, <http://www.assumption.us/media/virtual-library/47-virtual-library/432-sketches>).

it is characterized by power, mindfulness, and love.

1. Power. It is revealed in perseverance and patience. Only that which is strong endures; in this must your own charity consist. Then, be patient. But the poor are impatient. And you who are God's beggars, are you not impatient for what he has to give?

2. Mindfulness. Mindfulness in the way of carrying out the good: *Beatus qui intelligit* [Blessed is the one who is mindful of the poor] [Ps 41:2]. Mindfulness in what you say. *Non in solo pane vivit homo* [Man does not live on bread alone] [Mt 4:4]. While taking care of your body, do the same for the soul. *Impossibile enim esset, ut caro panem suam haberet, et anima panem suum non habent* [It cannot be that you nourish the body and not the soul]. So says St. Augustine.

3. Love. The Holy Spirit consumes the adorable Trinity in an eternal love, and still God in his love desired by an act of his entirely free will to create the world. He gives us being. He gives us his Son. He gives us the Holy Spirit. What else do we need? We, in turn, must give as well. *Quia charitas Dei diffusa est* [Because the love of God has been poured into our hearts] [Rm 5:5].

Estote ergo vos misericordes, sicut Pater vester misericors est [Therefore, be merciful as your Father is merciful] [Lk 6:36].

(Preached at Sète, on Trinity Sunday, 1859. Archives of the Congregation, typewritten volumes in view of the cause of Fr. d'Alzon, t. 51, p. 290-292).

Favors and graces received

Testimony received from Nairobi

Catherine Njeri: she had a hard mass on the breast and pregnancy complications. The breast problem was probably a cancer and the doctors in South Africa thought that she would not be able to deliver. She was sent back to Kenya from South Africa. Thanks to the intercession of Father d'Alzon, she delivered and both Catherine and her child are in good health. (from the Secretariat in Nairobi).

Testimonial received from Buenos Aires

(given by Mrs. Raquel A, April 25, 2016.)

Her small daughter, Tatiana, 4 years old, was taken to a pediatrician in March because she was having difficulty breathing and was suffering from frequent swelling of her tonsils. The doctor requested tests in view of surgery. The tests indicated that she was HIV-positive. The laboratory called the mother and told her that they needed to do the test over. A second and then a third time the results came back the same.

Faced with this situation, her grandmother began to pray to the Virgin Mary and to Fr. d'Alzon at the shrine of Lourdes. She herself regularly visits the sick in the hospital where her grand-daughter had been taken and always distributes the prayer for the beatification of Fr. d'Alzon to those in serious condition.

In the meantime, Tatiana's parents decided to go to see another medical professional. He requested that the same tests be taken. This time the results came back negative --- surprising the doctor and relieving the family. It must be pointed out that during all this time no treatment or medicine of any kind was used. All that took place was prayer to the Blessed Virgin and to Fr. d'Alzon; the family and friends continue to pray. Now it's a question of keeping an eye on the evolution of the girl's condition. It should be added that the labs where the tests were taken have a reputation of being highly reliable.

Bust of Fr. d'Alzon in Chile



News from the Secretariats

General Secretariat in Rome

On the 19 and 20 of May, 2016, a meeting was held in Rome the aim of which was, first of all, to enlarge this Secretariat to make of it a more international team, perhaps younger, and with a more significant representation of the Oblate Sisters and lay colleagues. Therefore, this Secretariat is now made up: Fr. Julio Navarro, Postulator, Br. Jean-Michel Brochec, Fr. John Franck, Sr. Salomé Kalonda Tullia, Fr. Jean-Marie Vianney Katabu, Fr. Alessandro Laini, Fr. Bernard Le Leannec, Sr. Gemma Rossi, Mrs. Marie-Clara Hae-Sou SHIN, and Fr. Alain Thomasset.

Two items of business were on the agenda: *evaluate* the work done by the Postulation Office since the last general chapter of the Assumptionists and to lay out a *program* for the upcoming months, with priorities, precise objectives, and realistic means. Here are some comments and proposals:

1. The fact of having enlarged this General Secretariat is already a step forward. It would be good to have a reflection group at the disposal of the Postulator and this Secretariat in order to update the heritage of Fr. d'Alzon.

2. During this meeting we were able to identify clearly the objectives of the Postulation and of this General Secretariat.

3. We stressed the need to make Fr. d'Alzon known: his person, his way of holiness, the « pillars » of his faith and his apostolate. To know him ourselves, his sons and daughters of the Assumption Family, and to make him widely known to lay-people within the Church. What we are talking about is not simply book knowledge, but an affective knowledge, one that should bring us to admire, venerate, and love Fr. d'Alzon like a father, a companion on our way. Once this is accomplished, people will be drawn to seek his intercession and to make him known to others around them.

4. We need to find adequate means to present an image of Fr. d'Alzon that is up-to-date, an attractive and galvanizing personality, a model of holi-

ness for us and for today's Church. Videos? Collections of testimonials? A more effective distribution of this newsletter, Signs of God... ? Perhaps we are left with images of Fr. d'Alzon that are out-dated, handed down to us from the past, but that may no longer speak to people today.

5. There must be regular communication with the local secretariats, in order to fire up their members, to exchange information and initiatives, and to make known testimonials of people who have obtained graces through Fr. d'Alzon's intercession.

6. Accompanying the sick in prayer and requesting Fr. d'Alzon's intercession is an important ministry. In fact, such a ministry has begun to dominate the activity of some local secretariats. We need to get lay-people involved in this work.

7. It would be good if members of this General Secretariat oversaw one or another of the activities of the Postulation Office, so as to allow the work of the Postulator to run more effectively.

Fr. Julio Navarro Román, Postulator

Diocesan secretariat in Nîmes

With the participation of the Postulator, Fr. Julio, this group met on June 2. There were added the regular members Pierre and Anne Chevrot, a couple from the parish of Le Vigan, who know Fr. d'Alzon well. One of the aims of this meeting was to "make Venerable Fr. d'Alzon better known" so as to enhance the work that is already being carried out in the diocese. The group had an interesting conversation about sites that could be especially powerful: the chapel of the Oblates where Fr. d'Alzon's body lies, the parish church in Le Vigan where he was baptized, the chapel in l'Espérou, the shrine of Notre Dame de Grâce in Rochefort where Fr. d'Alzon used to bring students of his high school on retreat, a shrine still used by members of the diocese. There's still work to be done at the cathedral of Nîmes where there is already a marble plaque in memory of Fr. d'Alzon and St. Perpetua Church, where he often celebrated Mass and where his funeral service took place. It is still necessary to underscore more the figure of Fr. d'Alzon in these places, inviting people to request his intercession and placing at the disposition of visitors the pamphlet produced by Bayard Press written to make him better known and featuring the prayer seeking his beatification.

Fr. Bernard Fougères, Vicar general for pastoral ministry.

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