November 21, 2013
(Presentation of the Blessed Very Mary/Feast of Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon)
Chapel of the Institut d'Alzon where Emmanuel d'Alzon is buried in Nîmes



We have the pleasure of celebrating the feast of the Presentation of Mary this year under the patronage of Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon. We are happy to join not only the members of the Assumptonist community here in Nîmes but also Fr. Marcelo Marciel, assistant to Fr. General, and Fr. Julio Navarro, postulator of the cause of Fr. d'Alzon).

We all know how the Second Vatican Council underlined the universal call to holiness and the particular call extended to priests: «*Every person must walk unhesitatingly according to his own personal gifts and duties in the path of living faith, which arouses hope and works through*

charity…Priests should grow daily in their love of God and their neighbor by the exercise of their office ” (*Lumen Gentium*, #41).

The ‘problem’, or rather the place where the rubber meets the road, if I may speak so, is the *un hesitatingly*
. Am I moving forward
unhesitatingly
, with
all
my strength ? Do I really want to make progress
unhesitatingly
along the path of a living faith that arouses hope and brings charity to birth ? As times goes by, it’s easy for us to be tempted by settling for a certain moral complacency half-hearted measures or even for a certain level of sinfulness as if the Lord could possibly tolerate such an accomodation, as if he could accept half-hearted measures or a willingness to serve with self-determined limits, he who is the Way, the Life, and the Truth, the Holy One…The Lord’s patience in our regard is not a matter of lukewarmness on his part but rather his generosity in affording us the time to turn to him and join in his mission,
« *I have come to bring fire to the earth and how I wish it were already lit (Lk 12:49).*

Here it is where I think d’Alzon can serve as a witness and, without a doubt, as a model.

"*Be saints, become saints,*" he would often write at the end of some of his letters. Deeply troubled by a world that had distanced itself from the Christian faith, rejected it or was ignornant of it, he knew that a world without God was heading for its own destruction. He refused to withdraw to some remote mountain or to enclose himself in some sacred shrine, because religion, he was convinced, had something to say to transform this earth. You cannot save yourself without getting involved in the salvation of others. As he said, "
I can’t love Jesus Christ without wanting everyone to love him
».

This simple and determined conviction finds an echo in contemporary popes: « *Enclosed within history, human progress*
runs the risk of being reduced to the mere accumulation of wealth
», wrote Pope Benedict XVI (
Caritas in Veritate
#11); and from the hand of Pope Francis we have, «
If we remove faith in God from our cities, mutual trust would be weakened, we would remain

united only by fear and our stability would be threatened
» (
Lumen Fidei
#55).

We cannot love Jesus Christ without wanting everyone to love him. Is that really true --- that we want everyone to love him? We cannot limit ourselves to or be satisfied with issues of staffing while neglecting the broader questions of the world, just as Jesus, while speaking to his « *small sheepfold*
», never forgot his plans for all humanity, «
when I am lifted from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself
» (Jn 12:32).

« *Jesus Christ, the more you love him, the more you want to imitate him*. » Is that really true of us? Fr. d'Alzon, as did all the saints, wanted this without stinting. Perhaps this is a sensitive point, something that causes us to hesitate just as it was the case for those who put their hand to the plow but who kept looking back (cf Lk 9:62). "
Lord Jesus, may I be poor like you, obedient like you, chaste like you, in all things may I be like you
": perhaps we find this prayer difficult to recite when we're afraid that the Lord will take us at our word, even if we do believe that he never ceases to want us to be happy.

It is also true that imitating Christ goes hand in hand with obedience to the Church, with welcoming God's will as the Virgin Mary did, « "*Ah! How I must descend deep within my heart to see what prevails there : the Church or my interests and those of those around me! Woe to me if your Church is not above all other interests* ». « *Lord, may I imitate the dependence of your Mother in everything that you ask of me. Speak, Lord, your servant is listening* ».





Emmanuel d'Alzon which Bishop