

Early Years

The fourth of six children, René Mertz was born in Riedwhir (Haut-Rhin), France, on February 18, 1907. After attending several Assumptionist high school seminaries, he joined the congregation and made his first vows on November 5, 1926, taking the name Amarin. After studying philosophy in Belgium and theology in France, he was ordained a priest at the end of 1934.

First Assignment: Manchuria (1935-1948)

Shortly thereafter, in October 1935, he left for Manchuria with Fr. Cyrille Paratte, the first two Assumptionists to set off for this Far East mission. He stayed for 13 years (1935-1948). During this time he would never be able to leave in order to see his family and often times he had a hard time corresponding with them. Already during his lifetime Fr. d'Alzon had his eye on the Orient and even mentioned to the Oblates of the Assumption, with a touch of humor, that they shouldn't rest easy until they had arrived at the foot of the Great Wall of China! Since 1931 Manchuria had been in the hands of China's bellicose and imperialistic neighbor, Japan.

