

“Education is the formation of Jesus Christ in souls.”

Students, faculty and others will have to recall those words of Father Emmanuel d’Alzon when they walk by a new sculpture of him at Assumption College, the president said at a ceremony Saturday.

At the dedication and blessing on Homecoming/Family Weekend, college President Francesco Cesareo unveiled life-sized statues of two students listening to Father d’Alzon, founder of the Augustinians of the Assumption, who founded the college. The bronze sculptures on a granite bench are outside the library, which is dedicated to Father d’Alzon.

This is the first time a statue of the founder has been erected on this campus, Assumptionist Father Donat Lamothe and Brother Armand Lemaire told The Catholic Free Press before the ceremony. A statue of him which is like one in Europe was damaged when the 1953 tornado ripped through Assumption Preparatory School and College on West Boylston Street, and was later buried on the present campus, they said.

The Assumptionists had once proposed commissioning a sculpture here, said Assumptionist Father Dennis Gallagher, the college’s vice president for mission, as he opened the ceremony of prayers, songs, readings and talks. The college commissioned this one as part of the president’s plan calling for artwork to beautify the campus and highlight elements of the college’s mission, he said. This piece’s blessing coincides with the 200th anniversary of Father d’Alzon’s birth.

President Cesareo thanked 82-year-old Sister Margaret Beaudette, of the Sisters of Charity of New York, who designed the sculpture and has created works of art around the world.

Sister Margaret told The Catholic Free Press she has been making sculptures, mostly life-sized religious figures, for about 25 years, and taught for about 30 years.

This was the first time she had depicted Father d'Alzon, whose likeness she studied in pictures to make clay images, she said. She then supervised the "lost wax process" through which the bronze images were made at the Modern Art Foundry in Long Island City, she said.

For the student figures she used molds originally made to go with her statue of St. Vincent de Paul at De Paul University in Chicago, she said. But in Assumption's sculpture the students sport a sweatshirt and backpack with the college's name and seal.

Overseeing the process were Assumptionist Father Roger Corriveau, theology department chair, and Sister Cathleen Toomey, a Religious Sister of Mercy who is Father Gallagher's assistant and a member of the college's d'Alzon bicentennial committee.

"We wanted it to be interactive," Sister Cathleen said, explaining the posture of Father d'Alzon and the space that enables onlookers to sit on the bench beside the sculptures.
Father d'Alzon saw education as a work of charity, a work "through which we shall seek to extend the reign of our Lord," Christian Goebel, philosophy professor, said in his dedication reflections.

He said Father d'Alzon demanded that teachers at his school love their students, and emphasized the need to help students seek the truth and "provide them with an education whose goal is not just information but a 'transformation of the entire person' and 'building of character.'"

Professor Goebel called such an education unconditional love, a willingness to share knowledge without expecting anything in return. Father d'Alzon said teaching is most successful when done by example, but successful education also depends on the students'

willingness to let themselves be transformed, he said.

Professor Goebel spoke of the harmony of faith and reason, of helping students appreciate the "intellectual respectability" of the Christian faith in America's "academic landscape … characterized by religious pluralism." This will lead to true ecumenical openness, knowing God can be found in all things, he said. Father d'Alzon criticized tolerance that was indifference, ungrounded in objective truth, he said.

Father d'Alzon saw education as serving his goal of "penetrating society with a Christian idea," Professor Goebel said. Assumption seeks "graduates known for critical intelligence, thoughtful citizenship and compassionate service."

By Tanya Connor

The Catholic Free Press
"You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" — John 8:32

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