

A man with outstanding faith and a sense of mission

Victorin Galabert was born in Montbazin (Hérault) November 6, 1830. Little is known about his early years, which Fr. Victorin tried to downplay in later life. He studied medicine at the University of Montpelier and received his doctorate in 1854. His dissertation was entitled *A Historical Essay on Smallpox*
. After meeting Fr. d'Alzon, he received the religious habit on June 29, 1855, in Nîmes. The following year he went to Rome where he studied theology and canon law. He made his final profession in Rome at the altar of the Confession of St. Peter on June 30, 1856. After obtaining his doctorate in canon law, he was ordained a priest o June 7, 1857, and wrote articles for the publications of Fr. Chaillot, a reputed canonist.

From 1858 to 1862 Fr. Galabert taught at the college of Nîmes, particularly the natural sciences. In 1862 Fr. d'Alzon sent him to Constantinople to lay the foundations of an Assumptionist apostolate that would pave the way for a union of the Bulgarian Church with the Catholic Church. It was on the insistence of Fr. Galabert, who wanted religious sisters to help in the mission, that Fr. d'Alzon first explored the possibility with the Religious of the Assumption, then founded the Congregation of the Oblates of the Assumption in 1865 for that purpose.

Fr. Galabert's first move was to found the primary school of St. Andrew of Philippopolis (Plovdiv) in January 1864. Little by little, an Assumptionist community took shape on the shores of the Maritsa. The modest school of 1864 became a true college in 1884, *CollPge Saint-Augustin* .

Beginning in 1865, Fr. Galabert became the theological consultant of the new bishop of the Bulgarian Uniate Church, Bishop Raphael Popov (1830-1876). As Fr. Victorin accompanied the bishop throughout Bulgaria, he diligently noted everything that affected the everyday life of these populations that were still living under the Ottoman yoke. He learned the Bulgarian language and later the Turkish language.

The Eastern Mission, which depended largely on Fr. Galabert, developed very modestly and slowly during the life of Fr. d'Alzon, due to a lack of money and manpower. In fact, Fr. Galabert considered himself as a foundation stone in the substructure of a still hidden work. He made innumerable pleas to the Founder and to the communities of France asking for additional personnel and resources. Also, he was responsible for the spiritual direction of the communities of Oblates who went to Bulgaria in 1868.

At Vatican Council I, Fr. Galabert was the theologian and the ultramontane interpreter for several Eastern bishops who had difficulty following the conciliar debates in Latin. In 1876 Fr. d'Alzon appointed him "Provincial of the Mission," with residence in Adrinopole (Edirne). During the Russian-Turkish War of 1877-78, Fr. Galabert was active on all fronts, caring for the wounded on both sides. Russian and Turks both competed to honor him. Uninterested in civilian honors, he paid no attention to his decorations, which won for him the great admiration of the people. In 1883 he had the joy of seeing Assumption settle into the Muslim Quarter of Stamboul (Istanbul).

Simple, humble, good, patient, but sometime neglectful of his appearance, for which Fr. d'Alzon often reproached him, Fr. Galabert distinguished himself especially by his faith and religious docility that almost seemed infantile. Those who lived with him testify to the fact that he was very ascetical, trusted in Divine Providence to the point of naivete, had a missionary soul, and was very respectful of the spiritual values of the East. Having discovered that East, he learned to love it, without closing his eyes on its miseries.

While on a visit to France, he died of a stroke in Nîmes on February 7, 1885. He was only 55 years old. Fr. Galabert was buried in St. Baudile Cemetery, Nîmes, in the plot of the Assumptionists, next to Fr. d'Alzon who preceded him by a little less than five years.