A WORD OF THANKS FROM US, THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF THE EASTERN MISSION, TO OUR FOUNDER


Emmanuel d'Alzon (1810-1880)

November 21, 2005 is the 125th anniversary of the birth into heaven of our venerable founder, Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon.

"The (Eastern) mission owes its birth to Pius IX. Leo XIII has just established it definitively. In June 1862, at the time of the first great pilgrimage that was destined to launch the movement and to become the origin of so many beautiful and magnificent expressions of faith, during that solemn audience when our Father was so proud to be able to present so many devoted priests with Bishop Plantier at their head, the great Pius IX addressed our stouthearted founder and said to him, 'I bless your works in the East and in the West.' We had but two houses, quite weak, in the West, and nothing in the East. What did the Holy Father mean? An audience the next day, which had not been requested, would clear up the mystery. The Bulgarian movement was on His Holiness' mind. He had neither men nor money to pay attention to it, so he designated Fr. d'Alzon."
(Fr. François Picard, The Eastern Mission, 1896)

The history of the Eastern Mission's birth tells us many things about our founder's breadth of vision. He hadn't intended to establish a mission in the East nor to become involved with the great cause of Church unity. What allowed the Eastern mission to become a reality was, at its very origin, a willingness, an openness, to welcome the word of an "Other," which

brought into the equation "His word." Fr. d'Alzon had the courage and the humility to let himself be challenged by reality. He was able to recognize in the words of Pius IX the will of God in his life.

In our own life situations God is present and speaks to us; he challenges us. We have to know how to "listen" and to let ourselves to be fashioned by "His Word." Many times, we brothers and sisters of the Assumption, have been invited to return to the sources, to the origins, of our religious families. At the very beginning there is, above all, the example of our founder. As his sons and daughters, we wish to put his example into practice; and with the same openness of spirit we want to continue to bring about that design of love which the Lord has entrusted to the Assumption in the Eastern Mission.

In giving thanks to the Lord for the spiritual paternity of Fr. d'Alzon, we also ask him, in the words of Pius IX, to continue blessing "our works in the West and in the East."

Happy Feast-day to all our brothers and sisters in the Assumption.

Fraternally,
The communities of brothers and sisters of Plovdiv, Bulgaria