

This past summer Fr. Vincent Leclercq, who recently completed a doctorate in theology at Boston College and who currently teaches at the Catholic Institute of Lille, made a presentation on education at the Collège Stanislas in Paris. Why this school? Quite simply because Emmanuel d'Alzon, the founder of the Assumptionists, atttended classes there from 1824-1828 and it was there that he began to reflect on the kind of education that individuals must receive to be transformed themselves and to transform society.

He would implement these ideas when he acquired the Collège de l'Assomption in Nîmes in 1843. Before citing the main intuitions of Fr. d'Alzon in the area of education, Fr. Leclerq briefly addressed the political and religious background of mid-19th century France which helped to shape d'Alzon's convictions.

An observation: The Industrial Revolution had significantly transformed social structures; inequalities deepened; working conditions became inhumane. The struggle for freedom and justice intensified. It should not be overlooked that two revolutions took place during this time in France, 1848 and 1871. The Catholic Church was seen as a supporter of conservative forces. D'Alzon, in Fr. Lecleq's opinion, was to react by presenting new ideas on education to combat what he saw as the deleterious forces of society.

The solution: Transform Man and society? It would be necessary to form men of character with an intelligence enlightened by faith. But how? By acquiring knowledge, convictions, and capacities for judgment that would allow them to act according to Christian principles, men who were fighters and who would not sit back.

Through education d'Alzon wanted to transform Man and society, but is this intuition not just as

relevant today in the 21st if the Kingdom is to come?

By Prof. Benoit COMBAUD