By Fr. Oliver Blanchette, A.A.

Consumers are generally interested when they are offered a two for one sale. Perhaps that's what I'm doing here. Recent articles appearing in the Jesuit Magazine, America set me thinking in a different vein in regards to the Cause of Beatification of our Founder, Emmanuel d'Alzon. In the February 24 issue there is an article entitled "Our Secular Future" by R.R. Reno, Editor of First Things and former professor of theological ethics at Creighton University, in Omaha, Nebraska. As the title indicates the author tries to show how our American culture is becoming ever more secular, with ever less place for religion. This is hard to deny. Yes, separation of state and religion is a good thing and we must never forget Jesus' words: "Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." (Mt.22, 21) But religion's influence is needed in society, in politics, in every - day life. Yet today how many Western Countries are becoming ever more securalized. In France, Catholics are more and more concerned about what is called "La Laicite'" (Broadly translated as "secularism") of its government. Though, perhaps, it should be said that the main problem in France, as in other countries, including our own, is finding the proper or at least the best balance possible between the rights of the State and those of Religion. *The Province of Quebec, so deeply Catholic not too long ago, is now unbelievably secular and not too sympathetic toward religion.*

Then in the February 17 issue of America there were two disturbing articles. The cover story spoke of "The College Hookup Culture" and another was a review of Martin Scorsese's filim "The Wolf of Wall Street". Commenting on the latter, film-critic Fr.Jim McDermott,S.J. has this to say: "Having recently forced myself to see the film...I can confirm it truly is a three hour ride into eager and enthusiastic debauchery…. In 1988 Scorsese did an adaptation of Nico Kazantzakis's " The Last Temptation of Christ". If "Last Temptation" served as Scorsese's meditation on the life of Jesus, "The Wolf of Wall St." serves as the opposite bookend, his meditation on Hell."

Writing of these and others in the long line of broken young performers, Fr. Matt Malone, himself the young Jesuit Editor In Chief of America has this to say. "Through these young celebrities we learn what it's like to be them. Their triumphs become our triumphs: We glow with self-satisfaction when they tell a reporter: "Really, all that I have achieved I owe to my fans.''... Perhaps I'm being too hard on us… But we also need to examine our role in all this. And our role is subtler and much more powerful than you might think. aS Father McDermott concludes in his film review: ¨Real temptation is a lot more attractive, it hides its victims and its consequences, and for a long time it's usually a lot more fun." "The fun ,however, " concludes Fr. Malone, "inevitably comes to an end."

Then I thought of Fr. d'Alzon born in 1810, just 30 years after the French Revolution. A Revolution that perhaps started with a goal, a motto that sounds so friendly to our modern ears: "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity". But a Revolution that we know ended with the guillotine and terrible bloodshed as God and Religion were blamed as the cause of France's problems and the Deity of Reason officially replaced Faith in an atheistic government.

Emmanuel d'Alzon, born into a profoundly Catholic family, very early felt the call to fight the Revolution and defend God and Religion. Perhaps he first expressed this call as a desire to plant once more a Christian Idea in Society. Much later when his vocation had become clearer the young Fr. d'Alzon would choose "Thy Kingdom Come" as the first motto of his Religious Congregation. Later still as his call matured in the crucible of reality and suffering, he counted less on his considerable intellectual prowess and his strength of will and more on the love and mercy of Christ. That led him to add a second motto to the Congregation "For the Love of Jesus Christ". Armed with these mottos and all they implied he was now a Founder endowed by the Holy Spirit with a rich Charism to be used to build up his young Congregation so that it could engage passionately in a very public way in making of France a more just, human, a more Christian country. And that effort spread in an ever widening circle outside France. For Charisms are given by God to Founders not only for his/her Congregation as such, but for the whole Church, indeed for the good of the world. And Charisms are gifts of God generally also meant to have lasting qualities that have relevance long after the Founder is dead. They are to be adapted to the changing times but their core values remain. Assumptonists are called to fight for the Coming of the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom of justice, love, peace and joy. They do so especially through education but education in a broad sense that surely includes the formation of the whole person and whose model is first of all Jesus Christ. We have tried to be faithful to these principles. But also to be relevant for our day. Today we speak not only of defending the rights of God but also human rights. Today our goals of struggling for truth, unity in the Church, and charity in everyday life are expressed in these terms: Assumptionists are called to be men of faith, communion and Solidarity , especially with the poor. And today, in keeping with our Founder's passionate desires we are more than ever before inviting lay people, men and women, to join us in order that our Charism be shared with them and enriches their capacity to fight for the Coming of the Kingdom here on earth even as, in turn, their gifts enrich and encourage us Religious in that struggle. Today we continue to reach out to new lands and our internationality is always increasing, not only in this extension to new lands but in the fact that our local communities are more and more international. Our community at St Anne's Parish and Shrine in Sturbridge, Ma, for example, is made up of five Assumptionists, 2 Americans, one Vietnamese, one Chinese and one Kenyan! Perhaps another development might be, while respecting the Charisms of different Congregations, to more willingly cooperation with them, hope fully so that all will be able to do more good. I believe some of our Assumptionist Sisters are doing a bit of this.

It's *not surprising then to have heard, as we quoted in "For a Good Cause -N. 8,* Bishop Robert Wattelbled, B **i**

shop of Nimes, where Fr. d'Alzon lived all his life and served as Vicar General for four Bishops in his day, say of our Founder:" Deeply troubled by a world that had distanced itself from the Christian Faith, rejected it or was ignorant of it, he knew that a world without God was heading for destruction. e re fused to hHhhHhhHhe wqS He had refused to withdraw to some distant mountain or to enclose himself in some sacred shrine, because religion , he was convinced, had something to say to transform this earth. You cannot save yourself without getting involved in the salvation of others. As he said, "I can't love Jesus Christ without
wanting everyone to love him."… "

Founders nearly always have been holy men and women and very many have been declared saints by the Church. Their very holiness has been passionately given over to making God better known and loved through Jesus Christ. But also to combating the evils of their day as we need to combat those of our day, some only of which have been discussed in the articles of the America magazine.

Why try so hard to have Fr. d'Alzon beatified? There are, as has been suggested, more than one reason. Two prayer cards asking for Fr. d'Alzon's Beatification agree. The first has been used for many years in our communities and by friends. "Heavenly Father, we thank you for giving to you Church, in the person of Emmanuel d'Alzon, a fiery apostle of your Kingdom. Please glorify Your Servant and reveal the power of his intercession by granting us the favors we now seek from your loving mercy. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen." The second was composed in 2010 on the occasion of the 200th Anniversary of our Founder's birth in 1810. "Lord Jesus, you called Emmanuel d'Alzon to be a fiery apostle of you Kingdom. We pray that you will gather into the Assumption family thousands of men and women, religious and lay to work for the kingdom with the same ardent love and tireless zeal. Grant we beseech you, that all his followers may grow in fidelity and numbers, ever eager to serve you and your Church. Lord Jesus, please confirm the Church's recognition of Emmanuel d'Alzon's holiness by granting us the favors we seek through his intercession. Amen".

The confirmation of Fr.d'Alzon's holiness leading to a renewal and spreading of his Charism, hopefully even in our Country so in need itself of such a Christian injection, what a remarkable two for one sale! May we go for it.