

A Word from the Postulator

Pope Francis is in the midst of inviting the entire Church at once to respond to three urgent calls, if it wishes to be credible and wishes to bring the gospel to today's world: the option for the poor, bringing the gospel to the *margins* of society, and the mission to all. In his own time Fr. d'Alzon knew how to respond, with boldness, creativity, and, especially, great faith, to these same urgent calls. In recent issues of *Signs of God* we tried to show d'Alzon's appreciation for the first two challenges and what he did concretely to respond to them. In the present issue we would like to draw attention to his missionary zeal. He tells us that the vocation, the very *raison d'être* of the Assumption, his religious family, is the extension of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, this is the greatest of all causes. Our mission is that of the Church: to gather all men and women into the People of God. Every Assumptionist, whether religious or lay, must possess a missionary spirit, like that of the apostles, d'Alzon would say, where every inkling of laziness or false prudence is ruled out: *Have a faith that is bold, don't worry if it is characterized by a certain careless concern. Happy are those who embrace the whole world in their ambition, because what they're really ambitious about is the extension of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ everywhere!* This is the challenge, ever current, to which he calls us.

Fr. Julio Navarro Rovira, A.A.

Bringing Christ to the the margins of society

Assumptionist religious life, like a tripod, rests on three legs and aims at striking a balance among the three, prayer, community, and mission. Prayer is the breath, community the heart, and mission the spearhead. In his own words, Fr. d'Alzon elaborated at length in his writings on these three constitutive components of apostolic religious life…

What are the areas or goals set by Fr. d'Alzon for his disciples? There are no limits other than those set by Rome, the heart of the Church and center of unity from which missions extend to the farthest reaches of the world, whence this concept of a mission with universal, catholic dimensions. Tongue in cheek, Fr. d'Alzon set the Great Wall of China as the limit for the mission of the Oblates in Nimes, and it is a known fact that, towards the end of his life, he made Russia an apostolic obsession for Assumption religious. As early as 1860, he sent his first missionaries to the other side of the world, to Australia, and he rejoiced when Saint Marie-Eugenie de Jesus, the Superior of the R.A.s, seized an opportunity to create a foundation in Capetown in 1852.

If Fr. d'Alzon tried to escape the tyrannical rule of so many bishops, it is because he wanted to put his congregations under the universal supervision of Rome, which rarely rejects the gratuitous missionary initiatives of religious orders. Concretely, we know that when it comes to a particular assignment, things can be a little uncertain. Frequently, religious themselves must define on the ground what shape their commitments will take based on the needs, one's interests, and one's abilities. As for the apostolic activity of the Assumptionists, one might describe it as a sort of exercise in on-the-spot inventiveness. This term seems to describe well the work of missionaries who set out with nothing but their faith and zeal as their first resources; only later do they begin to develop more concrete means of

In the words of Fr. d'Alzon

What an immense field of endeavor is opened before us! What Jesus said to his rude disciples I say to you: "The harvest is rich" (Mt 9:37). The disciples became apostles and conquered the world.

(*Foundational Documents*, p. 133)

«A missionary aspiration o

I dream of a "missionary option", that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation. The renewal of structures demanded by pastoral conversion can only be understood in this light: as part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented, to make ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open, to inspire in pastoral workers a constant desire to go forth and in this way to elicit a positive response from all those whom Jesus summons to friendship with himself. As John Paul II once said to the Bishops of Oceania: "All renewal in the Church must have mission as its goal if it is not to fall prey to a kind of ecclesial introversion".

(…) the principal aim of these participatory processes should not be ecclesiastical organization but rather the missionary aspiration of reaching everyone.

Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: "We have always done it this way". I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their



respective communities posal of goals without a communal search for of achieving them will prove illusory. I encour one to apply the guidel in this document gener courageously, without or fear. The important not walk alone, but to r other as brothers and especially under the le the bishops, in a wise a pastoral discernment.

We see then that t evangelization operates limits of language and stances. It constantly see municate more effective of the Gospel in a speci

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