

13 Signos de Dios — Signs of God — Signes de Dieu

A Word from the Postulator

Pope Francis has declared the year 2015 « the Year of the Consecrated Life ». So I thought it would be a good opportunity to reflect on the personal testimony and teaching that Fr. d'Alzon gives us with regard to religious life. The way in which he lived the vows and the virtues of poverty, chastity, and obedience is also a sign of his holiness. His teaching on these virtues speaks to all the baptized, because it is the teaching of Jesus Christ himself. Let's begin with poverty. It makes no sense in Fr. d'Alzon's mind unless it is the imitation of Jesus' poverty, an identification with this radical option of the Son of God, born poor in a manger, working years in Nazareth by the sweat of his brow, having nowhere to lay his head during the years of his ministry, embracing the poor of his people, and dying on a cross in an act that represented the absolute pouring out of himself. Gospel poverty is linked to the virtue of hope, the act of placing all one's heart in God alone. The fruits of such virtue are interior freedom and joy. Poverty, chosen as an option for the Kingdom, can become a remarkably effective means of evangelization in our world. The poor will have a place of privilege in the heart of the one who makes himself poor out of love for Jesus Christ.

Fr. Julio Navarro Román, A.A.

He lived like the poor

His aristocratic background, his education, his relations with the nobility of his day — all of this could have made Emmanuel d'Alzon indifferent to social inequalities. But his parents, profoundly Christian, taught him that the Gospel calls us to reach out to the poor and the least among us. As a little child, his mother would bring him to visit the sick in the local hospital. As a young schoolboy he would gather the personnel at the château of Lavagnac to give them lessons and teach them catechism. As a young priest, he would distribute all that he owned to the poor. His house-keeper nicknamed him, « Fr. Give-it-away ». Even his mother, good as she was, complained of his generosity: « My son costs me more than two beggars ». Appointed diocesan Vicar general, Fr. d'Alzon led a life that was sober, even austere. He chose to live in simple quarters in a poor neighborhood of the city. He refused to accept the trunkfuls of clothes and furnishings that his family would send him. He would walk through blue-collar neighborhoods in thread-bare shoes. He encountered plenty of misery and suffering which he set out to address. From the day he arrived in Nimes, the poor found in him an advocate.

(…) In his end-of-the-year addresses at his high school, the Collège de l'Assomption, addressing parents as well as students, he would denounce in scathing terms « corruption that takes advantage of poverty and hunger ». The poor are « the suffering members of Jesus Christ ». We must learn to « respect the poor ».

(Fiches d'Alzon 80, # 6, pp. 1-2)

In Fr. d'Alzon's own words

I implore you then, my dear Brothers, to flee from the love of wealth and thus protect against the tendency to material well-being which is one of the greatest degradations of our time and the destruction of all aspirations to Christian perfection and the supernatural order.

(Spiritual Writings, 157)



2 Signes de Dieu - Signos de Dio

He chose evange

The young d'Alzon was well aware of his privileged status from a material point of view. He thanked God for allowing him to be able to work without worrying about tomorrow. He made the decision himself to strive to become poor in spirit. When he was 21, he wrote the following as he planned his life's goals: « *I am determined to become poor in spirit. I thank God for making me a man of independent means – like this I can work without worrying about tomorrow. I can make use of the goods he has given me to acquire far more easily the intellectual tools I need to fulfil my task* » (E.S., 743).

When he professed private vows of religion in 1845 at Notre Dame des Victoires Church in Paris, here is how he formulated his commitment to poverty: « *I renounce the use of all that property which may come to me except insofar as it is used for the glory of God and I reserve the right to leave it or not to leave it to my family, depending on what will be most prudent in the eyes of those I shall consult. I commit myself to living poorly with regard to clothes, food, and other living expenses..... I pledge to make every effort to waste as little of my time as possible* » (Compendium of his life and virtues, vol. II, p. 342).

In September 1845, before beginning the novitiate, Fr. d'Alzon took up residence at the Collège de l'Assomption, first in the infirmary and then in a small, windowless room which he wanted to make into a monk's cell. From the day the novitiate began (Christmas 1845) he insisted on the spirit of poverty and its practice. He would make an example of himself: « *Would you like to know how I am knuckling down to a life of poverty as a future re-*

1871 – Les C

ligious ought? I have b my own bed for some tim day before yesterday I a new cell, and actuall – not at all well, but I d Today I had pitchers placed in the passage. who live with me, or soo get used to following you have been giving us

An anecdote

One day Father return all marked with his name dear "beggar," and had in silk socks. As Fr. d'Alzon was penniless, but he di away everything in it. All Some friends, notified so and return them to Fr. d' paupers.

It is said that near the had on his feet fine silk so for any price. He showed

Thus the poor wore n mended garments. He w wonderfully wise! Is that eran, *Sketches of Fr. d'Alz*

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