

A Word from the Postulator

For Fr. d'Alzon, obedience as well as humility finds its origin in faith. The most perfect model of obedience is Jesus himself, the Son of God, born of a woman, who became man among us so as to carry out the plans of God his Father. That is why obedience, for our founder, is not simply an ascetical virtue, destined solely for one's personal sanctification, but is, above all, an apostolic virtue. In the following way the current Rule of Life of the Assumptionists translates these words of Fr. d'Alzon: « *Lived in faith and prayer, obedience opens our hearts to God and to all human beings. Gradually, it transforms our tendency to dominate into a desire to serve and to promote the good of others. It reveals our faith and our availability to the will of the Father. It is thus a sign of the Kingdom* » (#43).

For Fr. d'Alzon, obedience also translated into absolute loyalty and fidelity to the Church, especially to the teachings, guidelines, and decisions of the Pope: « *Religious will have absolute and filial obedience first and foremost to Our Holy Father the Pope…* » (*First Constitutions of 1855*, Book I, ch. 10).

Let us also not forget that Fr. d'Alzon was himself an energetic and charismatic superior, whom we would describe today as a true leader; he had the knack of forming men and women to be full of creativity, initiative, faith, and generous commitment in their ministry. Not only did he know how to respect their personal gifts, but he also opened them to broad, new horizons where they could exercise their apostolic passion: Etienne Pernet, François Picard, Marie Correnson, Victorin Galabert, Vincent de Paul Bailly, etc.

Fr. Julio Navarro Román, A.A.

The Virtue of Obedience

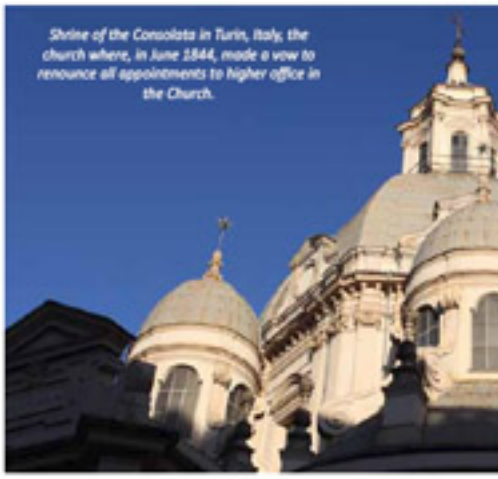
Fr. d'Alzon has given us an understanding of obedience at once lofty and original; it is rooted in an exceptionally apostolic spirit. For Fr. d'Alzon, our obedience flows fundamentally from the filial obedience of the Word of God, inscribed from all eternity in his divine person and made manifest in the eternal decree of his redeeming mission that destined him for death, and death on the cross. This perfect obedience of the Son of God enlightens the entire history of the world just as it penetrated the life of Christ among us on earth. We must always keep it before our eyes because our obedience is also an obedience of those sent by God for the salvation of the world. In his own rule of life, Fr. d'Alzon writes, « The apostle himself is a "nobody." He derives all his worth from whoever sent him – and his value depends on how faithfully he carries out his commission. This is why I must endeavour to be an obedient apostle. Obedience, in all its goodness, places us under God's immediate control – so I will be truly obedient only in so far as God assumes complete mastery over me. The apostle loves whoever sent him. But he also loves those to whom he is sent, because his mission is one of love and mercy. » (*E.S.*, p. 781). (*First Constitutions*, note from the chapter on obedience).

Fr. d'Alzon's speaks to us

Admirable mystery, in which God gives us ever greater freedom to the extent that we allow him to reign more perfectly over us and in which the perfection of our obedience is the source of the very perfection of our freedom.

("First Letter to the Master of Novices, " *Ecrits Spirituels*, p. 153)

Obedience: humble,



Shrine of the Consolata in Turin, Italy, the church where, in June 1844, made a vow to renounce all appointments to higher office in the Church.

Speaking of the virtue of obedience, we can see the disposition that characterized Fr. d'Alzon throughout his life, how he sought to submit himself to God's will, revealed on the one hand by his superiors — the bishops he served under, the Pope, and Vatican I, and, on the other hand, by the Rule of the congregation he founded.

As a young priest, still a student in Rome, the Abbé d'Alzon envisioned missionary work among the Protestant population of southern France, but he understood that he would have to do so in perfect harmony with his bishop's wishes. « I am convinced above all, » he wrote to his mother, « that it is not in doing my own will that I can do the will of God ». He adds a little later on, « My will consists in going to find the bishop of Nimes and doing neither more nor less than what he tells me ». And, in fact, when the bishop brushed his plans aside, however much it may have cost him, he accepted the decision « trying to throw himself blindly into the arms of Providence ».

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