

A Word from the Postulator

Saints are not born saints. Holiness is, first and foremost, a grace that comes from God; nevertheless, at the same time, it requires a generous response on the part of the Christian who pursues the ideal of becoming a saint. For Fr. d'Alzon, the ultimate goal of his own life was certainly, and always, holiness. And to get there, he had to overcome a lot of obstacles in his way.

One of these, he admits again and again, was pride. It was part of his temperament, which, in his own words, he described as "mocking, irritable, proud, and scornful." And he suffered from it. That is why humility would be one of the virtues he worked hardest to acquire. He recommended it as something essential to his religious and to those who came to him for spiritual direction: "Of all the virtues, humility is surely the most indispensable."

True humility is born of faith, because it places us face to face with God: "God is everything; I am nothing" in relation to him. Humility "arises when we compare who God is to who we are". Humility leads us to enter into the deepest recesses of our being and to see ourselves as we are with all our weaknesses and problems. Finally, humility facilitates relations with others marked by respect, service, obedience, and love.

Fr. Julio Navarro Rombi, A.A.

Humility, a virtue painfully acquired

As a young man, Emmanuel d'Alzon was wont to say that pride formed the basis of his character and that he was trying to curb it. He wrote in 1831: Pride is waging a cruel war against me. I am sadly experiencing the influence exerted upon me by the opinion I have of myself. I contemplate myself endlessly and I always admire myself; I almost adore myself, and yet pride makes me sink to the level of dirt; it is shattering me, it is crushing me.... I know all too well that I have been worth something, have adhered exactly to my plan of conduct, been firm in my work, strong against my passions only when I attacked the first of these, only when I was convinced of my uselessness, only when I told myself: "You are nothing. You are worth nothing." I know all this, and yet the opinion I have of myself is always the very best.

He can be believed because he was clear-eyed about his flaws, and his absolute truthfulness was not only applied to others, but to himself as well. It should be added, however, that the uncompromising judgment he was directing against his own person in his correspondence gives the impression not of humbleness, which is the result of a virtuous constraint, but of the most natural and spontaneous humility. (...) (He writes) again, in 1854 : "The shame that the sight of my past life causes me, the futility of my life, the blemishes which human feelings have cast on the little bit of good that I am capable of doing, all this upsets me greatly. I hope that God will have pity on me." Finally, (...) in 1855: "The Blessed Virgin has obtained for me...very great graces. I have understood that I preach myself too much and not Jesus Christ enough; that I must attract souls by being less mocking, irritable, proud, and scornful. I must draw them through patience, humility, gentleness that I do not have and that I must acquire..." (...) The uprightness of Father d'Alzon is confirmed first of all in his humility.

(Gaëtan Bernoville, *Emmanuel d'Alzon,1810-1880. A Champion of the XIX^th^ Century Catholic Renaissance in France*, trans. Claire Quintal, Bayard, Inc., 2003, p. 226-227 http://www.assumption.us/media/virtual-library/47-virtual-library/516-emmanuel-dalzon).

Fr d'Alzon says to us

Humility is a form of love. There are a lot of links between humility and love.
You cannot truly love without forgetting yourself.

(*Cahiers d'Alzon*, #8, p. 118)

Example of

It is true that the Servant of God practiced to a heroic degree the virtue of humility that serves as the foundation on which all other virtues are built. By nature he had a spirit that was open to noble and generous thoughts. By instinct he loathed petty and vulgar self-centeredness. In his regard, high-mindedness and a solid character went hand in hand with humility, the virtue of great souls. During his meditations, he would often place himself before God or before the most perfect of God's works. Thus an ideal of perfection shone before his eyes; and from there, coming down to himself, he would find himself quite small. "Who am I," he said, quoting the Scriptures, "if not dust and ashes?" Yet it was only because he looked on high that he found himself so small. He felt this nothingness in which he now lost himself: it was *humility, the fruit of his soul's greatness*. The small-minded have no experience of this. Having no idea of anything in the world that might be greater than they are, they are thoroughly satisfied with themselves. Fr. d'Alzon, accustomed to considering the perfections of God, was also well aware, by contrast, of the creature's defects. (*Articles gathered at the Nîmes inquiry for the cause of the beatification and canonization of Fr. d'Alzon*, Bar-Le-Duc, 1958, p. 86).


Stained glass window from the ch
of the Assumption i

An anecdote

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from the journey had
naked feet, they asked
water to wash them.
of the house who re
was alone at the time,
make the guests awar
simply asked them to

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