

A Word from the Postulator

For Fr. d'Alzon, mercy is a virtue that every Christian must cultivate. It flows from charity and is an essential aspect of any apostolic work. One is struck by the great sensitivity that Fr. d'Alzon had for « social work » or the « worker question », from the very first years of his priesthood till the end of his life. The works that he founded or took control of in the diocese of Nîmes are countless: adult education classes for the poor, youth shelters, orphanages, alternative detention centers for juvenile delinquents, workers' circles, soldiers' circles, an association for the distribution of Catholic literature, parish libraries, home visits to the poor, foundation of a women's congregation for domestic workers (The Work of St. Martha), a center for liturgical vestments, the Association of the Ladies of Mercy, etc. He established the Association of Our Lady of Salvation to foster all kinds of social outreach efforts. Among them he included pilgrimages. His first disciples understood perfectly well the spirit that was to permeate these efforts and the importance of this ministry for the Church and the society of their time. Great was the admiration that Fr. d'Alzon had for the ministry founded by Fr. Etienne Pernet, the Little Sisters of the Assumption, and their apostolate among working families. In this newsletter we will cite several extracts from Fr. d'Alzon's works. « Go and preach the gospel to the poor »!

Rev. Julio Navarro Rondón, A.A.

Proponent of works of mercy

Fr. d'Alzon was a great proponent, and sometimes founder, of works in behalf of workers and the disadvantaged. Here we read two examples (Life of Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon, Siméon Vailhé, volume II, pp. 190-193).

Association of Watchmen

This association had as its objective the spiritual and material assistance of the needy sick, during the night… This care was given free of charge, the watchmen taking care of men and their female counterparts the women. What characterized this association in Nîmes is that the lion's share of those recruited came from the mass of simple people, who, after having labored and sweated all day long, would deprive themselves of sleep to watch over and console the suffering members of the body of Jesus Christ. From the very start of its existence, there was such a great number of members who joined, so many needy sick who were comforted, so many who received the last rites before dying, that the results exceeded all expectations and the bishop declared that this new ministry would be definitively maintained…

During this period there returned to Nîmes, for only a few years, a humble Assumptionist priest who spent lots of time among workers and whose ministry was never fully understood except by the poor. He, too, would soon be brought to provide the needy poor with watchers day and night, who would offer their services free of any compensation whatsoever… Who knows whether or not Fr. Pernet did not discover in this work in Nîmes the initial idea for his Congregation of the Little Sisters of the Assumption, attendants for the working poor at home?

Liturgical vestment center

Fr. d'Alzon procured work for choice laborers among the poor and enhanced the beauty of liturgical worship by the care that these workers paid in making vestments

In Fr. d'Alzon's words

Charity is a beautiful tree the seeds of which are at the disposition of the Holy Spirit.

The Ladies



D'Alzon was blessed with an acute sixth sense that allowed him to anticipate the Revolution of 1848; he was taken up with it when he gave his talks to the Ladies of Mercy. He urged ladies of high society to be prepared and to take every precaution.

Moreover, these ladies repeated to us how, during their meetings, he would energize their Christian lives. He told them that they weren't giving enough, that they needed to turn this situation around by making visits filled with a spirit of faith, with uplifting words, with holy examples, and by the transparent and loyal demonstration of Christian women distributing alms of hope and of truth everywhere!

He told them that, in order to bring peace to people, they had to *draw them to Him*.

He also committed them to pay close attention at the same time to the lessons they could learn from the misery they witnessed and from patience as well as from the grumbling they heard and from their experience. (…)

We have found a handwritten list of instructions that he must have made around this time entitled, *Subjects of the instructions for the Association of Mercy*. In these few lines one can grasp what he wanted to convey to these ladies of high society:

- On the obligation t
poor (he often returne
cept of almsgiving, ap
what one did not really
- On the renunciatio
sual life (eyewitnesse
us that people would
members of Catholic
to galas sponsored by P
ciety to destroy, with
worldly celebrations,
Lent, the fervor amon
that Fr. d'Alzon had st
- On respect for the
poor (Father often pre
scandal given to the
rich).
- On the need for al

and other items worthy of their destination… The city of Nîmes was known for the beauty and quality of its cloth, no less than for the traditional craftsmanship of its weavers. Sometimes they were without work and orders often lagged at a time when meager salaries did not always provide enough bread for a household. In December 1852, in the middle of the industrial crisis, Fr. d'Alzon was

take
fro
as u
cha
was
Fra
clot

A Word of the Postulator

For Fr. d'Alzon, mercy is a virtue that every Christian must cultivate. It flows from charity and is an essential aspect of any apostolic work. One is struck by the great sensitivity that Fr. d'Alzon

had for « social work » or the « worker question », from the very first years of his priesthood till the end of his life. The works that he founded or took control of in the diocese of Nîmes are countless: adult education classes for the poor, youth shelters, orphanages, alternative detention centers for juvenile delinquents, workers' circles, soldiers' circles, an association for the distribution of Catholic literature, parish libraries, home visits to the poor, foundation of a women's congregation for domestic workers (The Work of St. Martha), a center for liturgical vestments, the Association of the Ladies of Mercy, etc. He established the Association of Our Lady of Salvation to foster all kinds of social outreach efforts. Among them he included pilgrimages. His first disciples understood perfectly well the spirit that was to permeate these efforts and the importance of this ministry for the Church and the society of their time. Great was the admiration that Fr. d'Alzon had for the ministry founded by Fr. Etienne Pernet, the Little Sisters of the Assumption, and their apostolate among working families. In this newsletter we will cite several extracts from Fr. d'Alzon's works. « Go and preach the gospel to the poor »!

Rev. Julio Navarro Román, A.A.

  Read more » PDF version