

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

Word from the Postulator

A total gift of self to God! What justifies the presence of this theme when treating the cause of Fr. d'Alzon's beatification? During the meeting of the International Secretariat for the Postulation, held in Rome from May 17-19, 2016, the first of the proposed objectives was to **know and make known** the Servant of God. And one of the concrete means identified to achieve this goal consisted in spreading the thought and teachings found in his writings. This brings us back to the conviction that Venerable Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon is a sign of holiness for us, and that he continues to speak to us still today as a man of faith, and to teach us by his personal witness and by his multifaceted apostolic action.

So we are speaking here of an important aspect of the Christian life and the consecrated life since it touches upon the quality and depth of our commitment to follow Christ. Fr. d'Alzon is raising the question, therefore, of the meaning of our total gift to Christ in our consecration to the religious life, a question that is also shared by all Christians by virtue of their baptism. We thought it would make sense in this issue to recall what he says to us about the profound meaning of **the total gift of self to God**, understood as an **ongoing process** of the experience of the Christian life and of the consecrated life.

Fr. Julio Navarro Román, A.A.

Total gift of self to God

The dynamic of self-giving is fundamental for every person who professes faith in God. This is the case of those who have chosen to follow Christ by consecrating their lives to him, such as the founders of religious congregations. God entrusted to each of them a specific mission to be carried out in a well defined context. The initiative, therefore, comes from God. They have died to self in their fidelity to Christ.

Fr. d'Alzon was also called by God, and he acknowledged this call. His experience of religious life, as it is connected to the question of the total gift of self to God, reveals to us the major preoccupation of a *Spiritual Master of the 19th Century* (translator's note: this title refers to a famous book on Fr. d'Alzon by Fr. Athanase sage, A.A., entitled *Un Maître spirituel du 19ème siècle*). A close reading of d'Alzon *Spiritual Writings* allows us to grasp his preoccupation with leading an exemplary consecrated life, that is to say, with the ideal of a gift of self to God as an ongoing experience or process of the religious life.

We see here a twofold conviction. On the one hand, as a religious, Fr. d'Alzon lived a life of total gift of self to God and translated that commitment into concrete acts: throughout his life he was faithful to what he promised God. On the other hand, he explicitly spoke of this experience in terms of gift of self in connection with the religious life.

It is clear that Fr. d'Alzon's spiritual adventure was characterized by three dimensions to which he keeps coming back: that of a Christian, of a priest, and of a religious. In his life these three dimensions were invariably interwined.

(Fr. Jean-Marie Vianney Katabu Kavunga, A.A.)

In the words of Fr.d'Alzon

« The gift of self.
This is what religious life consists in,
but there are many ways of self-giving.
A religious gives himself to the point of perfection ».
(Spiritual Writings/ES, p. 1107)

What does Fr. d'

The experience of Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon

The gift of self as a reality of the experience of the consecrated life remained a major preoccupation of Fr. d'Alzon. An analysis of an instruction on religious life, from the year 1874 (ES 1107-1109), shows how, by inference, he clearly relates the experience of religious life with that of the total gift of self.

Fr. d'Alzon begins this instruction with a problematic that's quite clear, expressed in the first two sentences of his treatment. On the gift of self, he writes, *«This is what religious life consists in, but there are many ways of self-giving. A religious gives himself to the point of perfection »* (ES 1107).

Three questions might be posed based on this problematic. 1) For Fr. d'Alzon in what does the total gift of self to God consist in religious life? 2) As one responsible for a religious family, what did he think the day-to-day life of a religious would look like in the light of the gift of self? 3) What is the *goal* of this gesture of self-giving made by a religious? This problematic brings to light the train of thought of Fr. d'Alzon on the idea and meaning of the gift of self in connection with religious life.

A religious' everyday experience, an expression of the gift of self

For Venerable Fr. d'Alzon, what is essential consists in the conscious and responsible giving at the level of religious practice and fidelity to the mission received from God. Therefore, from the very beginning, Fr. d'Alzon presents a *specific definition* of the gift of self, *«Religious life consists in this »*. As a result, there clearly appears this conviction of Fr. d'Alzon: religious life constitutes a fundamental experience of self-givi

In fact, the gift is founding and fundame of religious life, but it perceived as an existent of this experience. We if only briefly, but s the *definition* of religi *«the gift of self»*. The lived experience of a the expression of this doing so, Fr. d'Alzon e entire lifetime of exper

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Water-color by Sr. Angela Koreon Oblate of the Assu general house of the Assu

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