

By Fr. Oliver Blanchette, A.A.

Fr. Julio, postulator of the Cause of Beatification of Fr. d'Alzon, in "Signs of God", N.7, and in this Year of Faith, writes again about the profound faith of our Founder. In our Church today, and in our country deeply penetrated by individualism and secularism, there is need of models of faith like Fr. d'Alzon. In the last issue of the "For a Good Cause" series we mentioned how Fr. Seve, A.A. finally became convinced that in speaking of d'Alzon's faith he could no longer separate it from his love of God. Seve characterizes our Founder as a man of "faith-love." Faith is the portal to life in God, but to truly live our faith we must step through this doorway and put our faith into practice. This calls for charity, love of God, love of neighbor. And love calls for deeds, for action. Finally we believe and we learn by personal experience that this life of faith-love is beyond our capacities. We need, to live it, God's grace, we need to hope in God. Faith, hope and love; these virtues are at the very heart of any truly Christian living. In the face of the frenzied pace of life that so many call living today, it is clear that the New Evangelization, excuse the expression, "won't sell", unless like our Pope Francis, we put our faith into action through concrete deeds of love towards all, especially the disadvantaged, seeking the strength to do this, not in ourselves but in God, in hope for his assistance.

This is important. Remember how St. James tells us so forcefully that faith without works is dead. "…what good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, ''Go in peace, keep warm and eat well,'' but you do not give them the necessities of the body what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead." (James, 2, 14-17). So also Fr d'Alzon, very early in life learned that faith and love of God and neighbor must never be separated. A classic example of this is when he first arrived in Nimes as a young priest. He refused the carriage with the family coat of arms his parents provided him with. (Emmanuel d'Alzon – Gaetan Bernoville, p.85) Vicontess d'Alzon took advantage of her son's visit to their palatial home to replenish his wardrobe. But her son

would arrive in his own rather Spartan quarters quite ragged for he gave away everything. He never knew how to refuse. One day a beggar who often profited of his generosity was seen proudly walking around with the velvet stockings of a noble man, while the young priest had just a pair of old socks to wear! Already years of study of the Bible, of prayer and reflection had given d'Alzon a strong Gospel Spirituality of simplicity and poverty. And then would come, as mentioned in earlier articles, a time of trial when he would be burdened by financial worries, recruiting problems for his newly founded Congregation and especially a serious illness that left him very weak and often in great pain. And, as we recall, it was then that he better realized the need to count more and more on the mercy of God and not on his own remarkable talents, and to place his hope evermore in God. And it was then that he also realized the need to draw closer and closer to Jesus, to lose himself in Christ and to be able to say "Christ is my Life!" Only then did he come fully alive. And perhaps it was with this greater knowledge and love of Christ that his appreciation and awareness of the active loving presence of the Blessed Trinity also grew. And so it is not surprising that more and more we will see him sharing in the triune life of God as he lives out in his life all three of the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. Virtues so lofty and yet so human! For even as they put us in closer touch with God they allow us to know who we are, where we should be going, how we should get there, and assure us of the possibility of getting there; helping us to live more fully, as they surely did for Fr. d'Alzon.

Hear what Fr Seve, A.A., writes about how this ever deeper love of Christ, love of the "Whole Christ'', as Fr. d'Alzon would say, led him to deeper attention and devotion to the Holy Trinity: "I tried to live alone with you Jesus, and I discovered it was not you. For you are never alone. I was *getting tangled in my loves: God, you and my attempts at fraternal charity. By holding fast to the Gospel I expect to attain wholeness in a single love. It's St. John especially who makes me understand that when I encounter you exactly as you revealed yourself I always encounter the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and my brothers and sisters. You are at the very center of everything. And, if I really wanted to, I* could live everything through you …You want the very love that is the communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to touch us, to be within us. Who could have imagined such a thing without John's Gospel? A communionoy Spirit… Always through you, Jesus…I have l of love, here on earth. among us brothers and sisters, and through it a sharing in your communion, Father, Son and Holy Spirit… Always through you…. I have learned through the Gospels that to love you now without seeing you , to love you , Jesus with the Father and the Holy Spirit , to love by loving my brothers and sisters, yes that alone is truly living."(My Life with Jesus, Andre Seve, A.A., pages 193-200.) Would that have been a slightly updated way of speaking of Fr. d'Alzon's love of the Trinity? And, as Fr. Seve's reminds us, this love of Christ is to lead to fraternal charity, a life of service to all our brothers and sisters . And, again, it's Fr Seve who reminds us that our founder's "capacity for action leaves us breathless', action, needless to say, of service to others for the good of the Kingdom of God.

But always the only doorway to all this life is Faith, the foundational gift of God at **Baptism. That's how d'Alzon entered this life and lived it to the full. And that is why we have**

confidence in the holiness of our Founder.

And so we are not surprised to read in the last issue, N.7 of ‘Signs of God” how persistent prayers to God through the intercession of Fr. d’Alzon, for the healing of Bianca Belinato Palonato, who suffered from many serious ailments for years, have been heard; Bianca is now a "beautiful , young teenager completely healed.” May this moving story encourage us also to ask through the intercession of our Founder for healings of afflicted people. God loves persistence and one day, soon we hope, the Church will be able to confirm the necessary miracle for d’Alzon’s Beatification which will be for the glory of God, but also for the good of so many old and new admirers of Emmanuel d’Alzon, man of faith, fully alive, ever striving for the coming of the Kingdom of God within each of us and in the world.