

From the very beginning Fr. d'Alzon associated religious and lay people together in an exciting evangelical journey, both marked by the Assumptionist spirit, depending on their respective vocation. The association religious- lay, is an old story at Assumption.

According to the different historical moments, it took different forms. Active collaboration took place in common apostolic endeavors, whether the Catholic Press or pilgrimages at times supplanted the spirit. But long before Vatican II, lay people did not want to be, any more than today, simply executors of the tasks determined by the "Fathers" in spite of a real admiration and unfailing loyalty to them. Initiatives never rested solely with the religious, as if lay people could be but subordinates. But it is true that sharing, in fundamental matters, was not frequent and that many lay people felt "inferior" to the "religious priests."

It seems that it has been given to our times to bond again with the initial intention in order find ourselves, religious and lay people, profoundly involved in the same gospel adventure, through the inspiration of St. Augustine and Fr. d'Alzon, in this bicentenary of our founder's birth.

In France, the number of women and men religious decreases each year. Educational, health and charitable institutions carry on but without them, without a community at their service. Religious life is no longer the same and the Orders, in the future, will undoubtedly not recover their former strength. However, lay people desirous of sharing in the spirit of a religious family do not come to fill in diminishing - religious ranks. They clearly intend to remain who they are and to live fully their baptismal vocation. But they hope to share the spirit of a religious body that they discover in the life of some of its members, whom they come to know. Little by little the Alliance has taken shape, even if it is still stammering, modifying on all sides, the habits, ways of living and of acting. The Rule of Life corresponds to a Way of Life for Lay assumptionists. It marks out the route to be followed, describes the spirit to be lived out in matters of fraternal life, of spiritual life, of study and reflection as well as formation, of mission and of apostolic service.

For a long time, lay people of different ages and diverse social conditions have gone forward, at their own pace, along this Way. But twenty among them have decided, and this is new, to officially commit themselves, as couples or not, in a liturgical celebration, to follow this path. And even if they, in doing this, ratify a path they are already following, it remains a decisive and significant gesture for each of them. They count on our prayer, especially on November 20, 2010 at 6 p.m. at Valpre, near Lyon, the very moment their choice becomes public. One cannot doubt that this will be a moment of joy for Fr. D'Alzon.

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Former General Superior of the Assumptionists

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