

On November 12, 1903, after years of hard work, the Assumptionist Community moved into a ten-room house on Fales Street, establishing the first missionary residence of the Augustinians of the Assumption in Worcester. The community grew and later became the Assumption College we know today, fulfilling the dream of Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon.

Exactly one century later, on November 12, 2003, a Liturgy of Thanksgiving Mass was held in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit on the Assumption College campus to celebrate 100 years of the Assumptionist presence in Worcester.

During the Mass, Very Reverend John L. Franck, A.A., provincial superior of the North American Province, delivered a homily that detailed the timeline of the Assumptionist settlement in Worcester. He described the "heroic sacrifices" of leader Fr. Thomas Darbois, A.A., whose "perseverance and determination kept the flame burning."

Following the Mass, a reception in the Atrium of the Testa Science Center honored Marc A. LePain, Ph.D., a professor of Theology at the College. LePain was the recipient of the Emmanuel d'Alzon Medal, which is given to people who have outstandingly exemplified in their lives the vision and guiding principles of the Assumptionist Founder. These are "men and women of faith and energy who give witness to the validity and priority of spiritual values in an increasingly secular world and who courageously bring to bear in their activities the life-giving message of Christ".

The Medal, which was last awarded in 1995, has honored such prominent recipients such as Bishop John J. Wright (1959), Danny Thomas (1967); and Johannes Cardinal Willebrands (1980).

LePain, who received a bachelor's degree from Assumption College in 1965 and returned to teach in 1971, has taught a variety of theology and philosophy courses at every educational level of the College. He is also the director of the Ecumenical Institute at the College, which was re-founded in 1999 to provide a forum for reflection and discussion of questions of common interest to people of all faiths. The Institute organizes the College's annual d'Alzon Lecture, among other lectures and programs.

The award was presented to LePain by Fr. Franck and Fr. Dennis Gallagher. A.A., vice president for Mission.

“Marc A. LePain, for more than 30 years, you have admirably exemplified Fr. Emmanuel d’Alzon’s words: ‘If we ourselves love the truth, we will spare no efforts in teaching our students to love it too,’” Franck said. “You challenge your students to take up those questions which lie at the heart of a Catholic education and of a thoughtful and virtuous life.”

Accompanied by his wife, Patricia, and his four children: Maria, Julie, Joseph and Sarah, LePain accepted the medal proudly. During his remarks, he alluded to two gifts that Assumption has given him: the life of study and an opening to the world. He also expressed gratitude towards his colleagues and students. “You all continue to teach me through your love of learning,” he said, smiling.

LePain also recognized his cousin, Fr. Wilfrid Dufault A.A. ’29, honorary trustee and former president of the College, as an influential part of his success. “He has been a mentor in the Assumption way through his letters, through our conversations, and above all, by his example of great generosity,” LePain said.

Thanking the event’s attendees, LePain closed by saying “One hundred years from tonight, may another Emmanuel d’Alzon medalist wish your successors as I wish you tonight, ‘Happy New Century!’”