

## **Feast of the Assumption and 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Oblates**

All Assumptionists, both women and men, seek to transmit the precious heritage of the charism of their spirituality - the passion to make Jesus Christ known and loved. Wherever they find themselves, they seek to be of service to the poor, the marginalised, the voiceless, the forgotten, and the despised within society.

Our motto is ***Thy Kingdom Come*** taken from the Our Father and our founder, Fr Emmanuel d'Alzon, added ***because of our love of Jesus Christ!***

Emmanuel d'Alzon, founded the Augustinians of the Assumption in 1850 and 15 years later founded the Oblates of the Assumption to help the Assumptionists with their work in Bulgaria building bridges between Rome and the Orthodox Church, realising that one of the best way to do this was through working among the poor. This year, the Oblates of the Assumption celebrate 150 years of their foundation.

The name of our founder, Emmanuel, as you know, means God-with-us: our mission is to make God known and loved: to convince everyone that God is truly with us, loves us deeply and that true life is impossible without him. Mary, whose feast we celebrate today, showed us the truth and the extent of God's love for us by accepting to bring God into the world in the person of Jesus Christ. What today's Gospel shows us is that, once we say yes to God, our soul's response to welcoming God into our lives is, like Mary, to want to shout out our praise and glorify God; being filled with gratitude because we are able to see the truth of the world and God's deep love for humanity.

This is the power of saying **YES** to God!

Emmanuel d'Alzon left us, Assumptionists, with the highest of ideals to follow and emulate. Loyal to a fault to the Church in his dedication and commitment, he never came across as someone who presents us with an impossible challenge but rather as one who inspires within us a desire to give ourselves ever more generously to Christ – this is the fruit of our **charism**. Once you realise this about our charism you will realise how much Mary inspires us when we see the generosity of the gift of herself completely to Christ. Wherever we might seek to travel in following Christ, Mary has been there before us and, like a true mother, is always ready to encourage, support, and strengthen us and, yes, even challenge and reprimand us when the need arises. This is a work she continues to do down through the ages for all of Christ's followers, in the various apparitions and inspiring places dedicated to her. It is no wonder that Mary's Assumption was believed from the earliest days of the Church by its faithful. How could someone so dedicated, so trusting, so loyal not be raised totally, body and soul, to heaven? Yet, the Assumption is not just about God's recognition for all the Mary has done and is doing but it also reminds us that she gifted the totality of her life, body and soul, to God – she offered everything of herself. No wonder then that we have adopted the name of the Assumption and the honoured place we have for her as Assumptionists.

I believe Pope Francis is a closet Assumptionist, in his repeated call to us to open up people to the joy of the Gospel; reminding us that we are all called to do this, religious, priests and laity. Our first response to this call is: How? And probably, we too easily think that we are not

good enough to do that; let the professionals get on with it. But Pope Francis is calling ALL of us to this mission. He also has the wisdom to tell us that we do not have to do it in the same way. We can witness to the joy of the Gospel in our families, in our places of work, in our schools and universities. But we need help to do this. Religious have a particular way of doing this with a three pronged approach: prayer, work and study. Assumptionists have found that the more time given to prayer, the more we can accomplish for the Glory of God.

From the earliest times Fr d'Alzon worked with the laity in founding his first congregation. He sought their reflections and insights. Used trial and error, never sought to impose the austerities he imposed on himself on others. He adopted the rule of St Augustine precisely because it recognised the individuality of the response each makes to God's call but also because Augustine recognised the value and importance of community support in fulfilling our mission. Didn't Jesus form a community at the beginning of his ministry? God sought our cooperation in redeeming us by asking Mary to become the Mother of Jesus but then left her to carry out that task in her own way while giving her all the support, strength and courage to fulfil her task. This is true for us, too. God never asks anything of us that we cannot accomplish because he is there to provide all we need to fulfil our task.

Our Assumptionist charism inspires, motivates and energises us in our mission. From the beginning Fr d'Alzon wished to found a lay branch of Assumptionists but Rome was not ready for it then. In recent years Assumptionists have renewed this desire of their Founder and formed lay branches of the Assumption which take all

sorts of forms but all of which have responded to the Assumptionist charism which they find inspiring, motivating, and helps promote in them a positive response to the call made by Pope Francis to become evangelisers, not because they are asked to do so but because it is their deepest desire. The Assumptionist charism helps nurture that desire into a passion to witness to the joy of the gospel ever more strongly.

Fr d'Alzon was down to earth and did not want us to have a particular trait but asked us to be Catholic, but as fully Catholic as can be. He knew that by living the Gospel as true brothers and sisters of Christ we would inspire others to share in the Joy we find in the Gospel.

Our charism does not add anything more to the way you already live your life but rather seeks to help you become more focused in your prayer, in the development of your faith, in your spiritual life and in fulfilling your mission and becoming more fully Catholic.

On this feast of the Assumption, we join with Mary in giving thanks and praise to God for asking us, like her, to bring forth Christ to the world for its redemption. But we also thank and praise God for the gift he made to us of Mary as our mother. We thank God for inspiring our founder to dedicate ourselves to him through the Assumption and join with all the saints in celebrating this great feast.

Our Lady of the Assumption continues to inspire and motivate us in spreading the good news of the Kingdom her son Jesus established among us.

She does the same for you.

Our Lady of the Assumption, prayer for us.