

Our Story

Emmanuel d'Alzon having founded the Assumptionist Fathers, sent them to the Near East (present day Bulgaria) with a mission to work for the rapprochement of the Churches of East and West. They quickly realised that access to the local population was likely to be impossible without the help of women.

Fr. d'Alzon was a remarkable Spiritual Guide, filled with extraordinary prudence and finesse, both psychological and spiritual. He very soon found six women to share his missionary dream.

These six were hardy mountain women. They had very little education. The eldest was fifty-two years old and the others were in their twenties and thirties. What they lacked in education, however, was more than compensated for by the grandeur of their faith and by their courage and generosity. They commenced their training as Oblate Sisters on 24th May 1865 and it was thus that the new Missionary Congregation came into being.

Three years later they were joined by Marie Correnson who was to become the co-foundress. The first Sisters left France for Bulgaria for what was to be the first of many "missions". Despite their lack of education and the poverty of their material backgrounds, these early women were destined to accomplish extraordinary work.

Strife and suffering coloured their earliest years and they were called upon to show their adaptability. War brought famine and disease in its wake – the Sisters were obliged to transform their schools to take in 200 war orphans besides running hospitals and Health Centres. Generously and joyfully they continued and were quickly joined by other young women ready to offer their lives, too, to God and the service of the poor. Their work gradually extended the missionary territories, eventually covering much of what we used to refer to as "the Eastern Bloc".

The Communist period was a painful page of our story. The Sisters were obliged to live clandestinely and some served long periods in prison but today this missionary territory is flourishing once more. A "new springtime" came about in very daring circumstances when, yet again, some bold and daring young women were prepared to take "the risk of faith" knowing that if they were discovered then they, too, risked prison.

The Eastern Mission was not to be exclusive and today the Oblates of the Assumption live and work in over 20 countries worldwide confirming the prophetic words of our Founder:

"What foolishness to dare this with a handful of poor girls! ... God uses all sorts of means and will use even you" Emmanuel d'Alzon to the first Oblates