

## Reflection Monday Week 18 St Alphonsus Liguori 2022

**St Alphonsus Liguori (1696 - 1787)** was born in Marianella near Naples on 27<sup>th</sup> September 1696. He was the first in a large family of Neapolitan nobility. He received a broad education in the humanities, classical and modern languages, painting and music. He composed a *Duetto* on the Passion, a popular Italian Christmas carol, *Tu Scendi Dalle Stelle*, and numerous hymns. He earned a Doctorate in both civil and canon law and worked in the legal profession.

In 1723, he abandoned his legal career and, despite his father's strong opposition, began seminary studies. He was ordained a priest on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1726, aged 30. His first years of priesthood was with the homeless and marginalized young people of Naples. He founded the "Evening Chapels" run by the young people themselves. They were centres of prayer, community, the Word of God, social activity and education. At his death, there were 72 of these chapels with over 10,000 active participants.

In 1729, Alphonsus moved from his family home to the Chinese College in Naples, where he began his missionary experience among people much poorer and more abandoned than the street children in Naples.

On 9<sup>th</sup> November 1732, Alphonsus founded the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, the Redemptorists, to follow the example of Jesus Christ by announcing the Good News to the poor and most abandoned. Alphonsus loved beauty: music, art, poetry and books which he and his followers used in service of the mission. He wrote 111 works on spirituality and theology. The 21,500 editions and the translations into 72 languages show that he was a widely read author. Among his best-known works are: *The Great Means of Prayer*, *The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ*, *The Glories of Mary* and *The Visits to the Most Holy Sacrament*. Prayer, love, his relationship with Christ and his first-hand experience of the pastoral needs of the faithful have made Alphonsus one of the great masters of the interior life. Alphonsus' greatest contribution to the Church was in Moral Theology' see his *Moral Theology*. It derived from his pastoral experience, his ability to respond to practical questions posed by the faithful and his contact with everyday problems. He opposed the sterile legalism suffocating theology and rejected the strict rigorism of the time... the product of the powerful elite. Alphonsus believed that paths to the Gospel were closed because "such rigour has never been taught nor practised by the Church". He knew how to put theological reflection at the service of the greatness and dignity of the person, of a moral conscience, and of evangelical mercy.

Alphonsus was consecrated bishop of St. Agatha of the Goths in 1762 aged 66. He tried to refuse the appointment because he felt too old and too sick to properly care for the diocese. In 1775, he retired and went to live in the Redemptorist community in Pagani where he died on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1787. He was canonized in 1839, proclaimed a Doctor of the Church in 1871 and made Patron of Confessors and Moralists in 1950.