

Reflection Tuesday Week 17 St Alphonsus Liguori 2023

Saint Alphonsus Liguori was born in Marianella (Naples) September 27, 1696. The first born to a Neapolitan noble family. He education in the humanities, classical and modern languages, painting and music. He composed a *Duetto* on the Passion, a popular Christmas carol, *Tu Scendi Dalle Stelle*, and other hymns. He gained a Doctorate in both civil and canon law and entered the legal profession. In 1723, he abandoned his legal career and, despite family opposition, began his seminary studies. He was ordained a priest on December 21, 1726, aged 30. He lived firstly with the homeless and marginalized young people of Naples. He founded the "Evening Chapels", run by young people, as centres of prayer, community, the Word of God, social activities and education. At his death, there were 72 chapels with over 10,000 participants. In 1729, Alphonsus moved to the Chinese College in Naples, beginning his missionary experience in the Kingdom of Naples among people who were poorer and more abandoned than any of the street children in Naples. On November 9, 1732, Alphonsus founded the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, the Redemptorists, to follow the example of Jesus Christ announcing the Good News to the poor and abandoned. He gave himself entirely to this new mission. He loved beauty being a musician, painter, poet and author. He wrote 111 works on spirituality and theology. The 21,500 editions translated into 72 languages attest to their popularity: *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 made Alphonsus a great master of the interior life. His *Moral Theology*, born of Alphonsus' pastoral experience, responded to practical questions posed by the faithful. Opposed to sterile legalism, he rejected the strict rigorism of the time. He used theological reflection to express the greatness and dignity of the person, a person's moral conscience, and evangelical mercy. Consecrated bishop of St. Agatha of the Goths in 1762, aged 66, he tried to refuse, feeling too old and too sick to properly care for the diocese. In 1775 he retired to the Redemptorist community in Pagani where he died on August 1, 1787. He was canonized in 1839, proclaimed a Doctor of the Church in 1871 and Patron of Confessors and Moralists in 1950.