

See during his lifetime. After his death, Rome gave its seal of approval, declaring him a Doctor of the Church and the patron of moralists and confessors. His literary output was not limited to moral theology. His works were directed to every category of Christians and his writings spanned fifty productive years.

## Bishop

In March 1762, Clement XIII appointed Alphonsus bishop of St. Agatha of the Goths which was located near Naples. Alphonsus took possession of his diocese in July 1762. Despite his poor health, he threw himself into this new ministry with vigor. His first order of business was to reform the serious ecclesiastical abuses in the diocese, beginning with the renewal of seminary and a spiritual rehabilitation of the clergy and faithful. Second, he attacked the practice of public concubinage, even soliciting the aid of civil authorities. He organized general missions for the diocese that utilized his own Redemptorist missionaries. He also established social welfare programs for the poor and even opened his episcopal palace to the needy. Ill health and complaints against his reforms resulted in his resignation in May 1775, which Pius VI accepted.

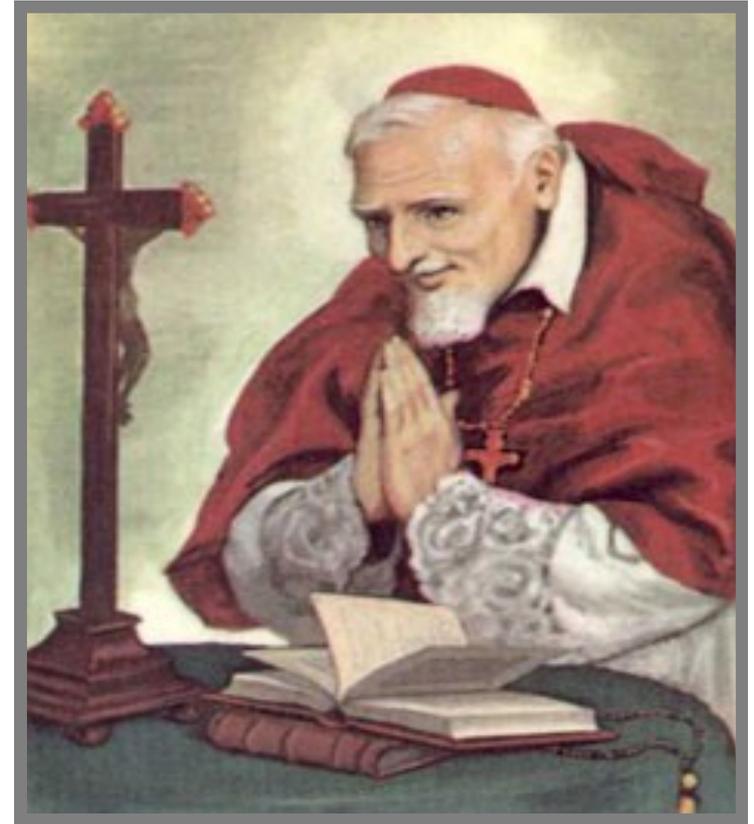
## Final Years

Alphonsus returned to Pagani "to prepare for death." Here he was to suffer the biggest disappointment of his life. The Congregation's Rule, which Benedict XIV had approved in 1749, had never received royal approval. In 1779 two Redemptorists, Father Cimino and Calone, were sent to negotiate with the royal court for approval. The eighty-three-year-old Liguori, deaf, practically blind and unable to read or write, put complete trust in his emissaries. Unfortunately, they made extraordinary concessions to the regalist authorities, watering down the original papal Rule to the point of being unrecognizable. The almost senile rector major was duped into signing this governmental Regolamento. The vows of religion were changed to mere oaths, the vow of poverty disappeared altogether, the oath of perseverance was omitted, and the local bishops were given the power over the internal affairs of the Congregation. General Chapters were wiped out of the text completely. This document was delivered to Liguori in March 1780 and when the radical changes were explained to him, he went into severe depression. The Pope was chagrined at the Congregation's acceptance of the Regolamento, which so blatantly contradicted the papal Rule. Only the Redemptorists within the Papal States continued as canonically approved Redemptorists. Six years later, on August 1, 1787, Liguori died, still technically outside the Congregation he had founded. The process for his canonization began a few months after his death. He was beatified in 1816 and in 1839 he was canonized. In March 1871, Pius IX declared him a Doctor of the Church, and in 1950, Pius XII declared Alphonsus the official patron of moralists and of confessors.

\*(excerpted from: //mission.liguori.org)

# Saint Alphonsus Liguori

Feast Day: August 2



**Take care of your own soul...before saving the rest of the world:**

***" I Love Jesus Christ and that is why I am on fire  
with the desire to give Him souls,  
first of all my own,  
and then an incalculable number of others."***

St. Alphonsus Liguori

# Saint Alphonsus Liguori

## Youth

\*Alphonsus Liguori was born on September 27, 1696, in a suburb of Naples, Italy. He was the eldest of eight children. His father, Don Giuseppe, entered the navy at the age of fifteen and attained the rank of commanding officer of a flagship of the Royal Navy. He was an authoritarian who ran his family in the same manner. Alphonsus' mother, Anna Cavalieri, was a gentle soul who was plagued by scruples and given to a highly ascetical piety. Alphonsus inherited both the authoritarianism of his father and the religious scrupulosity of his mother. Belonging economically and socially to the upper class, Alphonsus received an excellent education in the humanities and in the study of civil and Church law. He earned a double doctorate from the University of Naples. Suffering from myopia and chronic asthma prevented Alphonsus from following in his father's footsteps, so his father steered him into the legal profession. After losing an important court case, Alphonsus walked out of the court in disgust exclaiming, "Ah, world, I know you now!" He also refused more than two paternally planned betrothals because his scruples did not make him a prime candidate for courtship or marriage. Under the guidance of his mother's spiritual director, the Oratorian Thomas Pagano, who remained Alphonsus' director for almost thirty years, he joined various Oratorian confraternities which provided spiritual services for its members as well as apostolic work at the Hospital for Incurables and at the local prisons. Alphonsus and his father also attended annual retreats given by the Vincentians and the Jesuits. It was during a Vincentian retreat in 1722 that Liguori experienced a radical conversion. Although still a lawyer at the time, he rejected his secular lifestyle for a more spiritual one, and made a personal vow of celibacy. His father was not at all pleased and the growing tension exploded when Alphonsus announced his decision to become a priest. A compromise decision was reached with his father and he entered the diocesan priesthood.

## Diocesan Priest

By August 1726, Alphonsus was on the verge of a psychosomatic breakdown and received the last rites. He slowly recovered and by December 21 he was well enough to be ordained a priest. He lived at home for the next three years and then moved to the Chinese College, an institute founded by Matthew Ripa who was a missionary who had recently been expelled from China. Liguori lived there with a young friend, Gennaro Sarnelli who was simply a boarder at the college. Alphonsus introduced an innovated apostolic technique called the Evening Chapels. This was a program whereby he and a few of his priest friends organized and trained lay catechists. These catechists would then work out of slums, catechizing the poor lazzaroni, the beggars, and street people of Naples. During this period, Liguori was bothered by long bouts of introspection and scrupulosity over his new obligations and burdens as a priest. Obeying doctor's orders, Alphonsus took a leave of absence from

Naples and went to the Amalfi coast. There, despite his work in the slums of Naples, he was shocked by the spiritual abandonment of the poor mountaineers and began catechizing them in the small chapel of Holy Mary of the Mountains. After returning to Naples, he continued to worry about these poor souls and wondered where were the priests who could help them.

## Redemptorist Founder

After he returned to Naples, a woman entered his life! Sister Celeste Crostarosa (1696-1755) was a Neapolitan just one month younger than Alphonsus. A former Carmelite now living in a Visitation convent at Scala, she began to claim to receive divine revelations concerning the founding of a new institute for women, whose Rule she was to write under divine inspiration. Gossip about the Scala visionary was rife in Naples and news of her growing conflicts with the convent's spiritual director, Thomas Falcona, spread. Falcona was Alphonsus' director as well as Celeste's, and he asked Liguori to examine the troubled convent. Alphonsus was impressed with Celeste and concluded that her project was indeed the work of God. What he did not know then was that within a year she would claim she had received divinely revealed plans for a new missionary institute of men, of whom Liguori was to be the founder. His reluctance to make sudden decisions held him back and Alphonsus spent almost a year consulting theologians in Naples before he finally accepted his role as founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, which took its first shaky steps on November 9, 1732. Immediately, Liguori found himself caught in the middle of a multifaceted conflict involving Sister Celeste and Falcona (now a bishop), who was revising Celeste's Rules for the men and the women. An interfering lay theologian also added fire to the emotional conflagration. Liguori survived the growth pains of his new institute; Celeste was not as fortunate. By 1747 the Redemptorists numbered thirty-six members and were in great demand throughout the kingdom. They had a reputation of nearness to the people, a popular and solid preaching style, and a benign pastoral approach in the confessional. Fifteen years later, the Congregation had grown to one hundred fifty members. On Easter Monday, 1733, Celeste was dismissed from the convent at Scala because of changes that Falcona had made to her rule. She finally settled at Foggia, after journeying to several convents and established her own convent according to her original, unadulterated Rule. She died in 1755. During his stint as rector major, Liguori joined the struggle against moral rigorism. Two systems of morality were prevalent, the Dominicans supporting the rigorist and the Jesuits defending laxism. His approach avoided the extremes of both theories, and he published his monumental Moral Theology, as well as the eminently pastoral Guide for Confessors. He also published a number of apologies, including The Moderate Use of the Probable Opinion. Alphonsus moral teachings were vindicated by the Holy