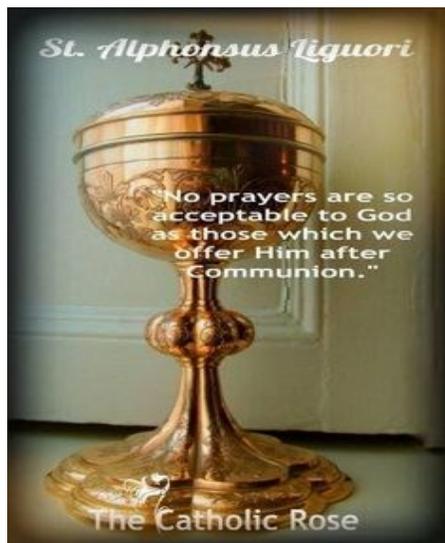


The crippled condition that St. Alphonsus described is believed to have been rheumatoid arthritis. Additionally, in extreme old age the saint's head was abnormally bent forward to such an extent that his chin rested on his chest, causing a furious sore. This is the reason his portraits usually depict him with his head bent forward.

Finally, in 1775, Pope Pius VI released him from his duties. St. Alphonsus was seventy-nine and had served as Bishop for thirteen years.

Somehow over the years he succeeded, despite his many infirmities, in writing 111 books of spirituality and theology, of which *The Glories of Mary* is said to be the most widely read book on the Blessed Virgin in the world. With good reason St. Alphonsus is regarded as the most prolific writer in the history of the Church. The saint was also Multi-talented in that he played the piano and wrote fifty hymns, some of which can still be found in various hymnals.

Saint Alphonsus Liguori died on August 1, 1787 at the age of ninety-one, surrounded by members of his community. He was canonized in 1831 by Pope Gregory XVI and was proclaimed a Doctor of the Church in 1871. In 1950 he was declared Patron of Confessors and Moralists.

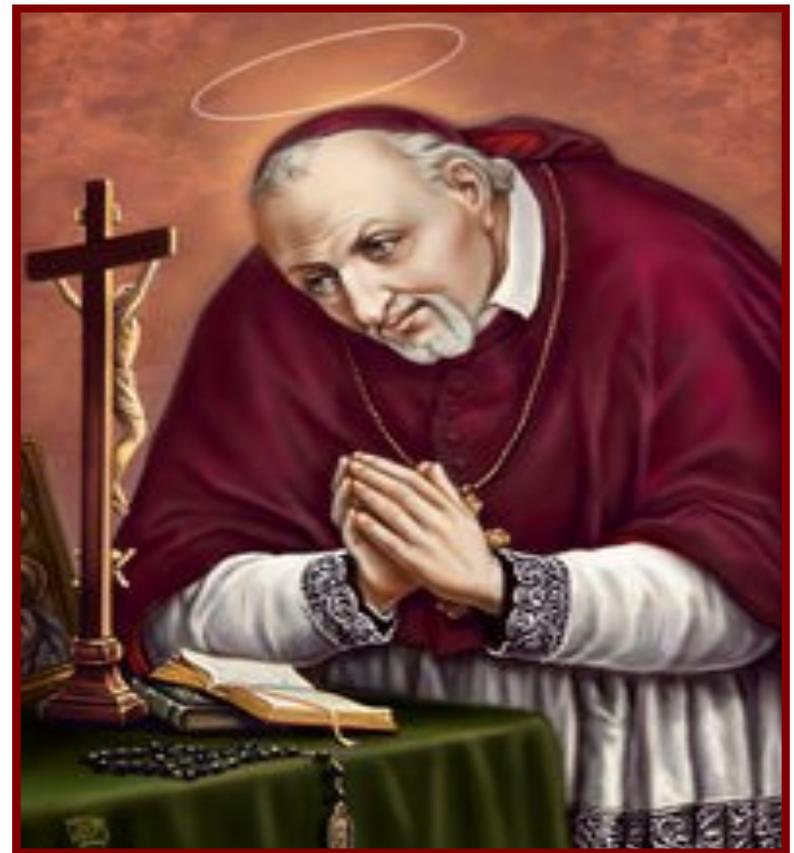


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***Bishop and Doctor of the Church
Patron Saint of Confessors and Moralists***

Saint Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787)

Alphonsus Liguori was the first of the seven children born in Marianella, near Naples, to a family that belonged to the Neapolitan nobility. At an early age he showed an extraordinary aptitude for study, and he entered law school at the age of 16. After receiving degrees in both civil and canon law, he began to practice his chosen profession at the amazing age of 18. It is reported that during the several years that he practiced law, he never lost the case. But then, after losing an important case due to an oversight, he abandoned his legal career and, despite his father's opposition, entered the seminary in preparation for the priesthood.

Ordained at the age of 30, St. Alphonsus was assigned first to an apostolate for the homeless and marginalized youth of Naples. For these he founded "Evening Chapels" where the youngsters found schooling, prayer and social activities. At the time of the saint's death, there were 72 of these chapels in existence, with more than 10,000 active participants.

It was soon realized that the scope of the work, which also included the elderly, required additional help. Father Alphonsus then found the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, known as the Redemptorists, whose goals were to teach and preach in the slums. Later, the Redemptorists' zeal for souls extended to the care of the sick. The new order was established when the young priest was only 36 years old. It consisted, in the beginning, of only three other priests. Shortly afterwards, a companion order of nuns was founded by Sister Maria Celeste.

Through the long years of his life, Alphonsus administered the Congregation's affairs and also found time to write, teach and give spiritual advice.

When Alphonsus was 62 years old, despite being ill, he was notified that he had been chosen bishop of the diocese of Sant' Agata dei Goti. Declaring himself unfit to properly care for the people who would be placed under his care, he wrote to Pope Clement XIII asking to be excused because of age and health. At the time, the saint was asthmatic, lame, bent over, partly blind and partially deaf. But the Pope insisted, and Alphonsus was consecrated in April of 1762.

During his years in the bishopric of Sant' Agata dei Goti, he became so ill that he received the Last Sacraments four times. Ten years later he again pleaded to be relieved of his office, listing his various ailments in a letter to Pope Pius VI. The saint wrote: "I am in extreme old age, for in the month of September I enter on my eightieth year. I have many infirmities which warn me that death is near. I suffer from a weakness of the chest which several times has reduced me to the last extremity, and from palpitations of the heart.... At present I am suffering from such constant headaches that sometimes they make me like one deprived of his faculties. Besides these evils, I am subject to various dangerous attacks which I have to remedy by blood-letting, blisters and other remedies."

As if that were not enough, the saint added: "My hearing fails me so that it is difficult to hear Confessions. I am paralyzed to such an extent that I can no longer write a line. With difficulty I sign my name.... I am become so crippled that I can no longer walk a step and have need of two assistants to help me. I pass my time on a bed or alone in a chair..."

It is interesting to note that St. Alphonsus' assistants contrived a chair – which they called a "roller chair" – with which he was moved from one place to another. This was a great convenience, but the saint constantly worried that the noise of the chair disturbed others at prayer.