

St. Alphonsus Liguori, Patron of Confessors and Moralists

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March 30, 2011. Benedict XVI dedicated his catechesis during the general audience to St. Alphonsus Liguori, the patron of confessors and moralists. St. Alphonsus Liguori was a doctor of civil and canon law but abandoned his promising career as a lawyer to become a priest. Pope Pius IX appointed him as a Doctor of the Church.

Benedict XVI

“Alphonsus’ pastoral zeal also found expression in his moral teaching, which emphasized divine mercy and the relationship between God’s law and our deepest human needs and aspirations.”

St. Alphonsus Liguori founded the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer in 1732, also known as Redemptorists. It currently has over 5,000 members and is active in 78 countries. The Pope described them as “genuine itinerant missionaries.”

Benedict XVI

“He began as a missionary among the urban poor, gathering small groups for prayer and instruction in the faith. Broadening his pastoral outreach, he founded the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.”

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Benedict XVI

“May this great Doctor of the Church, venerated also as the patron of moral theologians, help us to respond ever more fully to God’s call to grow in holiness, and inspire in priests, religious and laity a firm commitment to the new evangelization.”

The general audience was held in a sunny St. Peter’s Square and welcomed more than 10,000 people.

Fuller Account of Audience:

Pope Promotes Visiting Jesus in the Eucharist

Draws on Teaching of St. Alphonsus Liguori

VATICAN CITY, MARCH 30, 2011 -

Benedict XVI is reminding the faithful of the need for prayer, citing the teaching of an 18th century doctor of the Church who particularly encouraged visits to the Blessed Sacrament. The Pope dedicated his reflection at today's general audience to St. Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787).

The saint was gifted with an exceptional intellect -- completing studies in canon and civil law by age 16 -- but also "a way of acting marked by gentle and meek goodness, which was born from his intense relationship with God, who is infinite Goodness."

The Holy Father recalled how Alphonsus "insisted a lot on the need for prayer" as a condition for doing God's will and achieving holiness.

He cited the priest, who wrote, "God does not deny to anyone the grace of prayer, with which one obtains the help to overcome every concupiscence and every temptation. And I say, and repeat and will always repeat, for my entire life, that the whole of our salvation rests on prayer."

"Outstanding among the forms of prayer fervently recommended by St. Alphonsus is the visit to the Most Blessed Sacrament or, as we would say today, adoration -- brief or prolonged, personal or in community -- of the Eucharist," the Pope added. "'Certainly,' wrote Alphonsus, 'among all the devotions this one of adoration of the sacramental Jesus is the first after the sacraments, the dearest to God and the most useful to us. O, what a beautiful delight to be before an altar with faith and to present to him our needs, as a friend does to another friend with whom one has full confidence!'"

Converting criminals

Benedict XVI recounted how Alphonsus had a very successful ministry among the poor of Naples, some of whom "often were dedicated to vices and carried out criminal activity."

He explained, "With patience he taught them to pray, encouraging them to improve their way of living. Alphonsus obtained great results: In the poorest quarters of the city, there were increasing groups of persons who gathered in the evening in private homes and shops, to pray and meditate on the Word of God, under the guidance of some catechists formed by Alphonsus

and other priests, who regularly visited these groups of faithful. [...] [These meetings] were a real and proper source of moral education, of social healing, of reciprocal help among the poor: thefts, duels and prostitution virtually disappeared."

The Pontiff proposed that such meetings could be "a model of missionary action in which we can be inspired today as well, for a 'new evangelization,' particularly among the poorest."

The Bishop of Rome concluded by emphasizing how Alphonsus taught that holiness is meant for everyone: "The religious as religious, the lay person as lay person, the priest as priest, the married as married, the merchant as merchant, the soldier as soldier, and so on."

The Pope affirmed his gratitude to God, who "raises saints and doctors in different times and places who, speaking the same language, invite us to grow in faith and to live with love and joy our being Christians in the simple actions of every day, to walk on the path of holiness, on the path to God and to true joy." (Zenit)