



CRUSADERS OF MARY

Newsletter

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A Good Confession

— from a letter written by St. Alphonsus Liguori to his Redemptoristine nuns

Everyone knows that for a good confession three things are necessary: an examination of conscience, sorrow, and a determination to avoid sin. Spiritual souls who go frequently to confession and guard against deliberate venial sins have no need to spend a long time in the examination of conscience and had they committed any mortal sins they would know it without any examination. They would be conscious too of venial sins if fully deliberate, by the consequent remorse. Besides, there is no obligation to confess all our venial transgressions; therefore we are not obliged to make a strict search after them, and much less after the number, the circumstance, the manner, or the causes of them. It is sufficient to confess the most grievous, and to mention the rest in general terms. St. Francis de Sales is so consoling on this point. "Do not feel worried if you do not remember all your little peccadilloes in confession," he says, "for as you often fall imperceptibly, so you are often raised up imperceptibly," that is, by acts of love or the other good deeds virtuous souls are accustomed to perform.

In the second place, sorrow is essential; this is the principal condition necessary for obtaining pardon. The most sorrowful, not the lengthiest confessions, are the best. The proof of a confession is found, says St. Gregory, not in the multitude of the penitent's words, but in his compunction of heart. Some people are troubled because they do not feel sorrow; they wish to shed tears and to feel a tender contrition every time they receive the sacrament; and because in spite of all their efforts they are unable to excite this sorrow, they always feel uneasy about their confessions. But you must realize that true sorrow consists not in feeling it, but in wanting it. All the merit of virtue lies in the will. Thus, in discussing faith, Gerson has declared that sometimes a man who wishes to believe has more merit than another who does believe.

St. Thomas says that the essential sorrow necessary for the Sacrament of Penance is a displeasure at having committed sin, and this is found, not in the sensitive part of the soul, but in the will. Take care not to make forced efforts to arouse sorrow. Remember that the best interior acts are those performed with the least violence and with the greatest sweetness, for the Holy Ghost orders all things sweetly and



POPE JOHN PAUL II
at Confession

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Alphonsus Maria de' Liguori, the firstborn son of a noble Neopolitan family, was born on September 27, 1696. A short time after the child's birth, St. Francis Jerome, a friend of the family, prophesied: "This child will be blessed with length of days; he shall not see death before his ninetieth year. He will be a bishop and will do great things for Jesus Christ."

Alphonsus' mother was a deeply spiritual woman, who instilled in her son a deep love for God and for

prayer, and a hatred of sin. Alphonsus' father was also a model Catholic; however, he was consumed with ambition regarding his son's future, which he determined would be successful according to the standards of the world. Unfortunately, this ambition would cause many problems in the family, and give Alphonsus and his father much pain.

Alphonsus was a very pious child, yet any signs he may have exhibited for a religious vocation were thwarted by

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peacefully. That is why Ezechias described his sorrow in the words: "Behold in peace is my bitterness most bitter."

In the third place, a purpose to sin no more is essential; and this purpose must be firm, universal and efficacious. Some people say: "I wish never more to commit this sin, I wish never more to offend God." Alas for the word *wish*! A firm purpose of amendment says with a resolute will: I will never more commit this sin, I will never more offend God deliberately.

Secondly, it must be universal. The penitent must resolve to avoid all sins without exception – all mortal sins, that is to say. Spiritual souls should determine to avoid all deliberate venial sins, but as for indeliberate ones, it is sufficient to guard against them as far as one is able; it is quite impossible to avoid all indeliberate sins.

Thirdly, it must be efficacious. It is not enough for penitents to make up their minds to renounce sin, it is necessary also to remove the occasions of it; otherwise all their confessions, though they should receive a thousand absolutions, will be invalid. Not to remove the proximate occasion of mortal sin is in itself a mortal sin. And, as I have already shown in my *Moral Theology*, he that receives absolution without a firm purpose of removing the proximate occasion of mortal sin, commits a new mortal sin and is guilty of sacrilege.

But one may perhaps be tempted to conceal a sin in confession. Some Christians, through human respect and through fear of losing the esteem of others, easily continue for months and years to make sacrilegious confessions and Communions. But how can a Christian that has been so daring as to sin grievously against the divine majesty find an excuse before God for concealing a sin in confession in order to avoid the transient and trifling confusion that would arise from confessing it to a priest?

It is but just that the man who has despised God should humble and confound himself. However, the devil will endeavor to fill the mind of such sinners with many delusions and vain fears. One will say: "My confessor will rebuke me sternly if I reveal this sin." Why should he rebuke you? Tell me, were you a confessor, would you speak harshly to a poor penitent, who had come to manifest his miseries to you in the hope of being raised up from his fallen state? Another will argue: "But the confessor will, at least, be scandalized at my sin, and will dislike me for it." All nonsense! Far from being scandalized, he will be edified when he sees with what good dispositions and sincerity the sinner makes his confession, in spite of the shame that covers him. Has the priest not heard similar or possibly even far more grievous sins from others? Would to God you were the only sinner in the world! As for the dislike, on the contrary the confessor will esteem the penitent the more when he realizes the confidence placed in him, and will try all the more zealously to help him.

Have courage, then, and conquer by your generosity the shame that the devil magnifies so much in your mind. It will be enough to begin to reveal the sin you have committed: all your ridiculous apprehensions will vanish on the spot. And believe me when I tell you that afterwards you will feel more happy at having confessed your sins than if you had been made monarch of the whole earth.

Recommend yourself to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and She will obtain for you strength to overcome all repugnance. And if you lack the courage to disclose your sins at once to the confessor, say to him: "Father, I need your help. I have committed a certain sin which I cannot bring myself to confess." The confessor will then adopt an easy means of dragging from its den the wild beast that would devour you. All you will have to do is to answer "Yes" or "No" to his interrogations. And behold, both the temporal and the eternal hell have disappeared, the grace of God is recovered, and peace of conscience reigns supreme. ♦

his father's designs for his career. The boy proved to have a brilliant mind, and by the young age of eighteen had completed his studies and begun what promised to be an illustrious career in law.

Alphonsus' oratorical talent distinguished him in the field, but he left law in 1722, after he recognized the hand of God leading him in another direction. The providential sign was a certain case that he lost. He had believed himself to be thoroughly prepared for the case, but after giving a brilliant address to the court his opponent presented a document Alphonsus had overlooked, upon which the case rested. The error lost Alphonsus the case, the only case he ever lost in his career. He was devastated, but recognizing this as God's way of removing him from the world, Alphonsus vowed never to return to the courtroom.

Alphonsus soon after received a communication from God, in which he was told, "Leave the world and give thyself to Me." Alphonsus responded, "Lord Jesus, too long have I resisted Thy grace; do with me what Thou wilt." Through this communication Alphonsus learned that he was being asked to leave the world and become a priest. After praying before an image of Our Lady, Alphonsus removed the sign of his nobility, the sword that hung at his waist, and laid it on the altar. He would renounce his birthright as the eldest son and enter the seminary.

Alphonsus' entrance into the seminary was accompanied by opposition and scoffing from all sides. His father was devastated and avoided seeing him for an entire year. His former friends and acquaintances ridiculed him. Yet Alphonsus persevered and was ordained in 1726.

He began his priestly life as a missionary throughout Naples, and exhibited a great talent for preaching.

Crowds of every rank gathered wherever he was preaching, and his words had a profound impact on many souls.

According to the express wish of Our Lord in a revelation to a holy nun, Alphonsus founded the Redemptoristine nuns at Scala, Italy. In subsequent revelations, Our Lord revealed that He desired the formation of an institute of men that aimed to imitate the Savior and preach missions to the poor, under the leadership of Alphonsus. This Alphonsus did with great success, though not without many obstacles and sacrifices.

Alphonsus was also prolific in his writings, which had a tremendous impact on the Church, particularly his *The Glories of Mary* and *Moral Theology*. It has been said that Alphonsus did for the field of moral theology what St. Thomas Aquinas did for dogmatic theology. He was responsible for 111 books and pamphlets throughout his life, which contribution to the explanation of the Faith would later confer upon him the title "Doctor of the Church."

At the age of sixty-five, Alphonsus was appointed a bishop by Pope Clement XIII. Though he begged not to be given this tremendous responsibility, the Holy Father firmly desired that Alphonsus take over a certain diocese that had been spiritually neglected for many years. Under Alphonsus' direction the diocese

was transformed and soon became known for its religious fervor and zeal.

Even before his death Alphonsus de' Liguori was acknowledged as a saint. Pope Clement XIII, who consecrated Alphonsus bishop, once commented: "When Msgr. de' Liguori dies, there will be one more saint in Heaven." The saint's linen and objects he used had to be replaced every day, as they were taken as relics. He had to be escorted when he walked through the streets, in



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Dear Servants of Jesus and Mary:

We have received your generous donation of rosaries for distribution to the recruits at the Marine Corps boot camp. Training is difficult and it makes these recruits take a hard look within themselves. Training makes them look at their values and their beliefs. Many who have neglected church attendance in the past now find themselves rediscovering their

Catholic faith. They attend religious education classes with a burning desire to learn more about their faith.

On this tiny island in the state of South Carolina, you have left a little piece of Heaven with your labor of love. "God love you," as Archbishop Sheen always said at the end of his telecast. May God bless you.

Due to the gracious generosity of many hands, we have enough rosaries to last for the next year. We would be pleased if you would send us scapulars and "How to say the Rosary" pamphlets, though.

Sincerely,

Father K.M., Catholic Chaplain

Apostolate News

This past October two Apostolate workers traveled to Ireland in order to establish an office there. Though we are in the beginning stages of this project, the office, which is located in Northern Ireland but is very close to the Republic of Ireland, will serve the needs of the Republic of Ireland as well as the entire United Kingdom.

Also while there, the workers mailed our "Pictures of a Desecration" flyer to priests throughout the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. Within days of sending this important information out, a leading newspaper in the U.K. picked up the story.

As with all of Europe, the Faith in Ireland is suffering from a terrible decline. Please pray for the success of our efforts to reach this area of the world with Our Lady's Fatima Message, the only solution to our present crisis. ♦



ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI
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order to prevent people from cutting off pieces of his habit.

Many miracles are recorded to have occurred in his presence: apparitions of the Blessed Virgin, bilocation, levitation, cures and conversions, prophesy and the reading of hearts.

St. Alphonsus de' Liguori fulfilled the prophecy made of him by St. Francis Jerome: he lived to be ninety-one years old and those long and laborious years were filled with great accomplishments for Our Lord. He lived a life of prayer, privation, trial, pain and mortification.

He was intensely devoted to the Blessed Virgin, and his last words, fittingly, concerned Her. When asked if he

wanted anything in his death agony, he answered, "No, it is all over. Give me the Madonna." Then, taking a picture of Her in his hands, he kissed it lovingly. He died soon after.

Alphonsus was canonized a saint in 1839. In 1871 he was pronounced a Doctor of the Church. His long life was dedicated to his Church and to souls, and to this day his numerous writings continue his work for the salvation of souls. ♦

We'd Like to Hear From YOU! Crusaders of Mary Newsletter

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