

# ST ALPHONSUS LIGUORI,

DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH,

A.D. 1787

St ALPHONSUS was born at Marianella, near Naples, on September 27, 1696; his parents were Don Joseph de Liguori, captain of the royal galleys, and Donna Anna Cavalieri, whose elder brother became bishop of Troia and was a friend of St Paul-of-the-Cross: both people of virtuous and distinguished life. The boy was baptised Alphonsus Mary Antony John Francis Cosmas Damian Michael Gaspar, but preferred in after-life to call himself simply Alfonso Maria; the use of the Latin form of his name has become usual in English. Don Joseph was determined that his first-born should have every advantage that formal education could give him, and he was early put under tutors. He learned Greek, Latin, and French, the rudiments of mathematics, physical science and architecture, drawing and painting, riding and swordsmanship, and became an accomplished musician, especially a player of the harpsichord. At thirteen he began the study of jurisprudence, and when sixteen he was allowed, by dispensation of four years, to present himself before the university of Naples for examination for the doctor's degree in both laws (civil and canon); it was granted him with acclamation. For two years Alphonsus was pupil of two distinguished Neapolitan lawyers, Perrone and Jovene, and in **1715** he was called to the Bar. In the same year he admitted to the spiritual confraternity of the Doctors, which was directed by the Oratorians. His reputation as a barrister is testified by the tradition (not certainly true) that in eight years of he never lost a case. In 1717 Don Joseph arranged a marriage for his son, but it came to nothing and Alphonsus continued to work diligently and quietly; for a year or two some slackness in religious care was observable, coupled with and perhaps due to an affection for "society life" and fashionable amusements, but he had the will to avoid serious sin. He was very fond of the music of the theatre, but music was not the only thing on the Neapolitan stage of eighteenth century; however, Alphonsus was very short-sighted and when the curtain went up his spectacles came off, and so he was able to enjoy the good without receiving harm from the dangerous. A retreat with the Lazarists during the Lent of 1722 and reception of the sacrament of Confirmation in the following autumn steadied him and revived his fervour, and at the next Lent he made a private resolution not to marry and to continue in his profession only until it should appear that God wished him to abandon it. What he took to be a clear indication of the divine will was shown him only a few months later.

A certain Neapolitan nobleman (whose name has not come down to us) was suing the Grand Duke of Tuscany for possession of an estate valued at over 100,000 pounds. Alphonsus was briefed in the case, for which side we do not now know, but probably for his countryman, and made a great speech on his client's behalf which much impressed the court. When he sat down opposing counsel coolly remarked, "You have wasted your breath. You have disregarded the evidence on which the whole case depends." "What do you mean? Where? How?" asked Alphonsus. He was handed a document which he had read through several times, but with a passage marked that had entirely escaped his notice. The point at issue was whether the estate was held under Lombard law or under the Angevin capitularies: this clause made the point clear, and decided against the client of Alphonsus. For a moment he was silent. Then he said, "I have made a mistake. The case is yours," and left the court, murmuring to himself, "Now I know you, O world! These courts shall not see me again!" He was as good as his word, and, braving the fiery indignation of his father, refused either to go on with his profession or to entertain a second project for his marriage. While visiting the sick in the hospital for incurables he twice heard as it were an interior voice, saying, "Leave the world, and give yourself to me"; he went straight to the church of our Lady of Ransom, laid his sword on her altar, and then offered himself to the priests of the Oratory. Don Joseph tried every way to dissuade his son, but was at last constrained to agree to his being a priest, provided that, instead of joining the Oratory, he should stay at home. On the advice of his director, Father Pagano, himself an Oratorian, Alphonsus accepted this condition.

He began his theological studies at home, and at the end of 1724 received minor orders. He thereupon was admitted to the Society of Propaganda, a local missionary-training congregation, and also joined the society called White Fathers whose particular work was ministering to criminals condemned to death. After being ordained deacon the Archbishop of Naples licensed him to preach in any church of the city, and in 1726 he was advanced to the

priesthood. For the two following years he was engaged in missionary work throughout the kingdom of Naples, and at once made his mark. The early eighteenth century was a time of pompous oratory and florid verbosity in the pulpit—a fruit of the Renaissance out of control,—and of rigorism in the confessional—a fruit of Jansenism; Don Alphonsus repudiated both these characteristics. He preached simply and without affectation: “It is a pleasure to listen to your sermons; you forget yourself and preach Jesus Christ,” somebody said to him, and he afterwards instructed his missionaries: “Your style must be simple, but the sermon must be skilfully constructed. If skill is lacking it is unconnected and tasteless; if it be bombastic, the simple cannot understand it. I have never preached a sermon which the poorest old woman in the congregation could not understand.” He treated his penitents as souls to be saved rather than as criminals to be punished or frightened into better ways; he is said never to have refused absolution to a penitent. This was not pleasing to everybody, and some looked with suspicion on Don Alphonsus. He organised the *lazzaroni* of Naples into groups which met for instruction in Christian doctrine and virtue; one of the members was reproved by Don Alphonsus for his imprudent fasting, and another priest added, “It is God’s will that we should eat in order to live. If you are given cutlets, eat them and be thankful. They will do you good.” The remark was taken up and twisted into matter of offence: the clubs were secret societies of Epicureans, of Quietists, of some other heresy, there was a new sect, of Cutlets. The solemn wiseacres of Church and State took the matter up, arrests were made, and Don Alphonsus had to make explanations. The Archbishop counselled him to be more careful, the “Cutlet clubs” continued undisturbed, and developed into the great Association of the Chapels which numbers thousands of working-men who meet daily for prayer and instruction in the confraternity chapels. In 1729, being then thirty-three years old, Alphonsus left his father’s house to become chaplain to the College of the Holy Family, recently founded by Don Matthew Ripa for the training of missionaries to China. Here he met Thomas Falcoia, and became friendly with him; he was a priest twice his own age, whose life had been devoted to trying to establish a new religious institute in accordance with a vision he claimed to have had in Rome. All he had succeeded in doing was to establish a convent of nuns at Scala, Amalfi, to whom he had given a version of the rule of the Visitandines. One of the nuns, however, Sister Mary Celeste, alleged that she had received a revelation of the rule which the nuns were to follow, and when Father Falcoia discovered that its provisions tallied with those intimated to him twenty years before he was naturally impressed. In 1724 he proposed that this new rule should be adopted by the community, but there was a minority strongly opposed to it. This minority appealed to Father Falcoia’s superior (he was a member of the congregation of *Pii Operarii*) who ruled that Sister Mary Celeste had been deceived, that no alteration in their life should be made, and that Father Falcoia should cease to direct the convent. This was the position when, six years later, Falcoia got St Alphonsus interested in the matter. About the same time an unexpected turn was given to events by his appointment to the see of Castellaznare; this left him free to associate himself with the convent of Scala again, and one of his first episcopal acts was to invite Alphonsus to give a retreat to the nuns, a step that had far-reaching consequences for everybody concerned.

With his two friends John Mazzini and Vincent Mannarini, St Alphonsus went to Scala in September 1730, and after conducting a novena in the cathedral, betook himself to the convent; in addition to giving the retreat he investigated, with a lawyer’s precision, the matter of Sister Mary Celeste’s revelation, and came to the conclusion that it was from God and not an hallucination. He therefore recommended, and the nuns agreed, that the convent should be re-organized in accordance with the vision, and the Bishop of Scala gave his consent; there were still difficulties to be overcome, but on the feast of the Transfiguration 1731 the nuns put on their new habit, of red and blue, and entered upon their strictly enclosed and penitential life. Thus began the Redemptoristines, who still flourish in several lands. The new rule had been expanded and made more explicit by St Alphonsus himself, who took over responsibility for their direction from the aged Mgr. Falcoia. No sooner was this brought about than the Bishop of Castellamare intimated to Don Alphonsus that he should now undertake the establishment of a new congregation of missionaries to work especially among the peasants of the country districts: his own original vision had included an institute of men and further revelations to that effect were attributed to Sister Mary Celeste. Alphonsus knew there was room for much work, but he was already committed to the Society of Propaganda and so referred the question to his director; rather unexpectedly Father Pagano approved of the Bishop’s project and told Alphonsus to undertake it. The next twelve months were given over to facing a storm of opposition: his colleagues of the Propaganda Society and even his

friends, Father Ripa and Canon Gizzio, violently objected to the scheme, while, in addition to Father Pagano, the Jesuit provincial, Manulio, the Lazarist superior, Cutica, and a learned Dominican, Fiorillo, supported it. At last, after a long and painful leave-taking with his father, St Alphonsus left Naples in November 1732 and went to Scala. There the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer (which for its first seventeen years was known as "of the Most Holy Saviour") was born on the 9th of that month, and its first home was in a small house belonging to the convent of nuns. There were seven postulants under Alphonsus, with Mgr. Falcoia as informal superior general, and dissensions began at once, centring chiefly in this very matter of who was in supreme authority; a party opposed the Bishop, and consequently Alphonsus, and a schism was formed in both houses. Sister Mary Celeste went off to found a convent at Foggia, and at the end of five months St Alphonsus was alone but for one lay-brother. But other subjects came, a larger house became necessary, and in the autumn of 1733 successful missions were given in the diocese of Amalfi. In the following January a second foundation was made, at the request of the Bishop of Cajazzo, at Villa degli Schiavi, and here Alphonsus went to reside, and conducted missions. The saint is so well known as a moral theologian, for his writings, and for his efforts in founding the Redemptorists, that his eminence as a missionary has been overshadowed; but from 1726 till 1752 he was preaching up and down the kingdom of Naples, especially in villages and rural settlements, and with the greatest success. His confessional was crowded, hardened sinners returned to the healing sacraments in great numbers, enemies were reconciled, family feuds healed, and he established the practice, characteristic of the method of his followers, of returning some months after a mission was closed in order to confirm and consolidate the work.

But the troubles of the young Redemptorists were not over: indeed they had hardly begun. In the same year as the foundation at Villa degli Schiavi, Spain re-asserted its authority over Naples, the absolutist Charles III was in power, and he had as his prime minister the Marquis Bernard Tanucci, who was to be the lifelong opponent of the new congregation. A third house was started at Ciorani, between Salerno and Avellino, but in 1737 a priest of bad character spread evil reports about the establishment at Villa, the community was attacked by armed men, and it was deemed wise to close the house; in the following year troubles caused Scala too to be abandoned. On the other hand Cardinal Spinelli, Archbishop of Naples, put St Alphonsus at the head of a general mission throughout his diocese, and for two years the saint organized and conducted this, until the death of Mgr. Falcoia in 1743 recalled him to the work of the congregation. A general chapter was held, at which St Alphonsus was elected rector major (*i.e.*, superior general), vows were taken, and rules and constitutions were drawn up. They were now constituted as a religious institute and proceeded in the following years to make foundations at Nocera de' Pagani, Deliceto, and Caposele, all under great difficulties of local and official opposition; "regalism" was in the ascendant and the implacable anti-clericalism of Tanucci was a sword at all times threatening the existence of the congregation. There was no question of getting the royal approbation for it, in spite of the efforts of Alphonsus, and when in 1749 Pope Benedict XIV approved the constitutions of the new institute the *exequatur* to the papal brief was refused by the King of the Two Sicilies, who only a short time before had wished to make its founder archbishop of Palermo.

The first edition of the *Moral Theology* of St Alphonsus, in the form of annotations to the work of Busembaum, a Jesuit theologian, was published at Naples in 1748, with the *imprimatur* of both the King and the Archbishop;\* and the second edition, which is properly the first of his own complete work, in 1753-5. It was approved by Pope Benedict XIV and had an immediate success, for with consummate wisdom it steered a middle course between the rigorism of Jansenism and an improper laxity; seven more editions were called for in the author's lifetime. There is no need here to follow the controversy concerning "probabilism," with which the name of St Alphonsus is associated. Probabilism is the system in moral theology which holds that, if of two opinions, one insists that in certain circumstances a law binds, while the other holds that in these circumstances it does not, one is allowed to follow an opinion favouring liberty provided it be truly and solidly probable, even though the opinion favouring the law be more probable. St Alphonsus eventually favoured what he called Aequiprobabilism, which insists that the law must be obeyed unless the opinion favouring liberty is at least nearly equally probable with that favouring the law, though there would appear to be little practical difference between the two systems. The Church permits the application of either, but the reader may be reminded that Probabilism is primarily a principle for the moral theologian and is not put forward as an ideal of Christian life; often the more perfect and therefore more desirable course of action is to follow the more probable

opinion according to which the law is binding. Attempts have been made to impugn the morality of the teaching of St Alphonsus about lying: his was the ordinary teaching of the church, namely, that all lies are intrinsically wrong and illicit. The Holy See's estimate of him as a moral theologian is shown by a decree of the Sacred Penitentiary in 1831 which allows confessors to follow any of his opinions, without considering the grounds on which they are based. Among the consequences of the teachings of the Jansenists was that holy Communion can be received worthily only very rarely and that devotion to our Lady is a useless superstition; St Alphonsus vigorously attacked both these errors, the last-named particularly by the publication in 1750 of *The Glories of Mary*. To many readers this famous book has seemed in parts exaggerated, but it must be borne in mind that it was written in answer to certain people who were trying to "regulate" devotion to our Lady in such a way as to do away with it altogether; and that it was intended for people who were sufficiently intelligent to distinguish between metaphorical and literal language, and who were well enough instructed in their religion to know that all the glories of Mary are "for the sake of her Son." Among his numerous other works for which he was recognized as a doctor of the Church are *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, *The Great Means of Prayer*, *The Way of Salvation*, *The Admirable Workings of Divine Providence*, and a history of the Council of Trent.

From the time of the death of Mgr. Falcoia, St Alphonsus led a life of extraordinary industry: guiding and fostering his new congregation through troubles both external and internal, trying to get it authorized by the King, ministering to individual souls, conducting missions all over Naples and Sicily, even finding time to write hymns, compose music, and paint pictures. After 1752 his health was failing, his missionary vigour decreased, and he devoted much more time to writing. The general opinion of him was voiced by a prebendary of Naples, "If I were the Pope I would canonize him without process." "He fulfilled in a most perfect way," said Father Mazzini, "the divine precept of loving God above all things, with his whole heart and with all his strength, as all might have seen and as I saw better than anyone during the long years I spent with him. The love of God shone forth in all his acts and words, in his devout manner of speaking of Him, his recollection, his deep devotion before the Blessed Sacrament, and his continual exercise of the divine presence." He was strict, but tender and compassionate, and, often suffering acutely from scrupulosity himself, was particularly pitiful to others afflicted in the same way. His one remedy was implicit obedience to one's confessor, as is shown clearly in his letters to Father Rizzi, a priest of knowledge and good judgement who was, nevertheless, tormented by distressing scruples (this unfortunate man once wrote to a bishop, who was his penitent, advising him on a dispute that he had with his diocese. The bishop threatened to imprison him!). Father Cajone testified during the process of beatification of St Alphonsus that "His special and characteristic virtue seemed to me to be purity of intention. In all things and at all times he acted for God without any admixture of self. He said to us one day, 'By the grace of God I have never confessed having acted from passion. It may be that I have not noticed what was passing in me, but I have not remarked it so as to confess it.'" This is the more remarkable when it is considered that Alphonsus was a Neapolitan, and by nature passionate and precipitate, easily moved by anger, pride, or a sudden resolve.

When he was sixty-six years old St Alphonsus was made by Pope Clement XIII Bishop of Sant' Agata de' Goti, between Benevento and Capua. It was an honour entirely unexpected and unwanted: when the messenger of the nuncio apostolic presented himself at Nocera, greeted him as "Most Illustrious Lord," and handed over the letter announcing the appointment, Alphonsus read it through and handed it back, saying, "Please do not come back again with any more of your 'Most Illustrious'; it would be the death of me." But the Pope would take no refusal, and he was consecrated in the church of the Minerva at Rome. Sant' Agata was only a small diocese, but that was about all that could be said in its favour; it numbered 30,000 souls with 17 religious houses and 400 secular priests, of whom some did no pastoral work at all, living on the proceeds of an easy benefice, and others were not only slack but positively evil-living. The laity were to match, and rapidly getting worse; the results of nearly thirty years of neglect were apparent on all sides. After having established his own modest household, the new Bishop sent out a band of priests to conduct a general mission throughout the diocese: they were recruited from all orders and institutes in Naples except, for reasons of tact and prudence, his own congregation of Redemptorists. Alphonsus recommended two things only to these missionaries, simplicity in the pulpit, charity in the confessional, and after hearing one of the priests neglect his advice he said to him, "Your sermon kept me awake all night. . . . If you wanted to preach only yourself, rather than Jesus Christ, why come all the way from Naples to Ariola to do it?" At the same time he set about a reform of the

seminary, which had plenty of candidates but many of doubtful character, was housed in an unhealthy building, and suffered under a rector far too old for the post. "The Church," said St Francis de Sales, "does not need many priests, but she must have good ones," and St Alphonsus would not ordain anyone of whose good character and dispositions he was not personally satisfied. There were numerous benefices without cure of souls in the diocese, and he had to exercise an unremitting vigilance that personal influence was not brought to bear in granting them, and lest they were given to men of poor qualification on the plea that they were needy and could not do much harm. Some priests were in the habit of saying Mass in fifteen minutes or less; these were suspended *ipso facto* until they amended their ways, and the Bishop wrote a moving treatise on the subject "'The priest at the altar,' says St Cyprian, 'represents the person of Jesus Christ.' But whom do so many priests to-day represent? They represent only mountebanks earning their livelihood by their antics. Most lamentable of all is it to see religious, and some even of reformed orders, say Mass with such haste and such mutilation of the rite as would scandalize even the heathen. . . . 'Truly the sight of a Mass celebrated in this way is enough to make one lose the Faith.'" After he had been ten months at Sant' Agata St Alphonsus set out on a visitation of his diocese, during which he instructed, catechized and heard confessions in person, and insisted that scandals be put down firmly, whether arising from dirty and unkempt churches or from public wickedness and disorder. He was taken seriously ill at Ariola, and almost immediately after his return a famine broke out, with its usual accompaniment of plague. Alphonsus had foreseen and prophesied this calamity several times in the previous two years, but nothing had been done to avert it. Thousands were literally starving, and he sold everything to buy food for distribution among the sufferers, down to his carriage and mules and his uncle's episcopal ring; the Holy See authorized him to make use of the property of the endowment of the see for the same purpose, and he contracted debts right and left in his efforts at relief. When the mob clamoured for the life of the mayor of Sant' Agata, who was wrongfully accused of withholding food, Alphonsus braved their fury, offered his own life for that of the mayor, and finally distracted them by distributing the rations of the next two days. The Bishop was most vigorous in his concern for public morality; he always began with kindness, but when amendment was not promised or relapse occurred he took strong measures, invoking the help of the civil authorities. This made him many enemies, and several times his life was in danger from people of rank and others against whom he instituted proceedings. The custom of the courts of banishing hardened offenders, whether public vagabonds or private sinners, must have pressed somewhat hardly on the districts to which they went, and the bishops of neighbouring dioceses probably found scant consolation in the observation of the Bishop of Sant' Agata that, "Each must look after his own flock. When these people find themselves turned out everywhere, in disgrace and without food or shelter, they will come to their senses and give up their sinful lives."

Just before the suppression of the Jesuits in the Spanish dominions in 1767 a determined effort was made to disperse the still struggling Redemptorists. It was led by the powerful Don Francis Maffei, who had a grudge against the fathers at Deliceto because they remained neutral in a dispute he had with the local municipality, and Baron Sarnelli, who also had a personal grievance. The religious were denounced to the King as "degenerated...dominated by a spirit of greed. . . . They multiply properties and build magnificent monasteries. They eclipse even the Jesuits in their luxury and ostentation. . . they excite the people to rebel against their lords." Other charges and claims were added to this nonsensical indictment, and St Alphonsus went to Naples to defend his brethren. This was more than his opponents had bargained for, and when the case at last came on in the royal court the plaintiffs did not appear. But the judge would not enter judgement for the Redemptorists; instead he adjourned the case *sine die*, and Alphonsus returned to Arienzo, where he was living. He now set himself to answer the writings of Mgr. von Hontheim ("Febronius"), a German bishop who taught an exaggerated Gallicanism, opposing the authority of princes, bishops and councils to that of the Holy See. In the circumstances the *Vindication of the Supreme Power of the Roman Pontiff* had to be printed secretly in Naples, published privately and anonymously, and a few copies smuggled out of the country, even though Febronianism had already been condemned by the Pope. In June 1767 St Alphonsus was attacked by terrible rheumatic pains which developed into an illness from which he was not expected to recover: not only did he receive the last sacraments but preparations were begun for his funeral. After twelve months his life was saved, but he was left with a permanent and incurable bending of the neck, familiar from the portraits of him; until the surgeons had succeeded in straightening it a little the pressure of the chin caused a raw wound in his chest and he was unable to

celebrate Mass, which afterwards he could do with the aid of a chair at the communion. In addition to attacks on his moral theology, he had to face an accusation against the Redemptorists of carrying on the Society of Jesus under another name, and in 1770 the Sarnelli action came on again; this time the prime minister, Tanucci, intervened and appointed a commission to draw up a report. The case dragged on for another thirteen years before it was decided in favour of Alphonsus on all counts. Pope Clement XIV died on September 22, 1774,\* and St Alphonsus in the following year petitioned his successor, Pius VI, for permission to resign his see. Similar petitions had been refused by Clement XIII and XIV, but the effects of his rheumatic fever were now taken into consideration, permission was granted, and the aged Bishop retired to his Redemptorist's cell at Nocera, hoping to end his days in peace.

But it was not to be. In 1777 the procurator in the Sarnelli case issued his report, a vicious document in which Alphonsus was not only charged with having illegally founded a religious body but with undermining Christian morality by his impious doctrines, "built up entirely from Jesuit authors"; Probabilism must be destroyed and the Redemptorists should be suppressed as simply Jesuits in disguise.+

St Alphonsus at once applied himself to drawing up a detailed refutation. In 1778 Maffei died, ruined by the litigation in which he had deliberately involved himself; he left six children and large debts. These debts were liquidated and these orphans provided for by the efforts of Father Antonio Tannoia, C.S.S.R., with the assistance and encouragement of Alphonsus Liguori. Shortly after, Ferdinand di Leon, the procurator, died also, and taking advantage of the resentment which his report on the Redemptorists had aroused among many in Naples, St Alphonsus addressed a brief memoir to the King in defence of the exterior government of his congregation; as a result the established houses, with their superiors and novitiate, were approved. Thus encouraged he determined to make another effort to get the royal sanction for his rule (it was as religious rather than as priests that the congregation was objected to); in addition to the four houses in Naples and one in Sicily, it had now four others in the Papal States, at Scifelli, Frosinone, Sant' Angelo a Cupolo, and Benevento.

What followed was nothing less than tragic. Alphonsus agreed with the royal almoner, Mgr. Testa, to waive any request to be allowed to hold property in common, but otherwise to submit the rule unchanged, and the almoner would put it before the King. Then Testa betrayed him. He altered the rule in many respects, even to the extent of abolishing the vows of religion; he won over to his plot one of the consultors of the congregation, Father Majone, and this altered rule (*regolamento*) was presented to Alphonsus, written in a small hand and with many erasures. He was old, crippled, deaf, his sight was bad: he read over the familiar opening lines of the document—and signed it. Even his vicar general, Father Andrew Villani, connived at the cruel deception, probably through fear of the others. The King approved the *regolamento*, it became legally binding, and its provisions were made known to the Redemptorists—and to their founder. The storm broke on him: "You have founded the congregation and you have destroyed it," he was told. For a moment he was indignant with Father Villani: "I never thought I could be so deceived by you, Don Andrew," and then he overwhelmed himself with reproaches for his infirmity and his remissness. "It was my duty to read it myself, but you know I find it difficult to read even a few lines." To refuse to accept the *regolamento* now would mean suppression of the Redemptorists by the King; to accept it would mean suppression by the Pope, for the Holy See had already approved the original rule. Alphonsus cast about in every direction to save a *debacle*, but in vain; he would consult the Pope, but the Redemptorists in the Papal States had forestalled him, for they had at once denounced the new rule and put themselves under the protection of the Holy See. Pius VI forbade them to accept the *regolamento*, and withdrew them from the jurisdiction of St Alphonsus; he provisionally recognized those of the Papal States as the only true Redemptorists, and named Father Francis de Paula their superior general. In 1781 the fathers of Naples accepted the *regolamento*, with a slight modification which the King had accepted; but this was not acceptable at Rome and the provisional decree was made final. Thus was St Alphonsus excluded from the order which he had founded.

\* After saying Mass on the 21st, Alphonsus became unconscious and so remained for twenty-four hours, On coming round he announced that "I have been assisting the Pope, who has just died." This incident is sometimes put forward as an example of bilocation, but seems simply to have been a clairvoyant trance. It was referred to, but no great importance was attached to it in the process of beatification. + This report was drawn up by the supporters of royal supremacy in religious affairs, under the influence of Jansenists.

He bore the humiliation, inflicted by the authority he so loved and respected, with the utmost patience, and without murmuring accepted the apparent end of all his hopes as the will of God. Some followers deserted him and the remaining fathers in the Neapolitan kingdom were reduced to great want and distress, and by some of the bishops were looked on with suspicion and distrust; but in 1783 these same bishops, feeling the effect on their flocks of the loss of the missionaries, whose mission faculties had been withdrawn by the Holy See, petitioned for their restoration, which was granted. This was a great consolation to St Alphonsus, who also had the happiness of seeing Father de Paula repentant for the separatist part which he had played. But there was still one more bitter trial for the saint: during the years 1784—85 he went through a terrible “dark night of the soul.” He was assailed by temptations against every article of faith and against every virtue, prostrated by scruples and vain fears, and visited by diabolical illusions. For eighteen months this torment lasted, with intervals of light and relief, and was followed by a period when ecstasies were frequent, and prophecy and miracles took the place of interior trials. The end came peacefully on the night of July 31—August 1, 1787, when he was within two months of his ninety-first birthday. Pius VI, the pope who had condemned him under a misapprehension, in 1796 recognized Alphonsus Liguori as a venerable servant of God, in 1816 he was beatified, in 1839 canonized, and in 1871 declared by Pope Pius IX a Doctor of the Church. After the affair of the *regolamento* St Alphonsus predicted that the separated houses in the Papal States would prosper and spread the Redemptorist congregation and that those who had favoured division would become the advocates of reunion, but that this reunion would not come about till after his death. These predictions were verified; St Clement Hofbauer from Frosinone in 1785 first established the congregation beyond the Alps, and in 1793 the Neapolitan government recognized the original rule and the Redemptorists were again united, with Father Blasucci as rector major. Today they are established as missionaries throughout Europe and America, and in several other parts of the world.

**St Alphonsus de Ligouri. Pray for us**

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