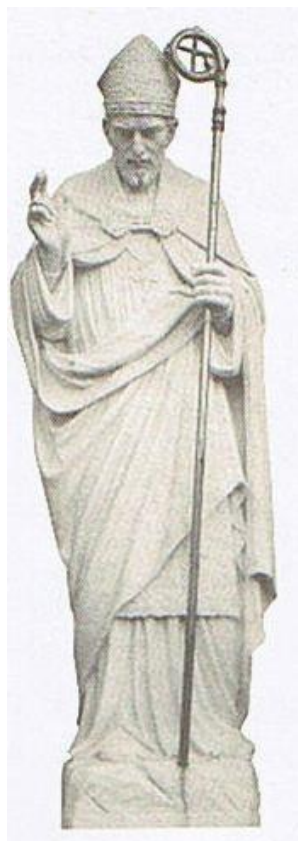


St. Alphonsus – Our Role Model



Ever wonder about that white statue that sits out front of St. Al's? At first glance, the image of one in regal Ecclesiastical robes, mitre on head, crozier in hand, could be *misleading*. What I first notice though, is that St. Alphonsus' head is deeply bowed – as if he were rather 'uncomfortable' with this position – a man who was extremely humble and, indeed, not the *least* interested in being an authority figure. And history tells us, he never really wanted to be a Bishop. But, when he reached about 66 years, and had completed such a holy and successful ministry, the Pope wished that he be made such – and Alphonsus reluctantly, but obediently obeyed.

In fact, the crozier in his hand, might *best* symbolize our Saint. As you know, the crozier resembles a shepherd's crook – the staff used by ancient herdsmen to gather, and protect their sheep. To me, from my readings on his life, this is a true image of St. Alphonsus.

Alphonsus was born as a noble, highly intelligent, strong willed, but sensitive and religious. His father, a lawyer, insisted that he too follow that profession. Alphonsus was kind and caring to all others, always with smiling good humour. Though he very much wanted to become a *priest*, especially to serve the poor and needy, he *had* to follow his father's will. He became a lawyer, and indeed, an excellent one ... honest and just, and practiced for a number of years. But, eventually, after losing an important case – he felt 'unjustly' – he left the legal profession – apparently saying: "Oh world, I know thee now!"

Alphonsus then studied, and became a priest – and later, founded a Religious Order dedicated to "the most abandoned souls" – and to bring 'The Good News to the poor, who generally lived in the hills around Naples.

St. Alphonsus also was a brilliant scholar and popular writer – producing some 110 works on Theology and the Spiritual Life. As a Doctor of Theology, he took the sensible, and 'middle road' between Rigorism and Laxism (better know as the *common sense* approach) – which recognizes what indeed is sinful, or not – and, that there is *forgiveness* for all.

St. Alphonsus served the common people faithfully for many long years, and lived to the *then surprising* age of 91 years. During his lifetime, he always held a very strong devotion to Mary, the Mother of God. Although the present image of Our Mother of Perpetual Help did not exist in his day, imagine how *pleased* St. Alphonsus would be to see the devotion to her at the little votive shrine, on the right wall of our Church ... and the prayer and devotion that is offered there!

- Bruce Hutchison †

Parishioner

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