

## CHAPTER ONE: CHRISTIAN LAYMAN

**September 27, 1696:** Alphonsus is born to Giuseppe de Liguori and Anna Cavalieri, their first child. Since Alphonsus' nearsightedness and asthma prevent him from following his own naval career, Don Giuseppe provides a thorough and extremely rigorous education for his son. This leaves Alphonsus proficient in music, art, architecture, mathematics, science, several languages, and civil and canonical law.

**1713:** At the age of 17, Alphonsus completes his education and becomes a successful lawyer. He enters the social whirl of the Neapolitan nobility, and his father seeks a lucrative marriage for him.

**1715:** Alphonsus joins the Sodality of Our Lady of the Visitation and embraces their ministry of caring for the poor. He nurses patients at the Hospital for the Incurables.

**1722:** During a Holy Week retreat with the Vincentian Fathers, Alphonsus decides to become a priest. Neapolitan law forbids an eldest son to enter the priesthood without his father's permission: Don Giuseppe is violently opposed.

**1723:** Alphonsus loses a major court case amid rumors that his opponents bribed the judge, and resolves to leave the legal profession. His father finally agrees to let him enter the priesthood if he becomes a diocesan priest and lives at home. Alphonsus is assigned to the church of Sant'Angelo a Segno for his formation. He begins catechizing local street children.

## CHAPTER TWO: MISSION TO THE POOREST

**1725:** Alphonsus focuses his priestly studies on the Gospels, St Aquinas, and St Teresa of Avila. He begins a ministry to criminals in the prisons of Naples, helping their families and consoling those about to be executed. He suffers greatly from the spiritual illness of scruples, until a vow of blind obedience to his directors gives him some relief. He is plagued with periodic returns of this problem throughout his life. He connects with three friends--John Mazzini, Joseph Porpora, and Joseph Panza--who figure greatly in the rest of his life.

**December 21, 1726:** Alphonsus is ordained, and formally turns over his primogeniture rights to his youngest brother Hercules.

**1728:** Don Giuseppe finally accepts Alphonsus' priesthood after hearing his son deliver a highly-praised sermon in the Basilica of the Holy Spirit.

**1729:** Alphonsus moves to the Chinese College. He establishes the practice of Evening Chapels: preaching in the streets and training lay catechists to do the same. On the brink of exhaustion, his doctor sends him to the Amalfi coast for a rest, but bad weather forces him to the area around Scala. Alphonsus begins ministering to the poor shepherds of the area, who were abandoned by the church in the 1600's.

### CHAPTER THREE: SEEDS OF SCALA

**1730:** Alphonsus is asked by Bishop Falcoia to preach a retreat for the nuns at the San Salvator convent at Scala, and meets Sr Maria Celeste Crostarosa. She sees Jesus uniting himself to all humanity in the Incarnation, making of all humankind a living portrait of Himself, which the Father loves with the same love He has for His Son. Alphonsus examines her visions of a new rule for the convent, and finds them convincing.

**1731:** The convent votes to accept the rule envisioned by Maria Celeste and fleshed out by Falcoia, and the new religious order of the Sisters of the Most Holy Savior is begun. Maria Celeste has a vision of a new men's order headed by Alphonsus. (Falcoia experienced a similar vision earlier, and made several unsuccessful attempts to form such an order.)

**1732:** After much thought and consultation, Alphonsus decides to commit to founding this new men's order. Bishop Falcoia becomes Alphonsus' spiritual director, as well as the *de facto* superior of the new men's order.

### CHAPTER FOUR: THE END OF THE BEGINNING

**1733:** The initial men's order efforts collapse, and the San Salvador convent separates into two factions. Maria Celeste is asked to leave because she feels Falcoia's changes to her rule violate its integrity, and she refuses to accept his continued spiritual direction. She stays for a while at a convent in Pareti. Falcoia and Alphonsus are forbidden to interact with the convent. Mannarini and others abandon the Congregation. Only Cardinal Pignatelli, Archbishop of Naples, supports Alphonsus, and encourages him to continue his work. Caesare Sportelli and Gennaro Sarnelli join the Congregation.

**1736:** Attacks of various kinds on Alphonsus' Neapolitan foundations close all except the one at Ciorani. Bernard Tannuci, Minister of Justice to the king, constantly prevents the Congregation from obtaining royal approval.

**1738:** Maria Celeste establishes the Foggia Convent as Redemptoristines, using her original rule, which is provided by Silvestro Tosquez. Alphonsus receives

permission to visit her, and their mutual support continues. She interacts frequently with Gerard Majella.

**1741:** Cardinal Spinelli orders Alphonsus to launch widespread missions to encourage and co-ordinate the efforts of his priests. Alphonsus and his Congregation gain a reputation for sound teaching and effective evangelization. After a year at this effort, Alphonsus receives permission to attend to urgent matters at the Ciorani foundation

**1743:** Bishop Falcoia dies. Alphonsus takes Fr Cafaro as his new spiritual director, and begins construction on a house at Pagani.

#### **CHAPTER FIVE: GENERAL OF "AN ARMY OF BEGGARS"**

**1744:** After a highly successful campaign in Naples to rescue poor girls from prostitution, Sarnelli dies. Alphonsus establishes houses at Illiceto and Caposele, where promised financial help does not come through, and his priests must truly embrace poverty.

**1748:** Alphonsus' *Moral Theology* is published.

**1749:** The pope gives his formal approval of the new Congregation and its rule. The Congregation votes to accept the rule, Sportelli is elected president of the Chapter, and Alphonsus becomes Rector Major for life. Those voting are fathers Alphonsus, Sportelli, Mazzini, Rossi, Villani, Cafaro, and Giordano.

**1755:** Exhausted from the intense interference in the new Congregation by the Bourbon monarchs, Alphonsus establishes houses in the Papal states. Mother Maria Celeste dies.

**1759:** Alphonsus' ill health ends his ability to travel about giving missions.

#### **CHAPTER SIX: BISHOP OF THE POOR**

**1762:** Pope Clement XIII appoints Alphonsus bishop of the diocese of St. Agatha of the Goths. Alphonsus turns management of the Congregation over to his Vicar General, Fr. Villani. In spite of his many chronic and acute illnesses, Alphonsus works hard to improve the church's ministry in his diocese. He perseveres in his attempts to win approval of his Congregation from the Bourbon monarchy, and continues his pastoral and theological writing. Twice he petitions the pope to relieve him of the bishopric because of his failing health, but is refused.

**1775:** A new pope finally allows Alphonsus to resign. He returns to Pagani to spend his last years.

**CHAPTER SEVEN: THE JOURNEY'S END**

**1779:** Deaf, almost blind, and horribly crippled by arthritis, Alphonsus sends Frs. Cimino and Caione to continue negotiations with the Bourbon court. They betray him by giving in to the monarch's demands (which negate the rule approved by the papacy), and trick Alphonsus into signing the document-- the *Regolamento*.

**1780:** Discovering their betrayal, Alphonsus goes into a severe depression. The pope declares that only the Congregation's houses in the Papal States follow the Rule approved by the papacy, and are therefore legitimate Redemptorists. Alphonsus is removed from the office of Rector General, and separated from his Congregation.

**1785:** Fr Clement Hofbauer takes the Redemptorist Congregation beyond the Alps to northern Europe.

**1787:** Alphonsus dies at the Pagani foundation, still officially divorced from the Congregation he had founded.

**POSTSCRIPT: RESURRECTION**

**1789:** The French Revolution changes the face of Europe.

**1793:** The Neapolitan government recognizes the original Redemptorist Rule. The Redemptorists of Naples are re-united with those of the Papal States. Fr. Blasucci becomes Rector Major.

**1871:** Alphonsus is canonized.

**1950:** Alphonsus is declared a Doctor of the Church.

## A Timeline of St Alphonsus Liguori's Life

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