

The
SERMONS OF
ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI
For All the Sundays of the Year

The
SERMONS OF
ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI
For All the Sundays of the Year

by

St. Alphonsus de Liguori

Bishop of St. Agatha, Founder of the Redemptorists, and Doctor of
the Church

FOURTH EDITION

TAN Books
Charlotte, North Carolina

Printed in 1852 by James Duffy, 7 Wellington Quay, Dublin, Ireland.

Photographically reproduced in 1982 from the 1852 edition by TAN Books.

Copyright © 1982 by TAN Books.

Library of Congress Catalog Card No.: 82-050894

ISBN: 978-0-89555-193-1

Printed and bound in the United States of America.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

TAN Books
Charlotte, North Carolina
www.TANBooks.com

2012

CONTENTS.

	Page
BULL OF THE CANONIZATION OF ST. ALPHONSUS M. LIGUORI ..	ix
OBJECT OF THE WORK	xxi
INSTRUCTIONS TO PREACHERS	xxiii

SERMON I.

FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

<i>On the general judgment</i> ..	33
-----------------------------------	----

SERMON II.

FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

<i>On the advantages of tribulations</i> ..	39
---	----

SERMON III.

FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

<i>On the means necessary for salvation</i> ..	47
--	----

SERMON IV.

FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

<i>On the love of Jesus Christ for us, and on our obligation to love him</i> ..	52
---	----

SERMON V.

FOR THE SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE NATIVITY.

<i>In what true wisdom consists</i> ..	58
--	----

SERMON VI.

<i>On the malice of mortal sin</i> ..	64
---------------------------------------	----

SERMON VII.

FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

<i>On the confidence with which we ought to recommend ourselves to the Mother of God</i> ..	71
---	----

SERMON VIII.

FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

<i>On the remorse of the damned</i> ..	78
--	----

SERMON IX.

FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

<i>Dangers of eternal salvation</i> ..	83
--	----

SERMON X.

FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

<i>On the pains of Hell</i> ..	89
--------------------------------	----

CONTENTS.

	Page
SERMON XI.	
FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.	
<i>On the death of the just</i>	95
SERMON XII.	
FOR SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.	
<i>On the importance of salvation</i>	105
SERMON XIII.	
FOR SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.	
<i>On the unhappy life of sinners, and on the happy life of those who love God</i>	111
SERMON XIV.	
FOR QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.	
<i>Delusions of sinners</i>	118
SERMON XV.	
FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT.	
<i>On the number of sins beyond which God pardons no more</i> ..	123
SERMON XVI.	
FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.	
<i>On Heaven</i>	130
SERMON XVII.	
FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT.	
<i>On concealing sins in confession</i>	136
SERMON XVIII.	
FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT.	
<i>On the tender compassion which Jesus Christ entertains towards sinners</i>	142
SERMON XIX.	
FOR PASSION SUNDAY.	
<i>On the danger to which tepidity exposes the soul</i> ..	148
SERMON XX.	
FOR PALM SUNDAY.	
<i>On the evil effects of bad habits</i>	154
SERMON XXI.	
FOR EASTER SUNDAY.	
<i>On the miserable state of relapsing sinners</i> ..	161
SERMON XXII.	
FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.	
<i>On avoiding the occasions of sin</i>	168

CONTENTS.

v

Page

SERMON XXIII.

FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

On scandal 174

SERMON XXIV.

FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

On the value of time 189

SERMON XXV.

FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

On obedience to your confessor 182

SERMON XXVI.

FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

On the conditions of prayer 199

SERMON XXVII.

FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

On human respect 203

SERMON XXVIII.

FOR PENTECOST SUNDAY.

On conformity to the will of God 210

SERMON XXIX.

FOR TRINITY SUNDAY.

On the love of the Three Divine Persons for man 217

SERMON XXX.

FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On charity to our neighbour 224

SERMON XXXI.

FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On holy communion 233

SERMON XXXII.

FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On the mercy of God towards sinners 240

SERMON XXXIII.

FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Death is certain and uncertain 246

SERMON XXXIV.

FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On the sin of anger 254

CONTENTS.

	Page
SERMON XXXV.	
FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.	
<i>On the vanity of the world</i> ..	262
SERMON XXXVI.	
FOR THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.	
<i>On the education of children</i> ..	269
SERMON XXXVII.	
FOR THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.	
<i>On the particular judgment</i> ..	279
SERMON XXXVIII.	
FOR THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.	
<i>On the death of the sinner</i> ..	287
SERMON XXXIX.	
FOR THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.	
<i>On the efficacy and necessity of prayer</i> ..	294
SERMON XL.	
FOR THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.	
<i>On the vice of speaking immodestly</i> ..	300
SERMON XLI.	
FOR THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.	
<i>On the abuse of divine mercy</i> ..	306
SERMON XLII.	
FOR THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.	
<i>On avoiding bad company</i> ..	313
SERMON XLIII.	
FOR THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.	
<i>All ends and soon ends</i> ..	319
SERMON XLIV.	
FOR THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.	
<i>On the practical death, or on what ordinarily happens at the death of men of the world</i> ..	327
SERMON XLV.	
FOR THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.	
<i>On impurity</i> ..	336
SERMON XLVI.	
FOR THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.	
<i>On the love of God</i> ..	345

SERMON XLVII.

FOR THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

<i>On bad thoughts</i>	353
------------------------	----	----	-----

SERMON XLVIII.

FOR THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

<i>On the pain of loss which the damned suffer in Hell</i>	..	361
--	----	-----

SERMON XLIX.

FOR THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

<i>On the predominant passion</i>	369
-----------------------------------	----	----	-----

SERMON L.

FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

<i>On the eternity of Hell</i>	376
--------------------------------	----	----	-----

SERMON LI.

FOR THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

<i>On straits and anguish of dying Christians, who have been negligent during life about the duties of religion</i>	..	384
---	----	-----

SERMON LII.

FOR THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

<i>On impenitence</i>	392
-----------------------	----	----	-----

SERMON LIII.

FOR THE TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

<i>On blasphemy</i>	401
---------------------	----	----	-----

PROTESTATION.

In obedience to the decrees of Urban VIII., I protest that, of the miraculous works and gifts ascribed in this work to certain servants of God, and not already approved by the Holy See, I claim no other belief than that which is ordinarily given to history resting on mere human authority; and that, in bestowing the title of Saint, or of Blessed, on any person not canonized or beatified by the Church, I only intend to do it according to the usage and opinion of men.

B U L L
OF
THE CANONIZATION
OF
SAINT ALPHONSUS MARIA LIGUORI,

FOUNDER OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER, AND
BISHOP OF ST. AGATHA OF THE GOTHs.

G R E G O R Y, B I S H O P,
SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD,
FOR A PERPETUAL REMEMBRANCE OF THE THING.

ACCORDING to the Apostle of Nations, sanctity and learning should so adorn a Bishop, to whose trust is committed the The Proemium. salvation of souls, that he may, by the most exemplary manner of life, serve as a light to guide his flock without stumbling on the road to eternal happiness, and also be able to exhort them in sound doctrine, and to convince the gainsayers. We learn from the history of every age, that there have been Bishops eminently entitled to this twofold praise, who, reflecting the image of the Good Pastor, and being made the pattern of the flock from the heart, devoted their exertions and wisdom to the promotion of its salvation; and who, like a candle placed upon a candlestick, shed a lustre over the Church of God, not less by the example of a most perfect life, than by the singular excellence of their doctrine.

2. For the purpose of furnishing his Church with a new example of such worthy Bishops in the last century, the Almighty appears to have given ALPHONSUS MARIA LIGUORI, who, having, from his tenderest years, carefully cultivated the Christian virtues, and having acquired a wonderful knowledge especially of sacred literature, was called to the very arduous office of the Episcopacy, that, in the field of the Lord, in which he had long since received the Priesthood and proved himself a laborious husbandman, he might labour with greater effect and advantage. Not content that his zeal

A general commendation of the virtues & merits of Alphonsus.

for the increase of the glory of God should be confined within the narrow limits of his own life, he, in order to transmit to the remotest ages a series of successors in such a salutary work, instituted a society of Priests, who, inflamed with like charity, should devote to the salvation of souls all their care and exertions. It having been ascertained, after the eminent virtues of ALPHONSUS were examined with the wonted severity of judgment, that they had reached the highest summit of Christian perfection, and that no doubt could be entertained of the miracles by which God—the Author of all good—had attested the sanctity of his servant, we, in virtue of the Apostolical authority with which, though unworthy, we are invested by God, and with the advice not only of the Cardinals of the holy Roman Church, but of the Patriarchs, Archbishops, and Bishops, of whom a very great number were present in the city, decree and declare, by the present letters, that the honours of the Heavenly citizens are to be paid to the blessed ALPHONSUS LIGUORI by the universal Church, and that his intercession with God is to be implored.

The birth and
early education of
Alphonsus.

3. ALPHONSUS, descended of an illustrious race, was born in Naples on the 5th of the Kalends of October, 1696. Being endowed with wonderful activity of mind, he, on the termination of his childhood, applied himself successively to the study of the classics, of the more severe sciences, and of the law. He possessed such felicitous aptitude for learning, that he scarcely had entered on his sixteenth year, when, after a rigorous examination, he obtained, with distinguished applause, his degrees both in civil and canon law. Yielding to the wishes of his father, he applied all his attention to the study and practice of the profession of the law. Though he preserved his chastity and integrity in that avocation, nevertheless, the troubles and dangers by which it was beset induced him to abandon it and enter into the service of the Church. Wherefore, declining an offer of a high matrimonial connexion, and spontaneously and cheerfully transferring to his brother the paternal property, which descended to him as the eldest son, he cast away all care of human things.

He receives the
Priesthood. The
preservation of
chastity his study.
His wonderful love
of God and of his
neighbour.

4. Having received holy orders, and being raised to the dignity of the Priesthood, he began to apply all his energy to extend on every side the glory of God, to sow the seeds of virtue in the minds of men, and to pluck up the roots of vice. Persuaded that the apostolical labours of no man can be productive of abundant fruit, unless he support his teaching by his example, it became a principal object of his care to exhibit himself by the practice of every description of virtue, “as a minister of God” and a “dispenser of His mysteries”. Of chastity, which he had long since consecrated by vow to God, he was always the most faithful guardian, incessantly exerting all the powers of his mind and employing every movement of his body for the sole purpose of preserving it free from the slightest stain. To attain this object with perfect security, he confidently consigned that virtue to the care of the Mother of God. He was carried towards God with so vehement an impulse of love, that his attention was perpetually fixed upon Him; and nothing appears to have afforded him

delight, but to think and speak of God. From the great fervour of his love for God, it is easy to conclude how ardent must have been the charity with which he burned for his neighbour. Hence, to recall men involved in vice and wickedness to the bosom and embraces of God, he never spared either toil or trouble. Hence it became his constant occupation to visit the hospitals for the purpose of assisting the sick, and of aiding by his presence those in particular who were in immediate danger of death. Hence it was that he accustomed himself to hear confessions with the greatest patience, and to spend in the performance of that function, not only whole days, but a considerable part of the night. Hence, too, was he in the habit of addressing from the pulpit his crowded audience in strains of such fervid language as to conquer and break down the obstinacy of abandoned sinners, and, by exhibiting to them the turpitude of the crimes which had hardened their hearts, to excite in the minds of his hearers such a lively sense of sorrow, as to move them to tears, and to fill, on various occasions, the sacred edifice with weeping and lamentations. Allowing himself, by day or by night, no intermission of the vast exertions, both of mind and body, which he made to procure the salvation of souls, he naturally became enfeebled and exhausted by incessant toil, and fell into a mortal malady, from which he was no sooner released by the Divine Power, than he immediately resumed with increased alacrity the performance of works of charity.

5. As soon as he had learned that, in the designs of the Supreme Being, he was called to establish a religious society for the purpose of preventing a want of laborious husbandmen while the harvest was so abundant, he was deterred by no accumulation of difficulties from pressing forward the completion of a work which would redound so much to the advantage of the Church. Wherefore, relying on the Divine assistance, he commenced the undertaking, and happily eluded the designs and artifices of the infernal enemy, who strove to impede the furtherance of this new work. Having associated with him twelve men of eminent piety, he laid the foundation of a religious sodality, which received its name from the most holy Redeemer. His leading object in the institution of the society was, to reform as much as possible, both by word and example, the profligate and abandoned morals particularly of the peasantry, who were scattered through the rural districts. In a short time the society became wonderfully propagated through the towns and provinces of Italy: he then procured from Benedict the Fourteenth, our predecessor, its confirmation by Apostolical authority. On being appointed its superior by that Pontiff, the extent to which he incited the brotherhood by his example to the practice of every virtue, is truly astonishing.

6. For the virtue of humility he was particularly distinguished; for, though the highest opinion of his great sanctity universally prevailed, and though he was respected and honoured by the most exalted dignitaries, he perpetually entertained the lowliest sentiments of himself, and esteemed himself unworthy of any mark of honour or respect. Towards the Blessed Virgin, whom he regarded

He institutes a congregation, which takes its name from the most holy Redeemer.

Remarkable for humility and penitential spirit, he is inflamed with an incredible love for the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist, and for the Virgin Mother of God.

as a mother, he cherished the most singular piety. For the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist he was penetrated with the deepest sentiments of love and veneration: and filled with extraordinary delight, he used to spend in adoring it several consecutive hours. That he might, in imitation of the Apostle, bring his body into subjection to the spirit, he kept it as a domestic enemy, under continual restraint, and subjected it to every species of torment. It was allowed by him as much meat and drink as would scarcely seem sufficient to renew its strength, or to support life: and the more effectually to extinguish every sense of pleasure, he was accustomed to sprinkle the very coarse food which he used with juices of the bitterest description. His side was constantly girded with a very rough horse-hair cloth; and he never omitted to attach small iron chains to the members of his body. He was in the habit of exercising on himself, by means of sharp-pointed disciplines, such a degree of severity, that the floor and walls were sprinkled with the blood which gushed from his mangled flesh; and to prevent the discovery of the mortifications which he practised, he took particular care to efface these stains of blood.

Though nearly exhausted by his apostolical labours he applies closely to the study of sacred literature, and publishes a great number of works for the good of the Church.

7. Perpetually occupied, as he was, in the discharge of his Apostolical functions, and enfeebling his body by every species of torture, it must excite wonder to find, notwithstanding, that he applied with so much energy, and devoted so much time, to the study of sacred literature, as to be able to render, by the publication of works equally learned and elaborate, the most important services to the cause of Christianity. In order that he might consecrate himself and all his actions to the service of God, he bound himself by an arduous and almost novel description of vow, not to waste the smallest portion of his time in idleness, but to be perpetually engaged in some profitable occupation. He composed a great number of books with the view of supporting the doctrine of morals, of fully elucidating the nature and duties of the clerical order, of confirming the truth of the Catholic religion, of asserting the rights of this Apostolic See, and of exciting sentiments of piety in the minds of Christians. They are wonderfully remarkable for unusual force, for extent and variety of learning, and for the singular proofs they afford of his great solitude for the Church, and his ardent zeal for religion. But what deserves to be particularly noticed is, that after a careful examination of his works, it has been ascertained that they all, notwithstanding their number and extent, may be perused by the faithful with the most perfect safety (*inoffenso prorsus pede percurri a fidelibus posse*).

He is appointed Bishop of St. Agatha by Clement the Thirteenth.

8. In consequence of so high a reputation for sanctity and erudition, ALPHONSUS was promoted by the authority of Clement the Thirteenth, to the Episcopal See of St. Agatha of the Goths. The holy man dreaded the weight of so great a burden, and employed every means to decline it. But having discovered the will of God in the designs of the Pontiff, he considered it to be his duty to acquiesce, and, with confidence in the Divine protection, to undertake with cheerfulness and courage a task to which, through humility, he deemed himself unequal.

9. It is difficult to describe the laborious attention and zeal with which he sought to discharge all the duties of a Pastor. He watched unceasingly over the flock committed to his care, and laboured to the utmost of his ability to prevent the loss of even one of the sheep entrusted to him. Nor did the acquisition of his new dignity cause any abatement of the rigorous mortification of his life: he avoided all daintiness of food and all costliness of dress: there was nothing superfluous, nothing splendid in his palace or furniture. His charity to the poor was truly astonishing: they were liberally supplied by him with food, clothes, and money; and to relieve their necessities he sometimes did not hesitate to sell even his golden cross and the episcopal ring. From his own revenue he was accustomed to give young females the portion necessary to enable them to enter the marriage state, and to support, at his own expense, young ecclesiastics of poor and humble parents, while pursuing their course of studies. To holy virgins he opened the cloister; and for such females as might stand exposed to the danger of losing their chastity, he established houses of refuge. In the visitation of his diocese, retarded neither by the badness of the roads nor by the inclemency of the season, he visited the villages on the summits of the mountains, and the people scattered through the country, and, in language full of ardour, enkindled in them the love of virtue, and deterred them from the turpitude of sin. To priests, and to young men who had commenced their preparation for the ecclesiastical state, he paid peculiar attention. Great indeed were the exertions he made, that, in the very flower of life, they should grow up in piety, and be imbued especially with sacred science, in order that they might at length become fit for the due administration of sacred things, and for the proper direction of the Christian people. It must be acknowledged, that the life of the excellent prelate acted upon their minds as a powerful stimulus; for, beholding his mode of life, they had before their eyes the brightest example of continency, of religion, of piety,—in fine, of all the virtues with which a priest, if he wish to contribute any thing toward the common advantage of the Church, should be furnished and adorned.

His eminent virtues in the discharge of the pastoral duties.

10. After having, for the space of thirteen years, governed the church committed to his care with all pastoral zeal and the most exemplary vigilance, bending under the united weight of old age and sickness, he, after repeated applications to our predecessor, Pius the Sixth, at length obtained leave to resign his burdensome charge. Released from the duties of the episcopacy, he rejoined his congregation; but, instead of devoting the remainder of his life to innocent repose, he, even in extreme old age, engaged in other laborious occupations. He was constantly employed in committing to writing something which might be productive of advantage to the faithful; and continued to preach, in order that he might reform the morals of men, and inflame them as much as possible with the love of virtue.

He resigns the bishopric, and returns to his congregation.

11. At length when he had reached the ninety-first year of his life, now hastening to its close, he was com-

Full of years and merits, he dies in the peace of Christ.

pelled, pressed down as he was by the weight of years, and 'seized by serious illness, to keep his bed. Having endured with incredible patience the excruciating pains of his illness, and having strongly exhorted the brethren of the religious society he had established to the practice of every virtue, he was refreshed by the Viaticum of the most holy Eucharist, and fortified by the sacrament of extreme unction. After he had received these sacraments of the Church most religiously, his soul, which longed for nothing more ardently than to be delivered from the prison of the body, and to be with Christ, full of joy and gladness, most placidly flew into the bosom of God.

The prevailing opinion of his sanctity confirmed by miracles. The drawing up of the juridical account of his virtues and miracles.

12. As soon as the intelligence of ALPHONSUS' death had obtained circulation, a great concourse of the faithful collected round his remains, lamenting the loss of so great a man, and evincing their respect and veneration for him by their efforts to procure something which he had used during life. Nor was fame silent regarding the miracles by which God publicly declared to all the extraordinary sanctity of the Bishop. A report of these miracles being spread far and wide, the opinion of his virtues, which had long since prevailed, became confirmed in a surprising degree; and several princes and other high personages, together with very many of the religious orders, earnestly besought the supreme Pontiff, Pius the Sixth, to order a juridical account of the most holy life of ALPHONSUS to be drawn up. This having been done in the usual manner, and weighed with the greatest nicety—the works also which he published, having been most attentively perused and examined—our predecessor, Pius the Seventh, with the advice of the Congregation of Rites, issued, on the Nones of May, 1807, a decree declaring that it was proved beyond doubt, that the venerable ALPHONSUS MARIA DE LIGUORI possessed in a heroic degree the theological and cardinal virtues, together with those connected with them.

Two miracles approved of by the Holy See for his beatification, are related.

13. Afterwards, in the same sacred council, an investigation took place of the miracles which were alleged to have been performed by Almighty God in favour of the venerable ALPHONSUS. Of these miracles, two in particular, of the second order, were pronounced to be most undoubtedly certain. The first was the sudden cure of Magdalen de Nuncio, who was brought to the point of death by a gangrenous ulcer, on account of which a great part of one side of her breast had been cut away. She implored the intercession of ALPHONSUS; her breast was made whole, and she was restored to health, contrary to the expectation of all. The second was likewise the perfect and instantaneous cure of Francis ab Octavino, of the order of the Reformed Minors of St. Francis. He was so grievously afflicted with a pulmonary phthisis and confirmed marasmus, that no hopes were entertained of his recovery. After having poured forth his supplications to the venerable ALPHONSUS for several days, he was suddenly restored to health, and not a single trace of consumption remained. But, in a matter of such serious importance, Pius the Seventh, of sacred memory, thought it proper to refrain from pronouncing his judgment until he should more earnestly have implored light from on high. At length, on

the 16th of the Kalends of October, 1815, the festival of the Dolours of the Mother of God, the memory of whose sorrows, ALPHONSUS, during his mortal career, had piously and religiously cherished, our said predecessor was pleased to declare his opinion, and published a decree, in which the two cures above mentioned were pronounced to be true miracles. At last, after taking the opinion of the Sacred Congregation, he issued pontifical letters, on the 12th of the Kalends of January, 1816, declaring that the honours of the blessed should, at some time, be paid to the venerable ALPHONSUS MARIA LIGUORI. The ceremony of the beatification was performed with solemn pomp and splendour in the Basilica of the Vatican, on the 16th of the Kalends of September, 1816.

14. After the honours of public worship had been paid to the venerable ALPHONSUS, many others in actual danger experienced his aid, manifestly in order that all might know that in proportion to the labours and exertions of this most pious Bishop for the advancement of the glory of the Divine name, God, of his great bounty, wished to accumulate honours in this world on the faithful dispenser of his house. Moved by the celebrity of these miracles, Ferdinand the First, the most pious King of the Two Sicilies, and other Princes, besides most of the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, of the Archbishops and Bishops, together with the religious orders, and especially the sodality of the Most Holy Redeemer, which justly boasts of ALPHONSUS as its founder, again and again besought Pius the Seventh to refer as speedily as possible to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, the question of the propriety of enrolling the blessed ALPHONSUS in the catalogue of the saints. The same Pontiff most graciously yielded to their prayers: an accurate inquiry into the truth of the recent miracles was commenced; and, after a long deliberation, two miracles were ascertained to be placed beyond all doubt. The first of these was the sudden and perfect cure of Antonia Tarsia, who was reduced to the last extremity by a mortal contusion in the abdomen, and most severe internal injuries, which she received by falling headlong from a considerable height while she was carrying a heavy load. She implored in the most earnest manner the aid of ALPHONSUS; and to the great amazement of all present, she suddenly bounded forth perfectly restored. The second was the cure of Brother Peter Canali, a professed lay brother of the congregation of the Camaldolese. He suffered under a most horrible ulcer in the breast, which had become fistulous, callous, and carious, and which appeared to be more and more exasperated by every attempt to effect its cure; so that, abandoning all hopes of recovery, he was in hourly expectation of death. He for some days implored ALPHONSUS to be propitious to him, and to avert from him the certain danger of death. His prayers were heard; for every vestige of the ulcer was effaced, and he forthwith recovered that health for which he sighed so long.

Miracles ratified by the Holy See for his Canonization, and declared to be most true.

15. The truly wonderful cures which we have mentioned being juridically proved, Pius the Eighth, our predecessor, published a decree declaratory of their truth, on the 3rd of the Nones of December, 1829. Afterwards,

Secret, public, and semi-public consistories held before his Canonization.

when, in the Sacred Congregation of Rites, the usual question was proposed, whether the solemn canonization might be safely proceeded with, and whether all those steps had been taken, which the usages of the Apostolic See necessarily require, the same Pontiff, Pius the Eighth, on the fifth Sunday after the Paschal solemnity, after having celebrated Mass in the Quirinal palace, on the 17th of the Kalends of June, 1830, announced his judgment, that it was safe to proceed to the said canonization. Now, desirous to execute this decree, and gladly yielding to the wishes of the sodality of the most holy Redeemer, we, in the first instance, in a secret consistory held on the 4th of the Ides of December, 1838, communicated on the subject with the entire college of our venerable brethren the Cardinals of the holy Roman Church; all of whom were of one opinion—that the honours of the saints should be paid to blessed ALPHONSUS MARIA DE LIGUORI. Soon after, we summoned to a consultation on so important a measure, a great number of our venerable brethren the Archbishops and Bishops, and submitted to their judgment the series of all the acts which comprised the virtues and miracles of the blessed ALPHONSUS, both orally in the public consistory, where our beloved son Anthony Maria Cagianò de Azevedo, the advocate of our Consistorial Court, pleaded the cause of the blessed Bishop; and in a written statement containing an accurate relation of these acts, taken from the authentic records of the same sacred council. After these proceedings, we called to a semi-public consistory, held in our presence on the 8th of the Ides of May, not only our venerable brethren the Cardinals of the holy Roman Church, but also our venerable brethren the Patriarchs, Archbishops, and Bishops, who were present in the city, and asked their opinion on the subject of the canonization of the blessed ALPHONSUS. When all had unanimously expressed their opinion in favour of the measure, and even professed the greatest desire that this honour should be conferred on the blessed ALPHONSUS, we gave directions to our beloved sons the Notaries of the Apostolic See, to draw up the necessary public documents; and we ordered that the written votes of our venerable brethren, signed by each, should be preserved in the archives of the Roman Church.

Notwithstanding the foregoing precautions, we deemed it proper, in a case of such momentous importance, to delay the peremptory sentence, until we should have ordered days of solemn fast to be observed in the city, and appoint churches for supplication to God, that we might obtain from the Heavenly Father of Light a more copious effusion of the rays of his wisdom.

On the feast of the most holy Trinity, the solemn ceremony of the canonization is celebrated with great pomp.

16. The 7th of the Kalends of June being at last fixed for the aforesaid solemn canonization of blessed ALPHONSUS, as well as for that of the other blessed individuals, namely—Francis de Hieronymo, of the Society of Jesus; John Joseph of the Cross, of the order of the Discalced Minors of St. Peter of Alcantara; Pacificus a S. Severino, of the order of Reformed Minors de Observantia; and Veronica de Julianis, Abbess of the Capuchin Nuns—we proceeded in festive pomp to the Vatican Basilick, attended by the several orders of the secular and regular clergy, by the nobles and officers of the Roman Court and of our Palace, and by our venerable brethren the Cardinals of the holy Roman Church, together with the Patriarchs, Archbishops, and Bishops. Before

we approached the altar for the celebration of the sacred mysteries, our beloved son Aloysius Lambruschini, Cardinal Priest of the holy Roman Church, of the title of S. Callistus, presented again, through the Advocate of our Consistorial Court, the most humble prayers of Christian Princes, of Bishops, and of the people, that the blessed ALPHONSUS should be raised to the rank of the saints; and we ourselves, falling on our knees, besought the choirs of angels, and all the saints in Heaven, to be propitious to us, and then, with reiterated importunity, implored the Holy Ghost in the most earnest manner, to strengthen, by his power, our mind, now about to pronounce the definite sentence. At last, taking into consideration the most humble prayers of the Postulator in the cause, and also the wishes of the universal Church, the searching investigation to which this important affair had been subjected, and the votes which the Bishops, aided by God, had given; we, by virtue of the Apostolic authority which, though unworthy, we possess, as the successor of St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, in the supreme government of the Church, in honour of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, for the splendour and glory of the Catholic Faith and Religion, announced our solemn and decretorial judgment, and placed in the catalogue of holy Bishops and Confessors, the blessed ALPHONSUS MARIA DE LIGUORI, refulgent with the light of Christian virtues, and most celebrated for miracles, and ordained that his memory should be venerated by the universal Church, on the 4th of the Nones of August. On those who should, on the said day, visit the tomb of SAINT ALPHONSUS, and on the days appointed, honour the remains of the other saints, we graciously bestowed an indulgence of seven years and of seven 40 days.

17. Afterwards, on the great altar of the Basilick of the Vatican, we reverently offered up the Immaculate Lamb to God the Father. Lastly, from the gallery of the upper hall of the Vatican Basilick, we most lovingly gave to a crowded congregation a solemn benediction, and bestowed a plenary indulgence, not only upon such of the faithful as assisted at this benediction, but upon all those who were present at the sacred ceremony of the canonization.

Public indulgences granted on the occasion of the canonization.

18. Let us now, therefore, rejoice exceedingly, as we justly may, and return due thanks to Almighty God, who never fails to supply his Church with new examples of virtue, that we may be more powerfully incited to walk with cheerfulness in the way of salvation. Besides, beset as we are with so many and such great dangers, and surrounded by the arms of so many bitter foes, let us have recourse to the intercession of SAINT ALPHONSUS, that, strengthened by the Divine aid, we may one day obtain the reward of victory, and a crown of never-fading glory in Heaven.

The faithful are incited to virtue by the bright example of Alphonsus.

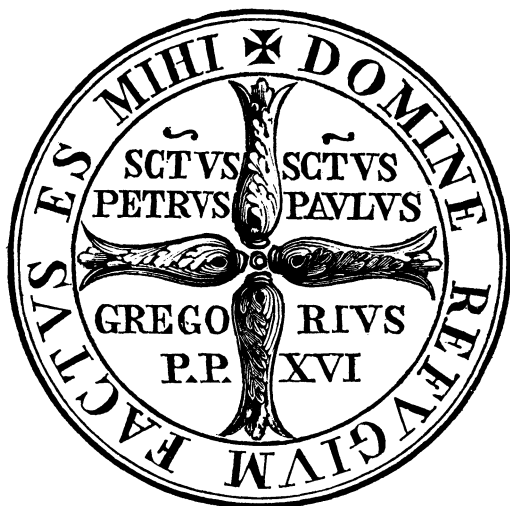
19. And that no length of time might ever obliterate the memory of this most auspicious event, we wished that it should be committed to writing, and confirmed by Apostolical letters, and ordained that such copies as should be signed by a Notary Public, and bear the seal of an Ecclesiastical Dignitary, should have as much authority as these the originals, if shown or exhibited.

The authority of the copies.

20. Let no man, therefore, infringe or, with daring temerity, contravene this instrument of our will and decree. If any should presume to make such an attempt, be it known to him, that he shall incur the indignation of the Omnipotent God, and of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul. Penal sanction.

21. Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, on the 7th of the Kalends of June, in the year 1839 of our Lord's Incarnation, and in the ninth year of our pontificate.

✠ GREGORY, Bishop of the Catholic Church.



- ✠ B. Pacca, Cardinal Bishop of Ostia and Veletri; Dean of the Sacred College.
- ✠ E. De Gregorio, Cardinal Bishop of Porto, St. Ruphina, and Civita Vecchia; Major Penitentiary.
- ✠ J. F. Falzacappa, Cardinal Bishop of Albano.
- ✠ C. M. Pedicini, Cardinal Bishop of Præneste; Vice-Chancellor.
- ✠ F. Micara, Cardinal Bishop of Tusculum.
- ✠ A. D. Gamberini, Cardinal Bishop of Sabina.
- ✠ C. Opizzoni, Cardinal Priest of the title of St. Bernard ad Thermas.
- ✠
- ✠
- ✠ H. Dandini, Cardinal Priest of the title of St. Balbina.
- ✠
- ✠
- ✠ J. B. Bussi, Cardinal Priest of the title of St. Pancratius.

- ✠ J. Giustiniani, Cardinal Priest of the title of St. Peter and St. Marcellinus.
- ✠ J. Ph. Franzoni, Cardinal Priest of the title of St. Mary in Araceli.
- ✠ B. Barberini, Cardinal Priest of the title of St. Mary beyond the Tiber.
- ✠
- ✠ A. Lambruschini, Cardinal Priest of the title of St. Callistus.
- ✠
- ✠ F. Serra Cassano, Cardinal Priest of the title of the Twelve Apostles.
- ✠
- ✠
- ✠
- ✠ A. Del Drago, Cardinal Priest of the title of St. Laurence in Pane et Perna.
- ✠ C. Castracane De Antelminellis, Cardinal Priest of the title of St. Peter ad Vincula.
- ✠
- ✠
- ✠ J. A. Brignole, Cardinal Priest of the title of St. Cecily.
- ✠ J. Della Porta Rodiani, Cardinal Priest of the title of St. Susanna.
- ✠ C. Patrizi, Cardinal Priest of the title of St. Sylvester in Capite.
- ✠ J. Alberghini, Cardinal Priest of the title of St. Prisca.
- ✠ P. Polidori, Cardinal Priest of the title of St. Eusebius.
- ✠ P. M. Tadini, Cardinal Priest of the title of St. Mary in Transpontina.
- ✠
- ✠
- ✠ A. Mai, Cardinal Priest of the title of St. Anastasia.
- ✠
- ✠ C. Falconieri, Cardinal Priest of the title of St. Marcellus.
- ✠ A. Tosti, Cardinal Priest of the title of St. Peter in Monte Aureo.
- ✠
- ✠ J. Mezzofante, Cardinal Priest of the title of St. Onuphrius.
- ✠
- ✠ A. S. Rivarola, (Prior) Cardinal Deacon of St. Mary ad Martyres.
- ✠
- ✠ Th. Bernetti, Cardinal Deacon of St. Cæsareus.
- ✠ J. F. S. Marco-y-Catalan, Cardinal Deacon of St. Agatha ad Suburram.
- ✠ L. S. Gazzoli, Cardinal Deacon of St. Eustachius.
- ✠ M. S. Mattei, Cardinal Deacon of St. Mary ad Aquiria.
- ✠
- ✠ A. S. Spada, Cardinal Deacon of St. Mary in Cosmedin.
- ✠ A. S. De Flisco, Cardinal Deacon of St. Mary in Porticu.
- ✠ A. S. Ciacchi, Cardinal Deacon of St. Angelo in Pescaria.
- ✠
- ✠
- ✠
- ✠



B. Cardinal Pacca Pro Datarius.

Place of ✠ Seal

E. Cardinal de Gregorio.

Seen at the Court

J. M. Vespignani, Archbishop of Tyana.

OBJECT OF THE WORK.

THE present Work is entitled ABRIDGED SERMONS FOR ALL THE SUNDAYS OF THE YEAR. They are called *Abridged Sermons*, because, although each contains abundant matter for a sermon, the sentiments are briefly expressed—not, however, so briefly as to render the sense obscure. Hence the work may be used for spiritual lectures. Diffuseness has been purposely avoided, that the preacher may extend the subject treated, in the way which may appear best to him. A preacher will scarce ever deliver with zeal and warmth, sentiments which he has not made in some manner his own. Hence the matter of each sermon has been condensed into a small compass, that the preacher may extend it according to his pleasure, and thus make it his own.

In each sermon there are many passages from the Scriptures and Holy Fathers, and a variety of reflections—perhaps too many for a single discourse—that the reader may select what will be most pleasing to him. The style is easy and simple, and therefore calculated to render the preaching of the Divine Word conducive to the salvation of souls.

INSTRUCTIONS TO PREACHERS.

1. IN the first place, the preacher, if he wishes that his preaching shall produce abundant fruit, should propose to himself the proper end—that is, to preach, not with a view to obtain honour, or applause, or any temporal advantage, but solely to gain souls to God; and hence it is necessary, that when he enters upon his exalted office of divine ambassador, he should pray to God fervently to inflame his heart with His holy love; because it is by this means that his preaching will be productive of much fruit. The venerable Father John D'Avila being once asked, what was most conducive towards preaching well, replied in those short but expressive words—“*To love Jesus Christ well*”. It has been therefore found by experience, that preachers who love Jesus Christ have often effected more by a single discourse, than others by several.

2. St. Thomas of Villanova said, that the words of a sermon should be like so many darts of fire, which would wound and inflame the hearers with divine love. “But how”, he subjoined, “can the heart be set on fire by those sermons which, though long and elaborate, issue, notwithstanding, from a frozen heart?” St. Francis de Sales observes, that the tongue speaks to the ear, but the heart speaks to the heart. He proceeds to say, that when the sentiments do not spring from the heart of the preacher, it is with difficulty they draw the hearts of others to divine love: he must himself be first inflamed with it. “*Lampades ejus lampades ignis, atque flammarum*”—*Cant.*, viii. 6. He must be first a fire to burn, and afterwards a flame to set others on fire. St. Bernard explained this in other terms, when he said, that he must be first a cistern, and then a canal: first a cistern—that is, full of the fervour and zeal which are collected in mental prayer; and then a canal, to communicate it to others.

3. With regard to the subject matter of sermons. Those

subjects should be selected which move most powerfully to detest sin and to love God; whence the preacher should often speak of the last things—of death, of judgment, of Hell, of Heaven, and of eternity. According to the advice of the Holy Spirit, “*Memorare novissima tua, et in æternum non peccabis*”—*Eccl.*, vii. 40, it is particularly useful often to make mention of death, by delivering several discourses on that subject during the year, speaking at one time on the uncertainty of death, which terminates all the pleasures, as well as all the afflictions of this life; at another, on the uncertainty of the time at which death may arrive; now on the unhappy death of the sinner; and again, on the happy death of the just.

4. The preacher should often speak of the love which Jesus Christ bears towards us, of the love which we should bear to Jesus Christ, and of the confidence we should have in His mercy whenever we are resolved to amend our lives. It would appear that some preachers do not know how to speak of anything but the justice of God, terrors, threats, and chastisements. There is no doubt but that terrifying discourses are of use to arouse sinners from the sleep of sin; but we should be persuaded at the same time, that those who abstain from sin solely through the fear of punishment, will with difficulty persevere for a long time. Love is that golden link which binds the soul to God, and makes it faithful in repelling temptation and practising virtue. St. Augustine said: “*Ama et fac quod vis*”. He who truly loves God, flies from everything displeasing to Him, and seeks to please Him to the utmost of his power. And here let us cite that remarkable saying of St. Francis de Sales: “The love that does not spring from the passion of Christ is weak”. By this the saint gives us to understand, that the passion of Christ moves us most effectually to love Him.

5. Thus it is very useful, and most conducive to inspire the love of God, to speak to sinners of the confidence which we should have in Jesus Christ if we abandon sin. “*Viam mandatorum, tuorum cucurri, cum dilatasti cor meum*”—*Ps.*, cxviii. 32. When the heart is dilated with confidence, it easily runs in the way of the Lord. In like manner, the preacher should often speak of the confidence which we should have in the intercession of the Mother of God. Besides the discourses delivered

during the course of the year, on the principal festivals of the Blessed Virgin Mary,—as the Annunciation, the Assumption, her Patronage, and her Dolours,—let him oftentimes, in his addresses to the people, inculcate upon the minds of his auditors, devotion to the Mother of God. Some preachers have a very laudable custom of introducing into every sermon something regarding the Blessed Virgin, either by relating some example of graces bestowed on her clients, or of some act of homage performed by her votaries, or some prayer which we should offer to her.

6. Moreover, the preacher should often speak of the means by which we are preserved in the grace of God; such as, flying dangerous occasions and wicked companions, frequenting the sacraments, and especially recommending ourselves often to God and the Virgin Mother, in order to obtain the graces necessary for salvation, and principally the graces of perseverance and of the love of Jesus Christ, without which we cannot be saved.

7. The preacher should likewise often speak against bad confessions, in which sins are concealed through shame. This is an evil not of rare occurrence, but frequent, especially in small country districts, which consigns innumerable souls to Hell. Hence it is very useful to mention, from time to time, some example of souls that were damned by wilfully concealing sins in confession.

8. We shall now speak briefly of the parts of a discourse, which are nine:—the exordium, the proposition, the division, the introduction, the proof, the confutation, the amplification, the peroration or conclusion, the epilogue, and the appeal to the passions. These are again reduced to three principal divisions: 1. the exordium; 2. the proof, which comprises the introduction, that precedes, and the confutation of the opposite arguments, that follows it; 3. the peroration or conclusion, which comprises the epilogue, the moral exhortation, and the appeal to the passions. To the exordium rhetoricians assign seven parts:—the introduction, general proposition, confirmation, repetition of the proposition, connection, particular proposition, and division. But, commonly speaking, the substantial parts of the exordium are three:—1. the general proposition; 2. the connection, or the link by which it is connected with the parti-

cular proposition; 3. the particular proposition, or the principal one of the discourse, which includes the division of the points. For example: 1. "We must work out our salvation, because there is no alternative: whosoever is not saved is damned": that is the general proposition. 2. "But, to be saved, we must die a happy death": that is the connection or application. 3. "But it is exceedingly difficult to die a happy death after a wicked life": and that is the particular proposition, or principal one of the discourse, which ought to be clear, concise, and simple, and, at the same time, one; otherwise, if unity be not observed in the proposition, it would not be one sermon, but several; and, therefore, the points into which the discourse is divided ought all tend to prove one single proposition. For example: "The person who is addicted to a bad habit is with difficulty saved, because the bad habit (1.) darkens the understanding, (2.) hardens the heart": and these will be the two points of the discourse. Let the points be short and few, not exceeding two, or, at most, three; and sometimes a single point will be sufficient. For example: "Mortal sin is a great evil, because it is an injury done to God"; or, "He who abuses too much the mercy of God will be abandoned by Him".

9. With regard to the body of the discourse, and, in the first place, the proof, it ought to be a perfect syllogism, but without appearing to be so. The major proposition should be proved before we pass to the minor; and the minor before we pass to the conclusion. This, however, is to be understood when the major or minor proposition requires proof: otherwise, when they express truths already known and certain, it is sufficient to amplify, without proving them.

10. As far as regards the order of the proofs, generally speaking, the authority of the Scriptures and of the Holy Fathers should be first adduced; then the arguments from reason; and afterwards the illustrations and examples. The texts of Scripture should be cited in an impressive and emphatic manner. It is better then to dwell on the exposition of one or two texts of Scripture, than to cite many at once, without considering well their import. The citations from the Fathers should be few and brief, and containing some sentiment that is strong and animated, and not trivial. After the citations, the arguments from reason

should be adduced; concerning which, some assert that the weaker reasons should be advanced in the first place, and then the stronger; but I am disposed to adopt the opinion of others, who think it better that the strong arguments should be adduced in the last place, but that in the first place a strong argument should be advanced; and that the weaker ones should occupy the middle place; because, were a weak argument adduced in the commencement, it might make a bad impression on the minds of the auditors. After the arguments from reason come the examples and illustrations. I have said that this arrangement should be observed *ordinarily*; but, occasionally, it will be of use to give some one of the forementioned proofs precedence of the others: this must be left to the discretion of the preacher.

11. Care should be taken that the transition from one point to the other be made naturally, without passing from one thing to another that has no relation to it. The most ordinary and easiest modes are these: "Let us proceed to the other point", etc.; or, "Thus, after having seen", etc. And passing from one argument to another, you may say: "Besides, we should consider", etc., taking care, as far as it is possible, that the last part of the preceding argument has some connection with the following point or argument.

12. We have spoken of proofs. As far as regards the amplification of proofs, one is verbal, which consists in words; another is real, which may consist either in climax — for example, "It is a virtue to suffer tribulations with patience—a greater virtue to desire them: it is a greater still to take delight in them": or it may be borrowed from the circumstances of the subject, or from comparison with another subject of equal or lesser consideration. The morals have their proper place, as we shall remark in the peroration. It is, however, occasionally allowed, after a satisfactory proof has been adduced, to address a short exhortation; and this is particularly the case in the sermons of the Mission, in which the audience is generally composed of rude, uneducated persons, on whom moral exhortation makes more impression; but these moral exhortations that are incidentally introduced, should not be too long or too frequent, so as to render the discourse tedious or languid.

13. The peroration contains three parts—the epilogue, the moral exhortation, and the appeal to the passions. The epilogue

is a recapitulation of the discourse, in which the most convincing arguments that have been already advanced are repeated, but which must be handled with a view to the movement of the passions which is to follow; whence the preacher, in this recapitulation, should commence to move the passions.

14. As to the moral exhortation, it may be observed, that oftentimes the principal fruit of the sermon consists, especially in discourses addressed to the people, in explaining the moral truths suitable to the subject of the discourse, with propriety and earnestness. The preacher, therefore, should take care to speak against the most prevalent vices; viz., hatred, impurity, blasphemy; against evil occasions, wicked companions; against parents who allow their children to hold intercourse with persons of different sex; and especially against mothers who invite young men into their houses to converse with their daughters. Let him also exhort the heads of families to remove from their houses bad books, and particularly novels, which insinuate a secret poison that corrupts youth. Let him speak against games of hazard, which are the ruin of families and of souls.

15. In a word, let the preacher endeavour, in his sermons, always to insinuate whatever he can that is practical,—that is, the remedies of the different vices; the means of persevering in a virtuous life; such as to fly dangerous occasions and bad company; to offer violence to one's self in motions of anger, so as not to break out into injurious actions or words; by suggesting to the hearers some form of expression, to avoid blasphemies or imprecations: for example, "Lord, give me patience!" "Virgin Mary, assist me!" and the like. Let him recommend the people to hear Mass every morning; to read every day some spiritual book; every morning to renew the resolution of not offending God, and to ask the divine assistance in order to persevere; to make each day a visit to the most holy sacrament and the Blessed Virgin, in some representation of her; each evening to make the examination of conscience, with an act of sorrow; after having committed a sin, immediately to make an act of contrition, and to confess it as soon as possible: above all, let him recommend his hearers to have recourse to God and to the Blessed Virgin in the time of temptation, by repeating oftentimes the names of Jesus and Mary, and continuing to invoke their aid until the temptation ceases. Those

means and remedies should be often repeated by the preacher, and recommended frequently in the course of his sermons; and he must not be deterred by the apprehension of being criticised by some learned person, who may remark that the preacher repeated the same things. In preaching we must not seek the applause of the learned, but the divine approbation, and the advantage of souls, and particularly of poor ignorant persons, who do not profit so much by thoughts and arguments, as by those easy practices which are suggested and repeated to them. I say repeated, since those rude and unlettered persons will easily forget what they hear, unless it is oftentimes repeated to them.

16. Let young preachers also take care to develope, and to commit to memory, their sermons, before they deliver them from the pulpit. To preach extempore is useful, inasmuch as the discourse becomes thus more natural and familiar; this, however, is not the case with young men, but only with those who have been in the habit of preaching for many years; otherwise, young men would contract a habit of speaking without preparation, and of preaching at random, saying whatever occurred to them, without any order or arrangement. However, young preachers should take care to develope their sermons, not in the florid style of elaborate expression, lofty thoughts, and sounding periods. Read the golden treatise on popular eloquence by the celebrated scholar, Louis Muratori; in which he proves that all sermons addressed to an audience composed of learned and unlearned, ought to be not only familiar, but also popular; composed in an easy and simple style, such as the people are in the habit of using; avoiding, however, all low and vulgar expressions, which are not suited to the dignity of the pulpit. "The people", says Muratori, "are composed for the most part of the ignorant; if you address to them abstruse doctrines and reflections, and use words and phrases that are not adapted to ordinary comprehensions, what fruit do you hope for from persons who do not understand you? Wherefore, the practice of those preachers will never be conformable to the rules of the art, or the principles of genuine eloquence, who, instead of accommodating themselves to the limited capacity of so many of their hearers, appear to study to make themselves intelligible to the learned only; as if they were ashamed to make themselves understood by the poor, who have

as good a right to the word of God as the learned. Nay more, a Christian preacher is bound to each one of his auditory in particular, as if there were no other who heard him. He who employs lofty reasoning, and is not careful to make himself understood by all, betrays the cause of God and his own duty, and disregards the spiritual necessities of a great portion of his audience". Hence the Council of Trent prescribes to all parish priests, to compose their discourses in a manner adapted to the capacity of their audience: "Archipresbyteri et parochi per se, vel alios idoneos, plebes sibi commissas pro earum capacitate pascant salutaribus verbis"—*sess. v. cap. i., de Reform.*

17. St. Francis de Sales said, that select language and sounding periods are the bane of sacred eloquence; and the principal reason of this is, that sermons composed in this style have not the divine sanction and concurrence. They may be of use to the learned, but not to the illiterate, who generally constitute the principal part of every audience. On the other hand, sermons composed in a familiar style are useful to the illiterate as well as to the learned. Muratori adds, that when the preacher addresses the humbler classes alone, or country people, he ought to make use of the most popular and familiar style possible, in order to accommodate himself to the gross understanding of such ignorant persons. He says, that the preacher, when speaking to those rude people, should imagine himself to be one of them, who was desirous to persuade a companion of something; that, on this account also, the periods of sermons addressed to the common people, should be concise and broken, so that whoever has not caught the meaning of the first sentence, may be able to comprehend the second; which cannot be done when the sentences are long and connected; for then, whoever does not understand the first period, will not understand the second nor the third.

18. Muratori also observes, that, in preaching to the people, it is very useful to make frequent use of the figure called *antiphora*; by which a question is asked, and replied to by the speaker. For example: "Tell me why so many sinners relapse, after confession, into the same sins? I will tell you: because they do not remove the dangerous occasions of sins". It is also useful oftentimes to call on the auditory to attend to what is said, and especially to certain things that are more important. For example: "O good

God! you come to us in order to save us, and we fly from you to destroy ourselves". It is useful likewise to repeat with emphasis some striking maxim of religion; as, for example: "There is no alternative: sooner or later we must die;—sooner or later we must die"; or, "My brethren, it is certain that, after this life, we must be eternally happy or eternally miserable".

19. I do not enlarge more on this subject, which I deem most important, as I have found it necessary to write more at length on it in a letter of apology which I published in reply to a religious who censured me for approving of sermons composed in a simple and popular style. I there premised in a succinct manner whatever Muratori has observed on this subject, and subjoined what the Holy Fathers have written on it, as far as I was able to discover. I pray the reader not to omit to read this letter: it is an uncommon little treatise, which contains matter not treated by any preceding writer.*

20. I do not, however, deem it right to omit to say something on the modulation of the voice, and on the gesture which should be used in preaching. As far as regards the voice, the preacher should avoid speaking in an inflated tone, or in a monotonous and invariably loud tone of voice. What moves and engages the attention of the hearers is, to speak at one time in a strong, at another time in a middle voice, and at another in a low voice, according as it suits the sentiment that is expressed, but without any sudden or violent fall or elevation; now to exclaim; now to pause; and now to resume with a sigh. This variety of tone and manner keeps the audience always attentive.

21. The preacher should avoid gesture that is affected, or oftentimes repeated in the same form, or too vehement, with much agitation of the body. The arms should be moved with moderation; ordinarily the right hand should be used; the left but seldom. The hands should not be raised above the head, nor too much extended sideways, nor held too confined. In delivering the exordium, the preacher should remain stationary, and should not move from a middle position in the pulpit: in delivering the first sentence he should not use gesture; in the second, he should only

* The translation of this Letter, which St. Alphonsus endeavoured to circulate as widely as possible through Italy, will be found in St. Liguori's *Instructions to Preachers*, published by the publisher of this volume.

commence to move the right hand, keeping the left resting on the pulpit or the breast. Let him take care not to keep the arms attached close to the sides, or to raise them both at same time in form of a cross, or throw them behind the shoulders. He must rarely strike them against each other or against the pulpit: to stamp the feet is very unbecoming. The motion of the head should correspond with that of the hand, accompanying it in the direction in which it moves. It is a fault to twist the head, or move it too often or too violently, or to hold it always raised, or always inclined upon the breast. The eyes ought to accompany the motion of the head; whence it is a fault to keep them always closed or cast downwards, or fixed immoveably in one direction. It may be permitted sometimes to sit down, but it should be seldom. The same may be said of moving back and forward: but the preacher should never run from one side of the pulpit to the other. He should, for the most part, speak from a middle position, so as to be seen equally from either side; but it is useful to incline occasionally to the right or left, without, however, turning the back to the opposite direction. Finally, as far as regards the length of the sermon. The Lent sermon should not exceed an hour; and the Sunday discourse should not occupy more than three quarters of an hour; but the parochial instructions should not be longer than a half hour, including the act of contrition, to which, ordinarily, it is advisable to accustom the common people, making them, at the close of the sermon, have recourse to the Mother of God, to ask of her some particular grace,—as, holy perseverance, a happy death, the love of Jesus Christ, and the like. Nor does it signify, that in order to make room for the act of contrition, the time of the sermon must be shortened; for these acts are the most precious fruit to be derived from it.

It were well that the preacher should sometimes exhort the audience to relate to others what they have heard in the sermon; as by this means it may be made useful even to those who have not heard it.