

Saint Alphonsus Marie de' Liguori

1696 - 1787

HELL

Saint Alphonsus Marie de' Liguori, Bishop and Doctor of the Church, in his writings refers to an episode which occurred at the University of Paris. They were the years of maximum prestige of the athenaeum, when one of his most famous professors died unexpectedly.

Struck by the tragedy, many colleagues in the teaching profession prayed in suffrage for the sake of his soul. Even the Bishop of Paris, an intimate friend of his, prayed every day for him, so that he would be liberated from Purgatory. One night, while he was reciting some prayers for the deceased, he appeared to him in an incandescent form, with a face of despair. The Bishop, at that moment, understood that his friend was not in Purgatory, but rather in Hell. Wanting to know more information about his fate, he asked him among other things, "In Hell do you still remember about the science for which you were so famous in life?"

"What science... what science! – replied the deceased. In the company of demons we have so much more to think about! These wicked spirits do not give us a moment of respite and they impede us from thinking about any other things that are not our sins and our punishments. These are already terrible and frightful, but the demons embitter them in order to foster in us a continual desperation!"

Saint Alphonsus was a great moral theologian and wrote many works of a popular character to form and instruct

the Christian people. To one text he entrusted his thought on the sins which men commit and which lead them to Hell:

"If God were to castigate quickly who offends him, certainly He would not be as offended as He is now. But because the Lord does not castigate quickly, the sinners feel encouraged to sin even more. It is good to know that God will not tolerate this forever: as he set for every man the number of days in his life, in this way He has set for each of them the number of sins that he has decided to forgive them: to whom one hundred, to whom ten, to whom one. How many people live for many years in sin! But when it is completed the number of sins set by God, they are seized by death and go to the Inferno."

Saint Alphonsus Marie de' Liguori, Patron of confessors and of moralists, was born in Marianella, near Naples, on the 27th of September 1696, and died in Pagani (Province of Salerno) on the 1st of August 1787. As all children from noble families, he completed his literary and scientific studies, among which even painting and music had their significant roles (his is the Italian Christmas song "Tu scendi dalle stelle" – "You descend from the Stars" – a beautiful song about Baby Jesus and His Nativity). In 1708 he enrolled in the School of Jurisprudence at the University of Naples, where he graduated with the highest of grades in Civil Law and Ecclesiastical Law. After



ten years of success as an attorney in the Neapolitan forum, due to an extreme moral disappointment (due to his mistake in a lawsuit), he decided to become a priest.

Having received Holy Orders on the 21st of December 1726, he immediately began to perform his ministry among the people. He wrote and published 111 works, both great and small. On the 9th of November 1732, in Scala (Province of Salerno), he founded the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer (known today as the Redemptorist Congregation). In 1762 Alphonsus was nominated Bishop of St. Agatha of the Goths (Province of Benevento).

