

Lord of My Heart
Affections and Prayers
from *The Practice of
the Love of Jesus Christ*

Saint Alphonsus Liguori

Edited by Thomas M. Santa, C.Ss.R.



Liguori

ONE LIGUORI DRIVE
LIGUORI MO 63057-9999

Imprimi Potest:
Richard Thibodeau, C.SS.R.
Provincial, Denver Province
The Redemptorists

Imprimatur:
Paul A. Zipfel, V.G.
Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese of St. Louis

ISBN 978-0-7648-0921-7
© 1997, Liguori Publications
Printed in the United States of America
12 11 10 09 7 6 5 4

All rights reserved. No part of this pamphlet may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted without the written permission of Liguori Publications.

The affections and prayers from Saint Alphonsus' *The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ* are excerpted Peter Heinegg's latest translation published by Liguori Publications, 1997.

The prayers have been arranged by Thomas M. Santa, C.Ss.R. following the chapter outlines of the work. The introduction and the pre-notes to each affection and prayer are original reflections for this edition.

To order, call 1-800-325-9521

www.liguori.org

INTRODUCTION

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ is considered one of the “ascetical works” of Saint Alphonsus Liguori, bishop and Doctor of the Church. This classification of the work is important because it helps us understand the nature and purpose of what motivated the saint.

Asceticism can be understood as “a matter of life, practice, and principle” (*Random House College Dictionary*) and certainly that basic definition would be helpful in understanding this work. For Alphonsus, the purpose of writing was to lead people to God—he was not interested in fame or acclamation. Written in 1768, the work has proven to be very popular, not only among Redemptorists but also with the general public who have learned to revere the efforts of this great saint and spiritual director to teach them about Jesus.

The outline of this ascetical work is in three parts. The first part develops the reasons why a person should love Jesus with their whole mind, heart, and soul. The second part is a commentary on Paul’s First

Letter to the Corinthians (13:4-7) in which the saint presents concrete ways to develop the love of Jesus in the lives of his readers. The third and final section (not considered in this work) explains some of the virtues that are necessary in order to love Jesus.

As the reader progresses through the work it becomes obvious that each chapter ends with a prayer which can serve as a summary of the teaching found in the chapter. It occurred to me that, although there is no substitute for reading the entire work, the prayers, in and of themselves, can serve as a helpful summary of the main points that Alphonsus was trying to make. In a day and age where “news bytes” and “digested books” are popular, it seemed that a presentation of the prayers, with a short reflection, might prove both useful and popular. This is the reason for this short pamphlet.

Obviously, the reader is encouraged to read the original book, *The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ*, in its entirety. However, for those who may find this impossible, or for those who may want to use this edition as a reminder of the main points found in the book, I present this little work. I hope that it will prove to be useful in prayer and meditation. I would also hope that in some small way it will contribute to

the original goal of Saint Alphonsus: “to teach people about Jesus and to lead them to God.”

A final word about the translation of the affections and prayers: For the modern reader the use of the male noun and pronoun might be a little jarring—we have grown accustomed to a sensitivity to inclusive language. However, for Alphonsus and for others in his time, such a sensitivity was not part of their thinking or consciousness. It is very difficult, and sometimes impossible, to change the language and still “capture” the full meaning of the text. Patience is required but it is worth the effort because of the depth of feeling and faith that is present.

THE AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS

- I -

Saint Alphonsus begins his teaching with a theme that can be understood as central to his life of faith. In the very first words of the meditation, he demonstrates that Jesus deserves our love, because of the love He has shown us in His passion. For Alphonsus the passion and death of Jesus was the ultimate demonstration of the Lord's love for us. The prayer that follows, reflects his feelings.

O Eternal Word! You spent thirty-three years in sweat and hardship. You gave your blood and your life for man's salvation. In short, you spared nothing to make men love you. Then how can there be people who know this and yet do not love you? O God, I am one of these ingrates. I see the wrong I have done. O my Jesus, have pity on me. I offer you this ungrateful heart of mine—ungrateful, but repentant. Yes, above every other evil, my dear Re-deemer, I repent having despised you. I repent and I am sorry with all my heart.

O my soul, love a God who is bound like a criminal for you, a God scourged like a slave for you, a God made a mock king for you, a God, in short, dead upon a

cross for you as if he were a scoundrel. Yes, my Savior, my God, I love you, I love you. Ah, always remind me of everything that you suffered for me, so that I may never again forget to love you.

O ropes that bound Jesus, bind me to Jesus; thorns that crowned Jesus, wound me with love for Jesus; nails that pierced Jesus, nail me to the cross of Jesus, that I may live and die united to Jesus.

O blood of Jesus, make me drunk with holy love. O death of Jesus, make me die to every earthly affection. Pierced feet of my Lord, I embrace you; deliver me from hell, which I have de-served. My Jesus, in hell I could not love you anymore, but I want to love you always. Save me, my dearest Savior, hold me close to yourself, that I may never lose you again.

O Mary, refuge of sinners, and mother of my Savior, help a sinner who wishes to love God, and who pleads with you. Help me for the love you bear toward Jesus Christ.



In the second chapter, Saint Alphonsus introduces another theme that is central to his spirituality. He teaches us that Jesus Christ deserves to be loved by His people because of

the love He has shown us in instituting the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar. For Alphonsus, the Eucharist, especially the blessed sacrament reserved in churches, is yet another sign of God's immense love for his people. As such, his prayer serves as a much needed reminder to all those who may forget the real presence of the Lord in the sacramental bread and wine.

O God of love, O infinite lover, worthy of infinite love, tell me what more can you devise to make us love you? Wasn't it enough for you to become man, and to subject yourself to all our miseries? Wasn't it enough to shed all your blood for us in torments, and then to die consumed with pain, upon a cross destined for the worst of criminals? Finally you reduced yourself to hiding beneath the species of bread and wine, to become our food, and so to be joined with each one of us. Tell me, I repeat, what more can you devise to make us love you? Ah, what wretches we are if we don't love you in this life! When we enter eternity, what remorse we will feel for not having loved you! My Jesus, I don't want to die without loving you, and loving you greatly.

I am terribly sorry, and it pains me to have dis-