

# St. Anthony of Padua R.C. Church

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## Traditionally Speaking *by S. Casarotto 9/6/09*

**A SAINTLY PRIEST WITH HUMANITY** - St. Alphonse Liguori (1696-1787) was a brilliant young man who became a lawyer at age 16 and successfully practiced law for 8 years. When he lost his first case due to a clerical error, St. Alphonse abandoned his career, became a priest and later a bishop. He is recognized as the great master of moral theology and spirituality, and the Church declared him patron of moral theologians. He also popularized the creation of the "presepio" (nativity scene). St. Alphonse loved music and, when he visited the parishes in his diocese, he used to play the violin to his audiences. Occasionally, he watched plays in the theater. One time, someone pointed out to him that some plays were a little risqué, St. Alphonse replied that he had bad eyesight and, in any case, he was taking off his glasses and sitting in the back row just to listen to the music!

With characteristic Neapolitan humor, St. Alphonse used to say, "Everything is permitted, except, of course, what is forbidden!" He always defended the human person, refuting the strictness of Jansenistic theories which diminished human dignity by viewing man as the slave of corrupt nature, unable to resist the stimuli of evil. St. Alphonse countered with three clean and liberating principles that can be considered a declaration of human rights:

- 1) Man, with God's help, can overcome all the incentives and temptations to sin;
- 2) Man has the power to resist grace and God's call;
- 3) Man can and must collaborate with God to build his own destiny.

Harnack wrote: "Liguori, with clarity and invincible power, has made law an ally and not an accuser of human freedom. The spirit of interiority and pastoral sensitivity that enlivened the saint's discernment has made him a master of Catholic morals." In thinking of the wise and peaceful equilibrium of our saint, historian Benedetto Croce described him as "the most likeable Neapolitan Saint; a Neapolitan with common sense."

**YEAR FOR PRIESTS** - Claudio Cardinal Hummes, Prefect for the Congregation for the Clergy, gives us direction in how this *Year for Priests* is to be celebrated. It is to be a year "in which the Church says to her priests... that she is proud of her priests, loves them, honors them, admires them and that she recognizes with gratitude their pastoral work and witness of their life" (*Letter on the Year of Priesthood*). Although some have gravely failed in their vocation, "the overwhelming majority of priests are people of great personal integrity, dedicated to the sacred ministry; men of prayer and of pastoral charity, who invest their entire existence in the fulfillment of their vocation and mission, often through great personal sacrifice, but always with an authentic love towards Jesus Christ, the Church and the people, in solidarity with the poor and the suffering" (*ibid.*). And since this *Year for Priests* is aimed at the spiritual growth and sanctification of priests, "it must be, in a very special way, a year of prayer *by* priests, *with* priests and *for* priests, a year of *renewal* of the spirituality of the presbyterate and of every priest." (*ibid.*, *emphasis added*).

"Without the ministerial priesthood there would never be the Eucharist,  
nor even the mission nor the Church itself." (Benedict XVI)