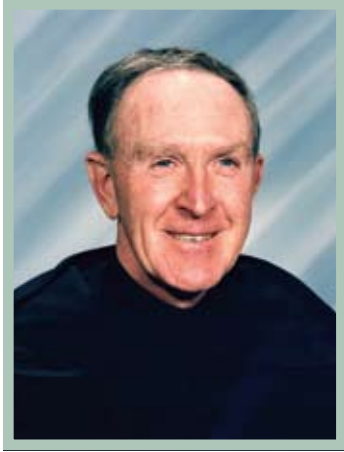


CARMELITE



MISSIONS



Father John Malley, O.Carm.
Director of Carmelite Missions

Spreading the Faith in China

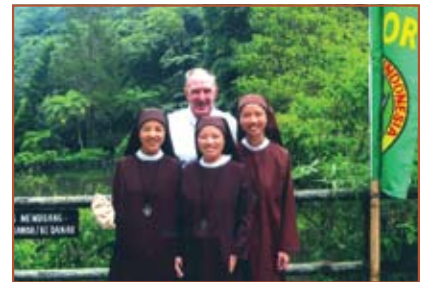
A year ago during the month of August, many of us were captivated and thrilled by the Summer Olympics that took place in Beijing, China. We began to get a better understanding of that country where over a billion people live. We wanted to learn more about their customs, their culture, and their practice of religion.

Recently, I had a wonderful conversation about the Olympics, China, and its people with a very close friend. Frank Busch was the assistant coach of the outstanding American swimming team that did fantastically well at the Olympics. In April 2008, his men and women teams at the University of Arizona had won the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) swimming championships. He was obviously an excellent choice to help train and prepare the American swimming athletes for Beijing.

Frank could not have been more complimentary about the Chinese people and their welcome and hospitality during the Olympics. He, and so many athletes and visitors, experienced outstanding courtesy, and they were deeply impressed by the desire of the Chinese people for better and more open relationships with America and other countries. Frank did not know what role religion was playing in the lives of the ordinary Chinese, but he did feel and experience strongly the very human and Christian qualities of respect and love that they showed.

With the Olympics in mind, I want to share briefly with you the missionary work that our Carmelite priests and sisters are doing in China. I want to ask you to continue to keep their simple efforts in your prayers and to support them in their dangerous work by your generosity.

Letter continued on back



Three Chinese Sisters (Teresa, Lucy and Mary) while studying in Indonesia



Daughters of Carmel in preparation for possible mission in China



Indonesian Carmelites studying theology, some of whom have visited China



Saint of the Month 🌸 Feast Day, August 1

Saint Alphonsus Maria Liguori

Most Catholics are aware of the devotion to Our Lady of Perpetual Help, and many recognize the well-known painting that gave rise to the devotion that inspires so many souls. The painting was done in Crete, and about the year 1500 it was taken to the church of Saint Matthew in Rome. Later, this devotion was strongly encouraged by the Redemptorist priests. To understand the beginning of this group of priests, it is necessary to look at the life of Alphonsus Maria Liguori, our Saint of the Month for August.

Birth and Early Training

On September 27, 1696, a boy was born in Maianella, Italy (very close to Naples), to a young married couple. The father, Joseph Liguori, was a Marquis and Captain of the galleys of Naples. The mother, Donna Anna Cavalieri, was also of a noble family. The family was truly “of blue blood” but they were not extremely rich, just moderately comfortable. The father was a pious but very irascible man. The mother could be described as a very holy woman.

Their first-born son was taken for baptism two days later and given the name Alphonsus Maria. His home was

a good one, and Alphonsus learned from his mother how to love God and what he must do to please Him. Because his parents were rich enough to afford a tutor for their oldest son, Alphonsus was taught personally by a priest-tutor. He learned Latin, Greek, French, mathematics, geography, and painting. He was also given lessons on the harpsichord, and music was his hobby throughout life.

When he was nine years old, Alphonsus was admitted into a pious confraternity for noble boys, and at the age of eleven he was allowed to make his First Communion. Even then he had a deep devotion to the Eucharist and to Our Lady, and these two devotions always remained very strong in his own personal life, and in the group of religious priests – the Redemptorists – that he later founded.

Alphonsus was a very bright boy and learned quickly. In fact, he was so bright that he was ready for an examination for a doctorate in civil and canon law at the age of sixteen! The law prescribed an older age, but a dispensation was given and the teenager became a lawyer. The judicial robes fell all about his feet, and the older students teased him. They soon learned to respect him, however, as he was very astute, and his ability to speak clearly enabled him to make a persuasive plea for his clients. Beneath his legal profession, there was a holy young man.

His father tried at different times

to make a marriage for his son, but Alphonsus would have no part of it. This led to great anger on the part of his father, and for years there was a very poor relationship between them. Alphonsus had been consulting his confessor about a direction for his life, as the practice of law was no longer of great interest to him. He had privately taken a vow of chastity with a firm decision never to marry.

Study for the Priesthood

In 1723, Alphonsus tells in his own words the story of his call to be a priest: *“While I was visiting a hospital for the incurables, I saw a bright light and heard the words: Leave the world and give yourself entirely to Me. Later that same day, I heard the same command, and my answer was: Lord, I have resisted too long; do with me all that You will.”*

He proceeded to his favorite church, Our Lady of Ransom, unbuckled his sword and laid it on the altar. He then visited his confessor who encouraged him in his choice, but he also advised him to wait a year before he studied for the priesthood.

When the news of his decision was announced at home, there was another heated argument with his father. His father finally gave in (with the stipulation that he remain at home), and Alphonsus assumed the cassock, received the tonsure, and started his studies for the priesthood. He committed himself assiduously to his studies, and

he followed a program of spirituality that would deepen his love of God. He took part in church services, taught catechism to poor children, and even joined a confraternity that assisted criminals at death. In two years, he became a deacon and was commissioned to preach. Significantly enough, his first sermon was about the Blessed Sacrament. After three years of further studies, he was ordained a priest on December 21, 1726. He was thirty years of age.

His sermons made a deep impression upon the laity, and he even won over many of the clerics. Since he was a practiced speaker from his career as a lawyer, he was soon in demand as a preacher. He spoke with a heart full of love for God, and even the uneducated could understand and respect him.

Beginning of the Redemptorists

In 1729 at the age of thirty-three, Alphonsus moved out of his parents' house and went to live at Holy Family College with a missionary group. A small church attached to the college became his responsibility. One of his associates who later became a Bishop asked him to assist a group of women who were founding a religious congregation, and when this proved successful, he encouraged Alphonsus to adopt a similar rule and start a congregation of priests that would preach and teach the people, especially in the area of moral theology. Hesitantly, Alphonsus agreed, and he and seven companions went to Scala, near Amalfi, to live a communal form of life, with the Bishop as their superior. This was the beginning of the Congregation of the Holy Savior (later changed to Holy Redeemer and Redemptorists).

The beginning, however, was very shaky, and soon Alphonsus was alone with a lay brother. Gradually however,

others came to join him and soon he had a group who worked among the people. When the Bishop died in 1743, Alphonsus was made the Major Superior, and in 1749 the Pope approved their rule and encouraged them to found houses in the Papal States.

Alphonsus' preaching became well known, and he later made a great impact throughout Italy because of his writings. There were many devotional books, including *The Glories of Mary*, that continues to be popular even today. Because of his background in law, he began to write many books for confessors on Moral Theology, and this type of writing later won him the title, Doctor of the Church and Patron of Confessors.

Bishop and Difficulties of Later Life

When he was sixty-six, an age when most think of retirement, he was made a bishop at the command of the Pope. He had been offered archbishoprics before, but he had always refused. However, this was a command, and so he went to Rome where he was ordained a Bishop in the Church of Saint Maria sopra Minerva, where Michaelangelo's famous statue of the risen Christ can still be seen. Unfortunately, his predecessor had let things go for 27 years while in office, and affairs in the diocese were in a sorry state.

It was the clergy that he first sought to reform, first by admonishing and appeals. Then, if they remained deaf, by threats and punishments, even expelling and jailing them if they were stubborn in their immoral life. He and others preached and taught the people, and slowly his influence for good showed itself by the reform of the clergy and people. When a famine broke out, he sold his mules, carriage, and silver plates, and even the stone from his episcopal ring.



During all this time, there was a vicar caring for his young congregation of priests. In 1775, at the age of seventy-nine, he finally convinced Pope Pius VI to allow him to resign from his diocese, and he tried to return to his own community. Regretfully, because of some misunderstandings between the Prime Minister of Italy and the Pope over the Redemptorist rule, he was excluded by his own Order from returning among them, since the group had divided into two factions.

Through it all, Alphonsus remained loyal to his God and prayed for a remedy to the problems of his young congregation. Almost alone, and unable to say Mass since 1785 because of poor sight, he spent his time with God. The end finally came on the night of August 1, 1787. He was a month short of ninety-one years.

Alphonsus' reputation for holiness was well known in Italy, and in 1816, only twenty-nine years after his death, he was declared a Blessed. He was canonized in 1839, and at the First Vatican Council in 1871, he was declared a Doctor of the Church. Eventually, the two streams of Redemptorists came together, and they continue to flourish today. Some members of the group have been canonized, among them St. Clement Hofbauer, St. John Neuman of Philadelphia, and Father Hecker, the founder of the Paulists. ❀



CARMELITE MISSIONS

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www.carmelitemissions.org



“Novices in Flores, Indonesia – some volunteers for future Chinese mission”

Your offering and your support are needed NOW more than ever.

Faith in China continued...

Our Indonesian Province of Carmelites has priests of Chinese ancestry studying and working in Beijing. They have been there for a few years, and they are saying Mass and sharing the Good News of Jesus and the Catholic faith with the people on a regular basis, even though it must continue to be “underground.”

The Indonesian and Malaysian congregation of Sisters – Daughters of Carmel – has recently opened its second foundation in China. There are now twenty Chinese members. Their primary work is as school teachers, but they have many opportunities to share our Catholic faith and the message of Jesus with the parents of their students. The seed of the faith is still very small and very simple, but it has been planted, and we must pray that God will give it great growth in the future.

Our Carmelite Mission office has been very supportive of both of these “underground” missionary efforts, right from their very beginnings. Fortunately, we still are able to get help to them through our Indonesian Carmelite friends. I would ask you to send a gift to them today as you read this mission newsletter. It would do so much good to spread the faith in China, and it would give Carmelites working in very dangerous conditions a tremendous sense of hope and encouragement. May our loving God reward you for your help to our Carmelite Missions, and especially for our efforts in China.

Love and peace,

Fr. John Malley, O. Carm.

Director of Carmelite Missions

Remember the Carmelite Missions when you write your will.