

AUGUST 1, 2019  
Memorial of St. Alphonsus Liguori, Bishop & Doctor  
Mt. 13: 47-52

THE CHURCH DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE

Today we are celebrating the Memorial of St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, an Italian doctor of the church, and founder of the Redemptorists, a congregation dedicated primarily to parish and foreign missions. In 1871, he was named a doctor of the church by Pope Pius IX. In 1950 he was named patron saint of moralists and confessors by Pope Pius XII.

In 1726, he was ordained a priest after practicing law for eight years. He founded in 1732, the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, or the Redemptorists, at Scala, Amalfi, Italy. In 1777, disagreement within the congregation was culminated when he was deceived into signing what he thought was a royal sanction for his rule. Actually, the document was a new rule devised by one of his enemies, thus causing the followers of the old rule to break away. In 1762 Pope Clement XIII made him bishop of Sant' Agata del Goti near Naples; he resigned in 1775 because of ill health.

Our gospel for today, talks about the catching of fish through casting-net or hand-net. As the boat moved through the waters the dragnet was drawn into the shape of a great cone which indiscriminately took in all kinds of fish and debris and trash swept in its path. It usually took several men to haul such a net to shore. St. Alphonsus knew that catching members of his congregation was not always heaven, enemies were there ready to destroy him but he holds on to his mission: to continue catching fish in the Kingdom of God.

What can our gospel for today tell us about God's kingdom? What is the message of Jesus to us? The Kingdom of God is open to all who will believe and accept. The Church does not discriminate between the good and the bad, the useless and the useful, like the dragnet does not or cannot choose what it catches. Just as a drag-net catches every kind of fish in the sea, so the church acts as God's instrument for gathering in all who will come. But at the close of the age, the Lord will return, will separate the good and the bad. For those who believed in him and his way of truth and righteousness, the reward will be a glorified resurrected body and a home in his everlasting kingdom. The wicked who refused to follow the Lord Jesus and their destiny will be loss of joy and happiness with God, a total separation.

My sisters and brothers, our Lord Jesus freely offers the treasure of abundant life and everlasting joy to all who believe in him and accept him as their Lord and Savior. It is now our choice: to follow Him or not, we want His kingdom or eternal damnation. Let us yearn for total peace, joy, and union with God in his everlasting kingdom. Let us ask the intercession of St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori to intercedes for us so that like him we may follow Him, with love and humility, and continue the mission of catching fish for the Kingdom of God.