

Homily for June 21st 2019

St Aloysius was the eldest son of Ferdinand Gonzaga, Marquis of Castiglione, was born on the 9th of March, 1568. The first words he pronounced were the holy names of Jesus and Mary. When he was nine years of age he made a vow of perpetual virginity, and by a special grace was ever exempted from temptations against purity. He received his first communion at the hands of St. Charles Borromeo. At an early age he resolved to leave the world, and in a vision was directed by our Blessed Lady to join the Society of Jesus. The Saint's mother rejoiced on learning his determination to become a religious, but his father for three years refused his consent. At length St. Aloysius obtained permission to enter the novitiate on the 25th of November, 1585. He took his vows after two years, and went through the ordinary course of philosophy and theology. He was wont to say he doubted whether without penance grace would continue to make head against nature, which, when not afflicted and chastised, tends gradually to relapse into its old state, losing the habit of suffering acquired by the labor of years. "I am a crooked piece of iron," he said, "and am come into religion to be made straight by the hammer of mortification and penance." During his last year of theology a malignant fever broke out in Rome; the Saint offered himself for the service of the sick, and he was accepted for the dangerous duty. Several of the brothers caught the fever, and Aloysius was of the number. He was brought to the point of death, but recovered, only to fall, however, into slow fever, which carried him off after three months. He died, repeating the Holy Name, a little after midnight between the 20th and 21st of June at the age of 23.

St Aloysius embodied the teaching in today's Gospel. His heart's treasure was Jesus and while he only lived to 23, his life was exemplary of this morning's psalm where David confidently instructs us

*O magnify the LORD with me,
and let us exalt his name together.*
4 *I sought the LORD, and he answered me,
and delivered me from all my fears.*
5 *Look to him, and be radiant;
so your faces shall never be ashamed.*¹

This kind of confidence was instilled in St Aloysius because as our collect for today summarized his life: "he joined penitence to a wonderful innocence of life". May we ask his intercession and be so inspired to discover that the eye is the lamp of the body. This was an ancient metaphor Jesus used to advocate generosity. Those with evil or unsound eyes are stingy with their belongings as is illustrated by this verse from Sirach 14:

The miser is an evil person;
he turns away and disregards people.

¹ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Ps 34:3–5). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

⁹ The eye of the greedy person is not satisfied with his share;.²

Those with sound eyes share their goods with the needy (4:7); they are filled with light. St Aloysius shared not only his goods but his very life and so inspires us to examine our hearts and eyes and ask: How does my heart's treasure influence how I see the world?

May we be inspired by the example of today's young saint to take to heart Jesus' teaching and so recognize that we too are crooked pieces of iron, who have come into religion to be made straight by the hammer of mortification and penance." For such a motto well lived will convert our hearts so as to store up treasure in heaven so that in turn we can look out on the world with a generous and merciful spirit.

² [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Sir 14:8–10). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.