

CENTENARY OF ST. ALPHONSUS, DOCTOR OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

by Patrick Deans, C.Ss.R.

On March 23, 1871 St. Alphonsus de Ligouri was proclaimed by Pope Pius IX a Doctor of the Universal Church. His writings had already spread throughout the world, and almost all the prelates of the whole catholic universe, the generals of religious orders, the theological faculties of the most celebrated universities petitioned the Holy Father that Saint Alphonsus Maria de Ligouri be adorned with the title of Doctor of the Church. In the Apostolic Brief of July 7, 1871 Pope Pius IX said: "One might truly say that there is no error in our time that has not been refuted, at least for the greater part, by St. Alphonsus."

The centenary celebrations to commemorate this historic event in the Holy Church and to do honor to our Saint began on March 23, 1971. They will end on the same day of this year, 1972. The nature and the importance of this event appear in the following texts.

In the first document, Pope Paul VI expressed his good wishes for the celebrations in a letter of his Secretary of State, Cardinal J. Villot. The letter was sent on June 28, 1971 to the Superior General of the Redemptorists, Father Tarcisio A. Amaral, C.Ss.R.

The second text is an extract from a letter of the Holy Father himself. It was addressed to a General Chapter of the Redemptorists that was held in Rome in 1967. In the passage quoted, the Holy Father refers to the pastoral charity of St. Alphonsus.

In the third text, extracts are given from a circular letter on the centenary from Father Amaral to the members of his Congregation. He discusses the relevance of the Saint's message and teaching for our times.