

PRAYING WITH ST. ALPHONSUS IN ORDINARY TIME

(Adapted from *In the Spirit of St. Alphonsus*, by Terry Moran)



Presider: Between the times of feast and fast, the Church year gives us large portions of “ordinary time.”

“Ordinary Time” is an opportunity to savour the presence of God in the routine of every day. Its sacred places are the kitchen, the living room, the office, the supermarket, the factory. Its sacred ministers are the people closest to us—our family, friends, our co-workers, and also those with whom we have difficulty dealing, those we don’t like, and those we don’t love as we should.

St Alphonsus never taught a particular “devotion,” but he was very concerned with teaching ordinary people how to live a devout life, a life in which all of our activities are acts of praise and thanksgiving to God.

Let us begin our prayer by raising our voices in a song of praise to our God, who does not reserve His power and presence to special times and places, but who loves us always and everywhere, in the ordinary times and places.

Song: A song of praise or thanksgiving

First Reading: from *The Way to Converse with God as a Friend*, by St Alphonsus.

When you behold beautiful scenes in the country or along the sea coast, or when you look at flowers or fruit, and are pleased by the sight or the perfume, say: “For me God has created these lovely things in this world, that I may love Him. What delights has He not prepared for me in heaven?”

When you see rivers or streams, reflect that as their waters run towards the sea, and never remain still, so ought you ever tend towards God, who is your only good. When you see a little dog, which for a morsel of bread is faithful to its master, reflect how much greater reason you have to be faithful to God, who has created and preserved you, and heaps upon you so many blessings. When you hear the birds sing, say: ‘Hearken, O my soul, to the praise which these little creatures are giving to their Creator; and what are you doing? Then do you also praise him with acts of love.

Psalm 27 (*recited antiphonally*)

Side 1: The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

Day to day pours forth speech,
and night to night declares knowledge.

Side 2: There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;

yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.

Side 1: The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul;

the decrees of the LORD are sure,
making wise the simple;

Side 2: The precepts of the LORD are right,
rejoicing the heart;

the commandment of the LORD is clear,
enlightening the eyes;

Side 1: The fear of the LORD is holy,
enduring for ever;

the ordinances of the LORD are true
and righteous altogether.

Side 2: More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;

sweeter also than honey,
and drippings of the honeycomb.

Side 1: Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable to you,

O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

Side 2: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;

Side 1: As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Second Reading: from *The Way to Converse with God as a Friend*, by St Alphonsus.

Your whole life long, may God be your only happiness, the only object of your affections, the only end of your actions and desires. You will come one day to that world without end, where your love will be in every way perfected and completed. Your desires will be perfectly fulfilled and completely satisfied.

Presider: We respond in words of St. Alphonsus, about which he said, "Whoever says this little canticle from the heart causes joy in paradise."

All: Jesus, my true, my only love,
I wish for nothing but you.
Here I am, I am yours, my God.
Do what you will with me.

Pause for Silent Prayer

Faith-Sharing

Presider: Share with the person next to you, or with your entire group, an experience of becoming aware of the presence of God in the circumstances of everyday life; a time when an ordinary object or event made you very conscious of God's presence or action.

Ritual

At the end of the period of faith-sharing, the presider passes a basket, in which are papers, each of which contains a suggestion recommended by St. Alphonsus for living the activities of daily life in a spirit of devotion. Each person takes one and resolves to try to practice it in the coming week. The suggestions are found below, at the end of the prayer service.

Intercessions

Presider: Our world is flawed, yet richly graced. Let us present its needs to the mercy of God.

All: Fill our days with your peace.

Presider: We ask God's blessing on our rising, and on our going to rest, on our labours and pleasures, on our silence and on our speech.

All: Fill our days with your peace.

Presider: May all those we love, our families, relatives and friends, know our concern for them, and experience our concern in words and actions of love.

All: Fill our days with your peace.

Presider: May our whole life, even during moments of routine and boredom, be filled with a sense of God's presence and providence.

All: Fill our days with your peace.

Presider: For those who experience life as a burden—those who live with depression, the abandoned, and the sick.

All: Fill our days with your peace.

Presider: We now invite members of this assembly to offer spontaneous prayers. To each, we will answer, "Fill our days with your peace."

Our Father

Presider: Let us join our voices in the prayer that we first learned from those we love. Our Father...

Blessing

Presider: We conclude our prayer by marking ourselves with the Sign of our redemption in Christ.

All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LIVING A DEVOUT LIFE

Place something beautiful (a flower, a piece of fruit, a picture of someone you love) near your bed where you can see it when you awaken. Praise God for these gifts.

In the morning, make an agreement with God that every time you make a certain sign—such as placing your hand over your heart—you wish thereby to make an act of love for God and a desire to see God loved by everyone.

Breathe deeply, and invite the Holy Spirit, breath of God, into your heart.

When you hear the phone ring, pause for a moment to recall the presence of God in the person who is calling before you answer it.

Drink a glass of water slowly and be aware that, from all eternity, God was creating the gift of water for your refreshment.

Spend a few moments several times today reading Scripture, remembering, as St. Alphonsus said, that there is nothing better able to enkindle the love of God in us than the word of God found in Scripture.

Choose a few words from Scripture and repeat them often during the day. St. Alphonsus said, “One holy sentence, well chewed, is enough to make us saints.”

When you get dressed, find something in your closet that you really don’t need, and give it to someone who does.

Alphonsus and his companions used to place food to be given to the poor at the feet of a statue of the infant Jesus during every meal. Skip a meal this week, and send the money to an organization that feeds hungry children.

Take a walk, and praise God for each of the beautiful things you see.

Buy or borrow the life of a saint to read, and make that person your companion through the week.

Recall that each person you meet today is the true dwelling place of God. Make an act of spiritual communion with the presence of Jesus in them.

Pause at morning, noon and evening to place your hand on your heart and recall the coming of God in human flesh.

Think of Alphonsus at his harpsichord while you delight in listening to a favourite piece of music.

Buy a special candle that you will light for a few minutes every Thursday evening to recall the great gift God has given us in the institution of the Eucharist.

On Saturdays, donate some time to a work of justice and peace in honour of Mary, Mother of Mercy.

In order to call to mind frequently the mysteries of our Saviour's love, when you see hay, a manger, a barn, or a cave, let the Infant Jesus in the stable at Bethlehem be present in your imagination.

In order to call to mind frequently the mysteries of our Saviour's love, when you see a saw, a hammer, a plane or an axe, remember the humble labour done by our Redeemer in Nazareth.

In order to call to mind frequently the mysteries of our Saviour's love, when you see ropes, thorns, nails, or pieces of wood, reflect on the passion and death of our Redeemer.

In order to call to mind frequently the mysteries of our Saviour's love, when you see bread, grapes, wine, or any vessels used for eating or drinking, call to mind the greatness of love which Jesus has for us in giving us the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

As often as you can throughout the day, repeat the prayer, "O God, come to my assistance. O Lord, make haste to help me."

As often as you can throughout the day, repeat as a prayer the names of Jesus and Mary.