

Homily on the occasion of the

75th anniversary of the founding of the Alphonsian Academy

Dear Fr. Antonio Donato, Greetings to you and all the professors of the Alphonsian Academy, present and past,

Greetings to Monsignor Amarante, Rector of PUL, who participates with us in this celebration.

Dear confreres of the Major College, Saint Alphonsus Community, and the General Council.

1. We are gathered to celebrate this Eucharist in thanksgiving for the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Alphonsian Academy. 55 years have passed since the initial dream was approved by the General Chapter in 1894, in the form of a decree. In 1949, on this date, Fr. Leonard Buijs, then superior general, founded our institute, materializing the decision of the Chapter.

It is the desire of the Chapter that in Rome, when it is possible, a Major University be erected, where one or another young father who has already finished his studies may come from the various provinces, so that, under the guidance of experienced fathers of the congregation, he may be formed with greater depth in both the philosophical and theological studies that are proper to St. Alphonsus, and so the fathers may in turn instruct others.

2. From 1949 to the present, our Institute has witnessed important events in general, in the Church and History of the Congregation, such as the Second Vatican Council, changes to our Constitutions, seven papacies and eight generalates. The Academy is thus a witness to history, to the evolution of science, to conflicts between nations, to the openness of the Church to today's world, to a Congregation that has undergone transformations over the years and is again reinventing itself in the process of restructuring and reconfiguration. Since its founding, we have gone from a small internal institute to a pontifical one, and we have witnessed and will witness human history with its sorrows and joys, making our contribution in what is our duty, in line with the Gospel and the Magisterium of the Church.
3. In today's Gospel (cf. Mk 7:31-37), Jesus' mission effects a change in people's lives. It opens the ears and lips of the men and women of his time so that they are able to hear and speak, that is, to discern reality and speak a transformative word. Jesus opens and shapes people's consciences.
4. Taking this Gospel as a reference, we can apply it to the mission of the Pontifical Alphonsian Academy, that of saying: *effata* so that ears may be opened, new words may be spoken that transform the human heart. In other words, it is about touching the reality of the human being with everything that prevents him from becoming aware of himself, the

- world and also from acting correctly. In this way, we can ask ourselves: from what deafness, lack of sight and paralysis do we need to free ourselves as Alphonsians to fulfill our mission? From what deafness, lack of sight and paralysis has the Academy helped to free itself in its service to the Church, the Congregation, and the People of God?
5. The mission of the Academy today is to help the Church itself to listen to the world and discern the signs of the times. It is an *effata* to change the mindsets that turn the institution itself away from the Gospel. What *effata* do we need for our language to reach our formators of conscience and our recipients not as a theoretical-abstract concept, but as content that reveals the truth of being itself with its human and divine mystery? *Effata* to the formation of consciences, to pastoral benignity, to the updating of language, to the transformation of human beings so that they respond to God's designs.
 6. May these 75 years be not only a review of our history, but a spiritual renewal, an *effata* of the Spirit in the life of every professor, every student of our beloved Alphonsian Academy and also of the whole congregation.
 7. Alphonsiana has never had a glorious history. Perhaps the advice of Jesus applies, "tell no one," but let others tell it full of surprise, saying, "The Pontifical Alphonsian Academy has done everything right: it has opened our hearing, freeing us from deafness, and given us a new language to dialogue with the world and transform the heart of man so that the world will be a place for all. This is our dream and our duty as Missionaries of Hope walking in the footsteps of the Redeemer.
 8. I thank God for the lives of all who have worked here, brethren and employees, living and dead, and to you who continue this mission. May St. Alphonsus and the Mother of the Redeemer guide us in this mission for another 75 years. So be it! Amen.

Fr. Rogério Gomes, C.Ss.R

Superior General and Moderator of the PAA

Rome, February 09, 2024

(Translated from the Original Italian text by Sanjay Tirkey)