

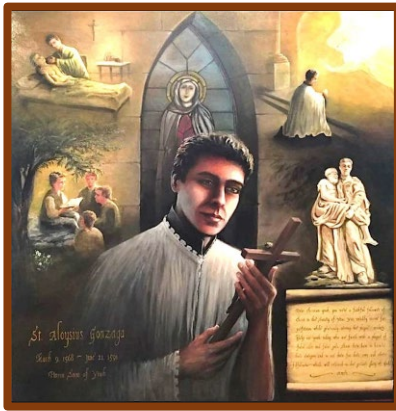
St. Aloysius (Luigi) Gonzaga (Italy) 1568-1591

During the 1591 epidemic, requested to interrupt theological studies and assist in hospital erected by the fathers of Jesuit Society in Rome.¹

Catechized and exhorted the poor patients, washed their feet, made their beds, changed their clothes, performed, with wonderful assiduity and tenderness, the most painful and loathsome offices of the hospital.¹

Went among the plague victims to heal and help them, working alongside St. Camillus de Lellis.²

Begged alms for the sick and physically carried those he found in the streets to a hospital where he washed and fed them and prepared them for the sacraments³



St. Aloysius Gonzaga
source: ignatiusloyola.org

Aloysius (Lewis/Luigi) Gonzaga was born on March 9, 1568 in the castle of Castiglione, in the town of Castiglione delle Stiviere, in the province of Mantua, in Lombardy, Italy located in the diocese of Brescia. His parents were Ferdinand Gonzaga, prince of the holy empire and marquis of Castiglione and Martha Tana Santena, daughter of Tanus Santena, lord of Cherry in Piedmont. Aloysius was the eldest of three children having a younger brother Ralph, and a sister Isabel who died in Spain when he was thirteen. Aloysius was a very pious youth. His mother had prayed for a son who would love and serve God entirely. Throughout his youth he spent many hours in prayer and meditation. He suffered some illnesses in his youth from which he recovered.

At the age of eight, Aloysius and his younger brother Ralph, were set to the court of Francis of Medicis to learn Latin and Tuscan languages and other behaviors suitable to their station in life. After two years they were placed in the court of duke William Gonzaga, governor of Montserrat. In both locations, Aloysius continued to practice his acts of piety and prayer. At the age of 11 years and 8 months he decided to resign, to his brother, his title of the marquisate at Castiglione, even though the emperor had already invested him in this position. Again Aloysius fell sick suffering from “retention of urine.” During this time he read Surius’s *Lives of Saints*. During his prayer he receive mystical experiences and ecstasies.

At age 12 he received his First Holy Communion from St. Charles Borromeo who was on a preaching mission. From that time on he had a great devotion to the Holy Eucharist and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass which would bring tears to his eyes. The next year in 1581, Aloysius and Ralph were made pages to James, the son of King Phillip II. During his time at court in Spain, Aloysius read Lewis of Granada’s excellent book *On Mental Prayer* and continued his pious practices when he was not attending James. He remained in Spain two years and then returned to Italy in July 1584 on board the galleys of the famous John Andrew Doria of the Battle of La Ponto.

Aloysius had a great desire to enter the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) which his father opposed. He attempted to subvert Aloysius’ desires assigning him to various secular tasks. Eventually Aloysius’ persistence prevailed and his father acquiesced giving his blessing. Aloysius then renounced his titles and inheritance giving these to his younger brother Ralph

(Rodolfo) and left for Rome. In Rome he met Pope Sixtus V and then entered the novitiate of the Jesuits on November 25, 1585, at St. Andrews at the age of 17. Aloysius was humble and obedient throughout his novitiate. He never spoke of himself, nor did he make excuses when people found fault with his actions, even when they misjudged him. He suffered an illness and was sent to Naples for six months to recover. He then returned to Rome and on November 20, 1587, he made his religious vows and soon after received minor orders. He had studied logic while a page in the Spanish court and philosophy during his nine months stay in Milan. He therefore studied divinity under Gabriel Vasquez and others. His studies were interrupted to settle an estate inheritance disagreement between his brother, now the Marquis, and his cousin which occurred when his uncle Horatio Gonzaga died without children. He also made family peace when Ralph married secretly failing to notify his uncle Alphonsus Gonzaga, lord of Castle Godfrey, whose heir he was to be. After settling the family issues, Aloysius was sent to Milan on March 22, 1590, for theological studies. After receiving a revelation notifying him that he would soon die his superiors moved him back to Rome in November to finish his theological studies.

In 1591 when a contagious pestilence infected many in Rome, the Jesuits set up a new hospital to care for the sick. Aloysius asked in earnest to be allowed to care for the sick. Granted permission, Aloysius catechized and exhorted the poor patients, made their beds, changed their clothes, and performed with wonderful assiduity and tenderness, the most painful and loathsome offices of the hospital.¹ He also went among the plague victims to heal and help them, working alongside St. Camillus de Lellis.² He begged alms for the sick and physically carried those he found in the streets to a hospital where he washed and fed them and prepared them for the sacraments.³ So many of the Jesuit fathers had died contracting this contagious disease that Aloysius was forbidden to return to the hospital. He did receive permission, however, to work at Our Lady of Consolation (Consolata) hospital which did not treat anyone with contagious diseases. Aloysius contracted the plague when he cared for a man there. Aloysius fell sick and took to bed on March 3, 1591 with a severe fever lasting seven days. Thinking that he might die, Aloysius received viaticum and extreme unction. He recovered, to his dismay, though he strongly desired to be with God. His confessor, the famous Cardinal Bellarmine informed him that it was not an unusual grace to desire death, not out of impatience, but to be united to God.¹ His fever continued for three months causing excessive weakness. The physicians gave him and another brother bitter medicine which he drank slowly as a mortification, not revealing or showing signs of its bitterness.

He continued to have mystical experiences and ecstasies during which it was revealed to him that he would die on the octave day of Corpus Christi. Though he appeared to be improving, at his request, he was given viaticum and extreme unction on the Octave day. Around midnight, between June 20th and June 21st, 1591, Aloysius Gonzaga died. He was 23 years old and had lived with the Jesuits 5 years and 7 months. He was buried in the Jesuit Church of the Annunciation in Rome. His relics were moved to a chapel built in his honor by the marquis Scipio Lancelotti in the same Church. His body is now kept in the Church of St. Ignatius in Rome.³

Butler's Lives of Saints reported that St. Aloysius Gonzaga was beatified by His Holiness Pope Gregory XV in 1621. However, the Vatican Dicastery for the Causes of Saints² and Hagiography Circle⁴ records that his beatification occurred 16 years earlier on October 19, 1605, by Pope Paul V. He was canonized by Pope Benedict XIII on December 31, 1726, at the Vatican Basilica.

Three years after his canonization, Pope Benedict XIII declared him the protector of students. His Holiness Pope Pius XI designated him as the patron of Catholic youth in 1926. Pope St. John Paul II in 1991, consecrated him as the patron of AIDS patients. (Memorial - June 21).

St. Aloysius or Lewis Gonzaga, Confessor (June 21), from the *original* Rev. Alban Butler's (1883) *Lives of Saints*:¹

Aloysius Gonzaga was son of Ferdinand Gonzaga, prince of the holy empire, and marquis of Castiglione, removed in the third degree of kindred from the duke of Mantua. His mother was Martha Tana Santena, daughter of Tanus Santena, lord of Cherry, in Piemont. She was lady of honor to Isabel, the wife of Phillip II of Spain, in whose court the marquis Gonzaga also lived in great favor. When she understood this nobleman had asked her in marriage both of the king and queen, and of her friends in Italy, being a lady of remarkable piety, she spent her time in fasting and prayer in order to learn the will of heaven, and to draw down upon herself the divine blessing. The marriage was solemnized in the most devout manner, the parties at the same time performing their devotions for the jubilee. When they left the court and returned to Italy, the marquis was declared chamberlain to his majesty, and general of part of the army in Lombardy, with a grant of several estates. The marchioness made it her earnest petition to God that He would bless her with a son, who should devote himself entirely to His love and service. Our saint was born in the castle of Castiglione, in the diocese of Brescia, on the 9th of March, 1568. William, duke of Mantua, stood godfather and gave him the name of Aloysius. The holy name of Jesus and Mary, with the sign of the cross and part of the catechism, were the first words which his devout mother taught him as soon as he was able to speak; and from her example and repeated instructions the deepest sentiments of religion and the fear of God were impressed upon his tender soul. Even in his infancy he showed an extraordinary tenderness for the poor; and such was his devotion that he frequently hid himself in corners, where after long search he was always found at his prayers, in which so amiable was his piety, and so heavenly did his recollection appear, that he seemed to resemble an angel clothed with a human body. His father designing to train him up to the army in order to give him an inclination to that state, furnished him with little guns, and other weapons, took him to Casal to show him a muster of three thousand Italian foot, and was much delighted to see him carry a little pike and walk before the ranks. The child stayed there some months, during which time he learned from the officers certain unbecoming words, the meaning of which he did not understand, not being then seven years old. But his tutor hearing him use bad words, chid him for it, and from that time he could never bear the company of any persons who in his hearing ever profaned the holy name of God. This offence, though excusable by his want of age and knowledge, was to him during his whole life a subject of perpetual humiliation, and he never ceased to bewail and accuse himself of it with extreme confusion and compunction. Entering the seventh year of his age he began to conceive greater sentiments of piety, and from that time he used to date his conversion to God. At that age, being come back to Castiglione, he began to recite every day the office of our Lady, the seven penitential psalms, and other prayers which he always said on his knees and without a cushion, a custom which he observed all his life. Cardinal Bellarmine, three other confessors, and all who were best acquainted with his interior, declared after his death their firm persuasion that he had never offended God mortally in his whole life. He was sick of an ague at Castiglione eighteen months, yet never omitted his task of daily prayers, though he sometimes desired some of his servants to recite them with him.

When he was recovered, being now eight years old, his father placed him and his younger brother Ralph, in the polite court of his good friend Francis of Medicis, grand duke of Tuscany, that they might learn the Latin and Tuscan languages and other exercises suitable to their rank. At Florence the saint made such progress in the science of the saints that he afterwards used to call that city the mother of his piety. His devotion to the Blessed Virgin was much inflamed by reading a little book of Gaspar Loartes on the mysteries of the Rosary. He at the same time conceived a great esteem for the virtue of holy chastity; and he received of God so perfect a gift of the same, that in his whole life he never felt the least temptation either in mind or body against purity, as Jerome Platus and cardinal Bellarmine assure us from his own mouth. He cultivated this extraordinary grace by assiduous prayer, universal mortification, and the most watchful flight of all occasions; being well apprized that this virtue is so infinitely tender that it fades and dies if blown upon by the least vapor: and that it is a bright and clear mirror which is tarnished with the least breath and even by the sight. He never looked at any women, kept his eyes strictly guarded,

and generally cast down; would never stay with his mother alone in her chamber, and if she sent any message to him by some lady in her company, he received it, and gave his answer in a few words, with his eyes shut, and his chamber door only half open; and when bantered on that score, he ascribed such behavior to his bashfulness. It was owing to his virginal modesty, that he did not know by their faces many ladies among his own relations with whom he had frequently conversed, and that he was afraid and ashamed to let a footman see so much as his foot uncovered. But humility, which is the mother of all virtues, was in our saint the guardian of his purity. He never spoke to his servants by way of command, but with such modesty that they were ashamed not to obey. He would only say to them: "Pray dispatch this or that: You may do this" or, "If it be no trouble you may do this or that." No novice could practice a more exact and ready obedience than Aloysius set an example of towards all his superiors, especially Francis Tuccius, whom his father had appointed tutor to his sons and governor of his family at Florence.

The two young princes had stayed there a little more than two years, when their father removed them to Mantua and placed them in the court of the duke William Gonzaga, who had made him governor of Montserrat. Aloysius left Florence in November 1579, when he was eleven years and eight months old. He, at that time, took a resolution to resign to his brother Ralph his title to the marquisate at Castiglione, though he had already received the investiture from the emperor. And the ambitious or covetous man is not more greedy of honors or riches than this young prince from a better principle appeared desirous to see himself totally disengaged from the ties of the world by entirely renouncing its false pleasures, which begin with uneasiness and terminate in remorse, and are no better than real pains covered over with a bewitching varnish. He knew the true delights which virtue brings, which are solid without alloy and capable of filling the capacity of man's heart, and these he thirsted after. In the meantime, he fell sick of an obstinate retention of urine, of which distemper he cured himself only by the rigorous rules of abstinence which he observed. He took the opportunity of this indisposition to rid himself more than ever of company and business, seldom going abroad and spending most of his time in reading Surius's *Lives of the Saints* and other books of piety and devotion. It being the custom in Italy and other hot climates to pass the summer months in the country, the marquis sent for his sons from Mantua to Castiglione in that season. Aloysius pursued the same exercises and the same manner of life in the town, at court, and in the country. The servants who watched him in his chamber, saw him employed in prayer many hours together, sometimes prostrate on the ground before a crucifix, or standing up absorbed in God so as to appear in an ecstasy. When he went downstairs, they took notice that at every standing place he said a Hail Mary. It was in this retirement that his mind was exceedingly enlightened by God, and without the help of any instructor he received an extraordinary gift of mental prayer, to which his great purity of heart and sincere humility disposed his soul. He sometimes passed whole days in contemplating, with inexpressible sweetness and devotion, the admirable dispensation of divine providence in the great mysteries of our redemption, especially the infinite goodness and love of God, His mercy, and other attributes. In this exercise he was not able to contain the spiritual joy of his soul in considering the greatness and goodness of his God, not to moderate his tears. Falling at last on a little book of Father Canisius which treated Meditation, and on certain letters of the Jesuit missionaries in the Indies, he felt a strong inclination to enter the Society of Jesus [Jesuits] and was inflamed with an ardent zeal for the salvation of souls.

He began even then to frequent the schools of Christian doctrine and to encourage other boys, especially among the poor, in learning their catechism, and often instructed them himself. So excellently did he then discourse of God as astonished grown persons of learning and abilities. It happened that in 1580 St. Charles Borromeo came to Brescia in quality of apostolic visitor, and preached there on the feast of Mary Magdalene. No importunities of the marquis or other princes could prevail upon the great saint to visit them at their country seats or to take up his lodgings anywhere but with the clergy of the churches where he came. Wherefore Aloysius, being only twelve years old, went to Brescia to receive his blessing. It is incredible how much the good cardinal was taken with the piety and generous sentiments of the young prince. But finding that he had never yet received the holy communion, he exhorted him to prepare himself for that divine sacrament and to receive it very frequently, prescribing him rules for his devout preparation, and with regard to many other practices of piety, all which the holy youth constantly observed, remembering ever after with wonderful joy the happiness of having seen so great a saint. He from

that time conceived so tender a devotion to the blessed Eucharist, that in hearing mass, after the consecration, he often melted into tears, in profound sentiments of love and adoration; and he frequently received wonderful favors in communicating; and this holy sacrament became his greatest comfort and joy. The marquis after this carried his whole family to Casal, the residence of his government of Montferrat. There the saint made the convents of the Capuchins and Barnabites the usual places of his resort. He fasted three days a week. Fridays at least on bread and water, boiled together for his whole dinner; his collation was a little piece of dry bread. On other days his meals were so slender that his life seemed almost a miracle. He secretly thrust a board into his bed to rest on in the night, and rose at midnight to pray even in the coldest season of winter, which is very sharp under the Alps. He spent an hour after rising, and two hours before going to bed in private prayer.

In 1581 his father attended the empress Mary of Austria, wife to Maximilian II and sister to Philip II of Spain, in her journey from Bohemia to Spain, and took with him his three children, a daughter named Isabel who died in Spain, and his two sons, who were both made by king Philip pages to his son James, elder brother of Philip III. Aloysius was then thirteen years and a half old. He continued his studies but never neglected his long meditations and devotions, which he often performed by stealth in secret corners. Though he every day waited on the infant of Spain, James, to pay his duty to the empress, he never once looked on the face of the princess, or took notice of her person; and so great was his guard over all his senses and so universal his spirit of mortification, that it was a proverb at court that the young marquis of Castiglione seemed not to be made of flesh and blood. While he remained in Spain he found great pleasure and benefit in reading Lewis of Granada's excellent book *On Mental Prayer*.

He prescribed himself a daily task of an hour's meditation, which he often prolonged to three, four, or five hours. He at length determined to enter the Society of Jesus [Jesuits], in order to devote himself to the instructing and conducting souls to God; and he was confirmed in this resolution by his confessor, who was one of that order. When he disclosed it to his parents, his mother rejoiced exceedingly, but his father, in excessive grief and rage, said he would have him scourged naked. "O that it would please God," replied modestly the holy youth, "to grant me so great a favor as to suffer that for His love." What heightened the father's indignation, was a suspicion that this was a contrivance on account of his custom of gaming by which he had lately lost six hundred crowns in one evening, a vice which his son bitterly deplored, not so much, as he used to say, for the loss of the money, as for the injury done to God. However, the consent of the marquis was at length extorted through the mediation of friends. The infant or prince of Spain, dying a fever, Aloysius was at liberty, and after two years' stay in Spain, returned to Italy in July, 1584, on board the galley of the famous John Andrew Doria, whom his Catholic majesty had lately appointed admiral. He brother traveled in rich apparel, but the saint in a suit of black Flanders serge. In his journey he either conversed on holy things, or entertained himself secretly in his heart with God. As soon as he came to an inn he sought some private little chamber and fell to prayer on his knees. In visiting religious houses he went first to the church, and prayed some time before the blessed sacrament. When he had arrived at Castiglione he had new assaults to bear, from the eloquence and authority of a cardinal, many bishops, and eminent men, employed by the duke of Mantua and his own uncles; yet he remained firm, and brought over some of these ambassadors to his side so that they pleaded in his favor. But his father flew back from his consent, loaded his son with opprobrious language and employed him in many distracting secular commissions. The saint had recourse to God by prostrating himself before a crucifix and redoubling his severities, till the marquis, no longer able to oppose his design, cordially embraced him and recommended him to Claudius Aquaviva, general of the society, who appointed Rome for the place of his novitiate. The father repented again of his consent and detained his son nine months at Milan, during which time he used the most tender entreaties and every other method to bring him from his purpose. He again removed him to Mantua, and thence to Castiglione, but finding his resolution invincible, left him at liberty, saying to him: "Dear son, your choice is a deep wound in my heart. I ever loved you, as you always deserved. In you I had founded the hopes of my family, but you tell me God calls you another way. Go, therefore, in His name, whither you please, and may His blessing everywhere attend you." Aloysius having thanked him, withdrew, that he might not increase his grief by his presence and betook himself to his prayers. His cession of the marquisate to his brother Ralph, with the reserve of two thousand crowns in

ready money, and four hundred crowns a year for life, was ratified by the emperor, and the writings were delivered at Mantua in November 1585. The excessive grief and tears of his subjects and vassals at his departure only drew from him these words, "That he sought nothing but the salvation of his soul and exhorting them all to the same." Arriving at Rome, he visited the churches and chief places of devotion, then kissed the feet of Pope Sixtus V, and entered his novitiate at St. Andrews's on the 25th of November, 1585, not being completely eighteen years old. Being conducted to his cell, he entered it as a celestial paradise, in which he was to have no other employment than that of praising God without interruption; and exulting in his heart, he repeated with the prophet: This is my rest forever: here will I dwell for I have chosen it.

The saint in his noviceship condemned himself as guilty of sloth if he did not in every religious duty surpass in fervor all his companions; he respected them all, and he behaved himself towards them as if he had been the last person in the family, and indeed such he always reputed himself. He loved and rejoiced most in the meanest and most contemptible employments. His mortifications, though great, were not so severe as he had practiced in the world, because limited by obedience, which gave a merit to all his actions. He used to say that a religious state in this resembles a ship, in which they sail as fast who sit idle, as they who sweat at the oar in rowing. Yet such was the general mortification of his senses that he seemed totally inattentive to exterior things, only inasmuch as they regarded God. He never took notice of the difference of villas where he had been, the order of the refectory in which he every day ate, or the rich ornaments of the chapels and altars where he prayed. He seemed entirely inattentive to the taste of what he ate, only he endeavored to avoid whatever seemed savory. He never listened to reports or to discourse about worldly matters; spoke very little and never about himself, thinking himself justly deserving to be forgotten by the whole world, and to be made no account of in everything.

He was a capital enemy to any artifice or dissimulation, which he called the bane and canker of Christian simplicity. Nothing gave him so much mortification as the least marks of honor or distinction. It was his delight to carry a wallet through the streets of Rome begging from door to door, to serve the poor and the hospitals, or to sweep the kitchen, and carry away the filth, in which actions he usually had before his eyes Christ humbled for us. On holidays he used to catechize the children of poor laborers. He changed his new gilt breviary for an old one, and often did so in his habit and other things. His whole life seemed a continued prayer, and he called holy meditation the short way to Christian perfection. He found in that exercise the greatest spiritual delights, and remained in it on his knees as if he were motionless, in a posture of wonderful recollection and respect. It is not possible to describe the sweet raptures and abundant tears which often accompanied his devotion, especially in presence of the blessed Eucharist and after communicating. He spent the three first days after communion in thanksgiving for that inestimable favor, and the three following in languishing aspirations and desires to receive on the Sunday his savior, his God, his physician, his king, and his spouse: on the eve of his communion his mind was wholly taken up with the dignity and infinite importance and advantages of that great action, nor could he speak of anything else. Such was the first of his words whenever he spoke on that mystery of love, that it inflamed all who heard him. He made every day at least four regular visits to pray before the blessed sacrament. The passion of Christ was also a most tender object of his devotion. From his infancy he had chosen the Blessed Virgin for his special patroness and advocate. He had a singular devotion to the holy angels, especially his angel guardian. In the beginning of his noviceship he was tried by an extreme spiritual dryness and interior desolation of soul, which served perfectly to purify his heart, and was succeeded by the greatest heavenly consolations. He bore the pious death of his father with unshaken constancy, because he considered it and all other events purely in the view of the divine will and providence. It happened six weeks after Aloysius had taken the habit. From the day on which his son had left him to enter the society, the marquis had entirely devoted himself to the practice of perfect virtue and penance.

Humility and obedience were the young novice's favorite virtues, and by them he gained a perfect mastery over himself. To appear poor, little and contemptible, was his delight, and he rejoiced to see the last and worst portion in anything fall to his share. He was never known guilty of the least transgression of the rule of silence or any other, and feared to arrive one moment too late at any duty. He would not, without the leave of his master, speak one word even to his kinsman, Cardinal Roborei, nor would he ever stay with him so long as to fail one minute in any

rule. It happened that the pious and learned Jerome Platus, while he was his master of novices, thinking his perpetual application to prayer and study prejudicial to his health, ordered him to spend in conversing with others after dinner, not only the hour allotted for all, but also the half hour longer which is allowed to those who dined at the second table. Father minister not knowing this order punished him for it, and obliged him publicly to confess his fault, which he underwent without offering any excuse. The minister learning afterwards how the matter was, admired very much his silence, but for his greater merit enjoined him another penalty for not telling him the order of his master. The saint bore in silence and joy the imputation and chastisement of the faults of any others because this afforded him an opportunity of exercising patience, meekness, and humility. By a habit of continual application of his mind to God, attention at prayer seemed so easy and natural to him that he told his superior, who put to him that question, that if all the involuntary distractions at his devotions during six months were joined together, they would not amount to the space of one Hail Mary. His health decaying, he was forbid to meditate or pray except at regular times. This he found the hardest task of his whole life, so great a struggle did it cost him to resist the impulse with which his heart was carried towards God. For the recovery of his health he was sent to Naples where he stayed half a year, and then returning to Rome. In that city, after completing his novitiate of two years, he made his religious vows on the 20th of November, 1587, and soon after received minor orders.

Aloysius had finished his logic while a page in the Spanish court and his course of natural philosophy during his nine months' stay at Milan. After this he commenced student in divinity under Gabriel Vasquez and other celebrated professors. But a family contest obliged him to interrupt his studies. His uncle, Horatio Gonzaga, died without issue and bequeathed by will his estate of Sulphurino to the duke of Mantua. Ralph, the saint's brother, pleaded that the donation was invalid, the estate being a fief of the empire, which inalienably devolves on the next heir in blood, and he obtained a rescript of the emperor Maximilian in his favor. But the duke refused to acquiesce in this sentence, and the archduke Ferdinand and several other princes had in vain attempted to reconcile the two cousins. At length St. Aloysius was sent for to be the mediator of peace. He had then just finished his second year of divinity and was at the Jesuits' villa at Frescati during the vacation, when father Robert Bellarmine brought him an order from the general to repair to Mantua about this affair. A discreet lay brother was appointed to be his companion, to whom a charge was given to take care of his health, with an order to Aloysius to obey him as to that particular. Most edifying were the examples of his profound humility, mortification, love of poverty, and devotion, and incredible the fruits of his zeal, both on the road, and at Mantua, Castiglione, and other places where he went. Though both parties were exceedingly exasperated, no sooner did this angel of peace appear than they were perfectly reconciled. The duke, though before much incensed, was entirely disarmed by the sight and moving discourse of the saint; he readily pardoned and yielded up the estate to the marquis, who as easily consented to bury in oblivion all that had passed, and the two cousins made a sincere and strict alliance and friendship together. Many others who were at variance, or at law, were in the same manner made friends by the means of the saints, friendly interposing. No enmity seemed able to withstand the spirit of meekness and charity which his words and whole deportment breathed. Great numbers were by him converted from sinful habits, and many brought to a profession of perfect virtue. His brother Ralph had fallen in love with a young gentlewoman, much inferior to him in birth, and had secretly married her before private witnesses, but durst not publish his marriage for fear of offending his uncle, Alphonsus Gonzaga, lord of Castle Godfrey, whose heir he was to be. The saint represented to him that by such a conduct, notwithstanding his precautions, he offended God by the scandal he gave to his subjects and others, who looked upon his behavior as criminal. He, moreover, undertook to satisfy his uncle, mother, and other friends, and thus engaged him publicly to declare his marriage, and the uncle and others, through the saint's mediation, took no offence at the alliance. Aloysius having happily restored peace among all his relations, and settled them in the practice of true virtue, by the direction of his superiors went to Milan on the 22nd of March, 1590, there to pursue his theological studies. These he accompanied with his usual exercises of devotion, and all virtues, especially humility, to nourish and improve which in his heart, he embraced every kind of humiliation. He often begged to serve in the kitchen and refectory, and it was his delight to draw water for the cook, wash the dishes, cover the table, or sweep the scullery. While he was at Milan, one day in his morning prayer he was favored with a

revelation, that he had only a short time to live. And by this heavenly visitation he found his mind wonderfully changed, and more than ever weaned from all transitory things. This favor he afterwards disclosed at Rome, in great simplicity, to F. Vincent Bruno and others. The general would not suffer him to finish his studies at Milan, but recalled him to Rome in November the same year, to perform there the fourth or last year of his theological courses. The saint chose a dark and very small chamber over the staircase in the garret, with one window in the roof; not had he in it any other furniture than a poor bed, a wooden chair, and a little stool to lay his books upon. He appeared even in the schools and cloisters quite absorbed in God, and often at table, or with his companions at recreation time after dinner, he fell into ecstasies, and appeared unable to contain the excessive heavenly joy with which his soul overflowed. He frequently spoke in raptures on the happiness of dying, the more speedily to enjoy God.

In 1591 an epidemical distemper swept off great multitudes in Rome. In this public distress the fathers of the society [Jesuits] erected a new hospital, in which the general himself, with other assistants, served the sick. Aloysius obtained by earnest entreaties to be one of this number. He catechized and exhorted the poor patients, washed their feet, made their beds, changed their clothes, and performed, with wonderful assiduity and tenderness, the most painful and loathsome offices of the hospital. The distemper being pestilential and contagious, several of these fathers died martyrs of charity, and Aloysius fell sick. It was on the 3rd of March, 1591, that he took to his bed: at which time he was overwhelmed with excessive joy as he thought that he was called to go to his God. This joy gave him afterwards a scruple whether it was not immoderate. But his confessor, who was the famous cardinal Bellarmine, comforted him, saying, that it is not an unusual grace to desire death, not out of impatience, but to be united to God. The pestilential fever in seven days became so violent, that the saint received the viaticum and extreme unction. However, he recovered; but from the relics of this distemper succeeded a hectic fever, which in three months reduced him to an excessive weakness. He studied to add continual mortifications to the pains of his disease, and rose in the night to pray before a crucifix, till being caught by the infirmarian, he was forbid doing so for the future; which direction he punctually obeyed. The physicians having ordered him and another sick brother to take a very bitter draught, the other drank it at once with the ordinary helps to qualify the bitterness of the taste; but Aloysius sipped it slowly, and as it were drop by drop, that he might have the longer and fuller taste of what was mortifying; nor did he give the least sign of perceiving any disagreeable taste. After speaking with father Bellarmine on the happiness of speedily enjoying God, he fell into a rapture through excess of inward delights, and it continued almost the whole night, which seemed to him in the morning to have been but one moment, as he told F. Bellarmine. It seems to have been in this ecstasy that he learned he should die on the octave day of Corpus Christi, which he often clearly foretold. In thanksgiving for his death being so near, he desired one to recite with him the *Te Deum*; with which request the other complied. To another he cried out, his heart exulting with joy; "My father, we go rejoicing! We go rejoicing!" He said every evening the seven penitential psalms with another person, in great compunction. On the octave day, he seemed better, and the rector had thought of sending him to Frescati. But he repeated still that he should die before next morning, and he received the viaticum and extreme unction. At night he was thought to be in no immediate danger, and was left with two brothers to watch by him. These, about midnight, perceived on a sudden, by a wanness and violent sweat with which he was seized, that he was falling into his agony. His most usual aspirations during his illness were the ardent languishings of a soul aspiring to God, extracted from the psalms. After saying; "Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit," he frequently repeated the holy name of Jesus with which sacred word he expired a little after midnight between the 20th and 21st days of June, the octave of Corpus Christi that year, 1591, being twenty-three years, three months, and eleven days old, of which he had lived five years and almost seven months in the society. He was buried in the church of the Annunciation, belonging to the Jesuits of the Roman college. A rich chapel being afterwards built in that church under his name, by the marquis Scipio Lancelotti, his relics were translated into it. St. Aloysius was beatified by Gregory XV in 1621, and canonized by Benedict XIII, in 1726. Ceparius gives a history of many miracles wrought through the intercession and by the relics of this saint, several being cures of noblemen and eminent prelates. A much more ample history of his miracles may be read in Janning the Bollandist, in an appendix to the life of St. Aloysius.

When we see a young prince, the darling of this family and country, sacrifice nobility, sovereignty, riches, and pleasures, the more easily to secure the treasure of divine love, and of eternal happiness, how ought we to condemn our own sloth, who live as if heaven were to cost us nothing!

(From his life, written in the most authentic manner by F. Ceparius, his master of novices. See also other memoirs collected by Tanning the Bellandist, Junij, t. 4. p847, ad p. 1169, and his life in French by F. Orleans. A.D. 1591).

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Note: This biography is for all desiring to grow in holiness and follow His Holiness Pope Pius XI address to 2000 nurses assembled at Castel Gondolfo on August 27, 1935 for the II World Congress of Catholic Nurses (www.ciciams.org / www.nacn-usa.org): *to first and foremost bring the Christian supernatural, Christ to our patients, bring salvation to souls*. May it also help nursing students with your Nursing History course. Source: Diana L. Ruzicka (2022). *The Book of Nurse Saints*. Available at www.lulu.com/spotlight/Ruzicka