

## August 2013

# St. ALPHONSA

**History:** Born prematurely on August 19, 1910 at Kudamaloor, India as *Anna Muttathupadathu*, Sister Alphonsa was so determined to enter a convent that she deliberately stepped into burning embers to disfigure her feet so that her strict aunt would stop pressurizing her to get married. She was stricken with suffering and sickness falling ill with pneumonia in June 1939. She died on July 28, 1946, just before her 36th birthday. **She was declared Blessed, by Pope John Paul II on February 8, 1986 at Kottayam, Kerala, during his first visit to India and was raised to the honours of the altar on October 12, 2008 by Pope Benedict XVI as India's first woman saint.**

**Early life and formation:** From her birth, the life of the Blessed was marked by the cross, which would be progressively revealed to her as the royal way to conform herself to Christ. Her mother died three months after Annakutty was born and she passed her early infancy in the home of her grandparents, during which the first seeds of a vocation flowered. Her grand-mother, a pious and charitable woman, communicated the joy of the faith, love for prayer and a surge of charity towards the poor to her. At five years of age the child already knew how to lead, with a totally childish enthusiasm, the evening prayer of the family gathered, in accordance with the Syro-Malabar custom, in the "prayer room". She was heard saying post her first holy communion, *"Do you know why I am so particularly happy today? It is because I have Jesus in my heart!"*. In a letter to her spiritual father, she confided the following: *"Already from the age of seven I was no longer mine. I was totally dedicated to my divine Spouse. Your reverence knows it well"*. In 1920, she was transferred to the house of her aunt Anna Murickal to whom her mother had entrusted her as her adoptive mother. The virtue of the saint was manifested in accepting the severe and rigid education as a path of humility and patience for the love of Christ, and tenaciously resisted the reiterated attempts towards an engagement to which the aunt tried to oblige her.. *"My marriage was arranged when I was thirteen years old. What had I to do to avoid it? I prayed all that night.. then an idea came to me. If my body were a little disfigured no one would want me! .. O, how I suffered! I offered all for my great intention"*. The period 1930-1935 was characterized by grave illness and moral suffering. Her canonical novitiate was delayed because of her ill health. The illness deteriorated, to such a point that

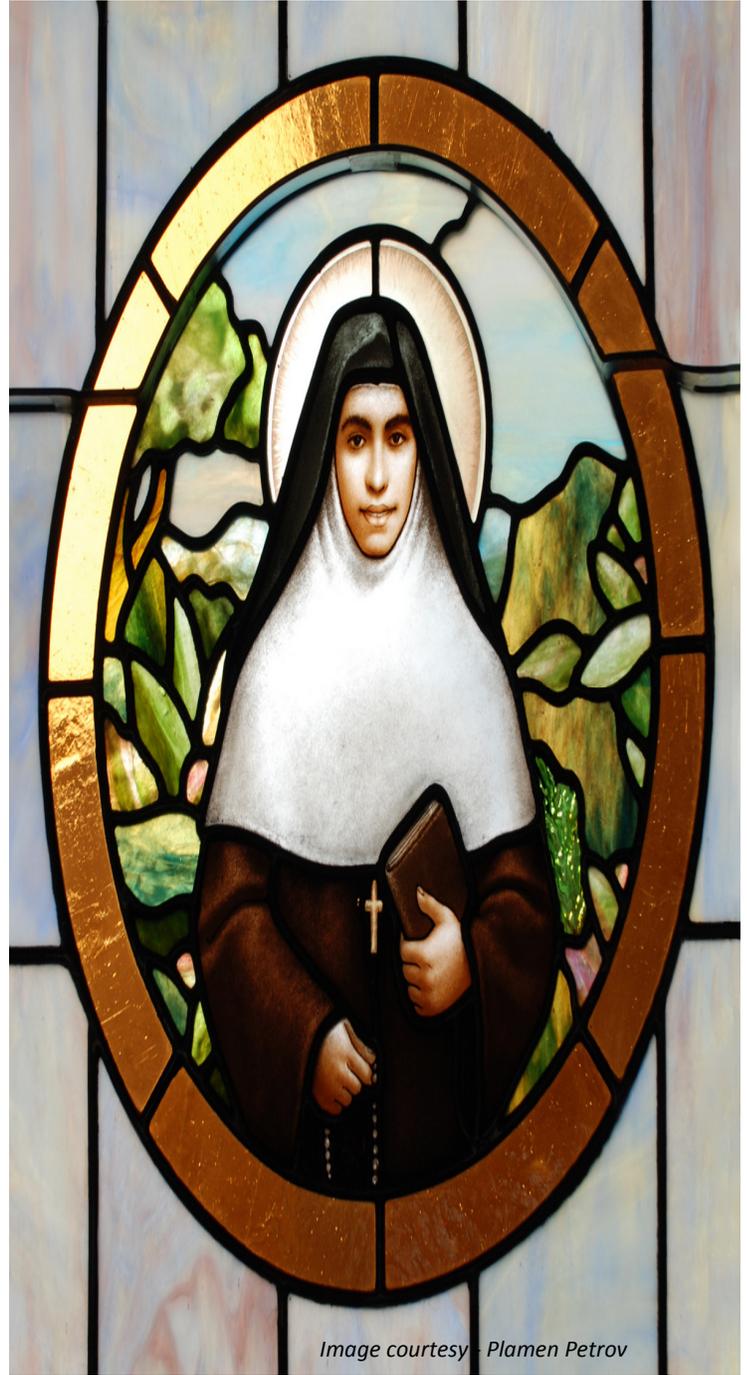


Image courtesy: Plamen Petrov



the worst was feared. But during a novena to **Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara** she was instantaneously cured. Having restarted her novitiate, she wrote, "I do not wish to act or speak according to my inclinations. Every time I fail, I will do penance... I want to be careful never to reject anyone. I will only speak sweet words to others. I want to control my eyes with rigour. I will ask pardon of the Lord for every little failure and I will atone for it through penance. No matter what my sufferings may be, I will never complain and if I have to undergo any humiliation, I will seek refuge in the Sacred Heart of Jesus". She had realized her desire, guarded for a long time in her heart and confided to her sister Elizabeth when she was only 12 years old: "Jesus is my only Spouse and none other". Jesus, however, wished to lead His spouse to perfection through a life of suffering. Painful illnesses followed each other. Her state of psychic incapacity lasted for about a year, during which she was unable to read or write. In every situation, Sister Alphonsa always maintained a great reservation and charitable attitude towards the Sisters, silently undergoing her sufferings. In 1945 she had a violent outbreak of illness. With an attitude of a victim for the love of the Lord, happy until the final moment and with a smile of innocence always on her lips, Sister Alphonsa quietly and joyfully brought her earthly journey to a close at Bharananganam, Kerala leaving behind the memory of a Sister full of love and a Saint. St. Alphonsa would always offer all her sufferings for the salvation of souls-Even though she was unwell, she would call the children who would come to play nearby and teach them to pray and encourage them to become great missionaries. These children later became priest and lay missionaries in different parts of India. We too as part of a missionary movement at the service of the church should draw strength and motivation from the life of St. Alphonsa. St. Alphonsa has set a great model of joyful spirituality for every Jesus Youth who strive to share this joyful spirituality with everyone they come across.

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**Week I**

**Quote of St. Alphonsa**

*"The food I relish the most is the Holy Eucharist. Ineffable joy wells up my soul every time the lord who said 'I am the living bread' descends into me."*

**Prayer of the Saint**

Oh Lord Jesus, hide me in the Sacred wound of Your Heart. Free me from my evil desire to be loved and esteemed. Save me from the mean pursuit of honour and fame. Make me humble until I become very insignificant and a small spark in the furnace of the love of Your Divine Heart. Give me the grace to forget the world and everything in it, including myself. My Jesus, who is ineffable sweetness, transforms all my worldly consolations into bitterness. Oh Jesus! Sun of Justice, with the divine rays of Thy Sacred fire of love, illumine my mind, enlighten my intellect, purify my heart, enkindle my love towards Thee, consume me in the fire of Your love, and thus unite me with You. Amen.

**Week II**

**Quote of St. Alphonsa**

*"How great is the joy we obtain when all our pains are offered to the sacred heart of Jesus."*

**Prayer of the Saint**

My sweet Beloved Lord, I am entirely Yours. Grant me the grace to live the most humble life in a poor convent offering my heart totally for you.

**Week III**

**Quote of St. Alphonsa**

*"I have abandoned myself to the lord fully; let him do to me as it pleases him."*

**Prayer of the Saint**

Jesus, Sun of Justice, clarify my thoughts and illumine my mind with your sacred radiant rays, enlighten my intellect, purify my heart and consume me in the fire of Your love, so that it may always be united with You.

**Week IV**

**Quote of St. Alphonsa**

*"I desired to be ever faithful to the Lord. I would rather die than break this promise."*

**Prayer of the Saint**

Blessed Virgin Mary! My Mother, make my heart a worthy dwelling place for Your Holy Son. Decorate me with your holy heart.

