

penance. It is a non-title to give the devil, he is the demon of lust; though being without a body himself, he knows how by stirring this passion, he can lead people into any kind of sin. That is the first and towering lesson of the life of Saint Aloysius.

A **second** feature of his spirituality is his profound humility shown in the fact that as you know in certain cultures, notably the Italian and Spanish nobility, is highly prized.. Under divine inspiration from early boyhood, Aloysius recognized that if he is to even save his soul, he cannot pride himself on his rank or social state. He had humility without pretense and he did not have to pretend because he was of the highest nobility.

The **third** feature of his spirituality was penance. Under divine guidance, Aloysius recognized that we all have powerful drives in our fallen nature, called the 'capital sins', the more sophisticated name is our concupiscence. We all have these seven drives. This is an insight into the meaning of penance that only a person totally innocent as Aloysius could teach us...one reason he was canonized. For even though we have not personally sinned, we commonly and correctly associate doing penance for our own past mistakes.

A **fourth** feature of Aloysius' spirituality was his profound understanding of the gravity of sin. In his own life as well as the life of others, we must understand how dreadful a thing it is to offend the good God. If there is one mystery of our faith that needs strengthening in these days, it is the fact of sin.

The **fifth** feature is that from early childhood, Aloysius looked forward to going to Heaven, the mystery of Heaven. No doubt one reason that he performed extraordinary penance was that he just looked forward to a day when all the trials of this world would end. No wonder when he caught the plague in Rome and briefly recovered, he confessed impatience with wanting to die. It was not death that he welcomed, it was the aftermath of death, namely Heaven.

The **sixth** feature of Aloysius spirituality is charity in the practice of mercy so much so that we can call him a 'martyr of charity.' One meaning of Calvary that can be lost on us--is a voluntary sacrifice of His life as an act of charity. For us, this means living with people and with their faults. Charity means not only doing good, but giving up self including the dearest possession we have, naturally speaking, our lives.



The **seventh** and final feature of Aloysius is spiritual joy. We are not to be sad or even depending on the person's viewpoint, it may seem oppressive, it should not be, that has so much of the negative, you know, about penance, mortification sin--if it is God's will, we should be ecstatically happy. We are not to be sad. The secret is to find happiness in the right places. Aloysius showed that is why the Church canonized him, that when Christ gave us the eight Beatitudes, which are eight promises of happiness, He meant it. The condition for being happy, well, that is part of the Covenant, that is what we do, but if we do our part, God comes through.

\*(excerpted from: [www.therealpresence.org](http://www.therealpresence.org); [en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org))

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## ***Saint Aloysius Gonzaga***

### **PATRON SAINT OF TEENAGE BOYS**

**Feast Day: June 21**



#### **Attributes:**

**A lily, referring to innocence...**

**A cross, referring to piety and sacrifice...**

**A skull, referring to his early death...**

**A rosary, referring to his devotion to the Virgin Mary.**

**St. Aloysius is often depicted in art wearing a black cassock and white rochet, or as a page.**

## SAINT ALOYSIUS GONZAGA

\*Aloysius (Luigi) Gonzaga was born at his family's castle in Castiglione delle Stiviere, between Brescia and Mantova in northern Italy in what was then part of the Papal States on March 9, 1568. He was a member of the illustrious House of Gonzaga. He was the oldest son of Ferrante Gonzaga, Marquis of Castiglione in Lombardy, and Maria Tana di Santena, daughter of a baron of the Piedmontese Della Rovere family.

His father assumed that he would become a soldier, as the family was constantly involved in the frequent minor wars in the area. His military training started at an early age, but he also received an education in languages and other subjects. In 1576, at the age of 8, he was sent to Florence with his younger brother Ridolfo, to serve at the court of Grand Duke Francesco I de' Medici and to receive further education. While there, he fell ill with a disease of the kidneys, which was to trouble him throughout his life. While he was ill, he took the opportunity to read about the saints and to spend much of his time in prayer. He is said to have taken a private vow of chastity at the age of 9. In November 1579, the brothers were sent to the Duke of Mantua. Aloysius was shocked by the violent and frivolous life-style he encountered there.

In 1580, he returned to Castiglione. There he met Cardinal Charles Borromeo in July of the same year. The cardinal found out that Aloysius had not yet received his first holy communion, and gave this to him on July 22, 1580. After reading a book about Jesuit missionaries in India, he felt strongly that he wanted to become a missionary himself. He started practicing by giving catechism classes to young boys in Castiglione in the summers. He also adopted an ascetic life-style.

The family was called to Spain in 1581, to assist Empress Mary of Austria. They arrived in Madrid in March 1582, and Aloysius and Ridolfo became pages for the infant don Diego, Prince of Asturias (1575-82). He then started thinking in earnest about joining a religious order. He had considered joining the Capuchins, but he had a Jesuit confessor in Madrid, and decided to join that order. His mother agreed to his request to join the Jesuits, but his father was furious. In July 1584, one and a half years after the infante's death, the family returned to Italy. Aloysius still wanted to become a priest, and several members of his family worked hard to persuade him to change his mind. When they realized that there was no way to make him give up his plan, they tried to persuade him to become a secular priest, and to arrange for a bishopric for him. If he became a Jesuit he would have to renounce any right to income from property or status in society. His family was afraid of this, but their attempts to persuade him not to join the Jesuits failed; Aloysius was not interested in higher office and still wanted to be a missionary.

In November 1585, Aloysius gave up all rights of inheritance, and this was confirmed by the emperor. He went to Rome and, because of his noble birth, gained

an audience with Pope Sixtus V. Following a brief stay at the Palazzo Aragona Gonzaga, the Rome home of his cousin, Cardinal Scipione Gonzaga on November 25, 1585 he was accepted into the Jesuit Roman novitiate by the order's superior, Claudius Acquaviva. His health continued to cause him problems. In addition to the kidney disease, he also suffered from a skin disease, chronic headaches and insomnia. He was sent to Milan for studies, but after some time he was sent back to Rome because of his health. On November 25, 1587, he took the three religious vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. In February and March 1588, he received the lower ordinations, and started studying theology to prepare for the priesthood. In 1589, he was called to Mantua to mediate between his brother Ridolfo and the Duke of Mantua. He returned to Rome in May 1590. Later that year, he had a vision in which the Archangel Gabriel told him that he would die within a year.

In 1591, a plague broke out in Rome. The Jesuits opened a hospital for the stricken, and Aloysius volunteered to work there. He was allowed to work in a ward where there were no plague victims, as they were afraid to lose him. As it turned out, a man on his ward was infected, and on March 3, 1591 (six days before his 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday Aloysius showed the first symptoms of being infected. He was given Extreme Unction as it seemed certain that he would die shortly. To everyone's surprise, he recovered, but his health was left worse than ever. While he was ill, he spoke several times to his confessor, Cardinal Robert Bellarmine. Aloysius had another vision, and told his confessor that he would die on the Octave of the feast of Corpus Christi. On that day, which fell on June 21, he seemed very well in the morning, but insisted that he would die before the day was over. Cardinal Bellarmine gave him the sacraments, and recited the prayers for the dying. He died just before midnight on June 21, 1591. Purity was his notable virtue; he never looked even upon his mother's face and never looked at his queen so that he could only recognize the queen by her voice. Saint Maria Magdalena de Pazzi saw him in a vision in a great glory because he had lived a particularly strong interior life. He was canonized on December 31, 1726 by Pope Benedict XIII.

Some new insights have surfaced concerning Aloysius' spirituality. To the one virtue which the Church has chosen, and on account of which has chosen him 'the universal patron of youth', was his chastity. All the evidence we have indicates that he had very strong sexual passions. We know that from his own writings; we know that from people who knew him and we know that from what is called penance from one viewpoint, what is really, you might say 'preventive austerity' from another. He simply believed that unless he mortified his body, he just would not get that passion under control. You cannot control passion without mortification. As a result, the Church has held him up as a model of what even the most passionate personality can achieve with God's grace. Remember Christ's words about a certain demon not being driven out except through