



Saint of the Month: Heaven's Heroes



Saint Alphonsus Rodriguez, SJ October 30

Goal: To provide a lesson for children about a saint or saints who exemplify a deep relationship with God and the ability to share it with others

Materials Needed: This lesson plan, accompanying story, and any necessary materials for follow up activities

Objectives:

1. To assist children in developing the understanding that all of God's people are called to a life of holiness
2. To help children respond appropriately to the question: What is a saint?
One who:
 - is proclaimed by the Church, after their death, to have lived a life of holiness
 - teaches others about Jesus by their example
 - lives like Jesus
3. To introduce one of our Church's saints, Saint Alphonsus Rodriguez, SJ, telling as much of the story that you feel will interest the children at your grade level
4. To learn that Alphonsus was a saint because he lived in a way that respected the Gospel of Jesus
5. To learn that we are called by God to share the Gospel with our lives
6. To help the children develop listening skills

Procedure:

1. Prepare the children to listen to Alphonsus' story.
2. Read, or have read, the attached story of Saint Alphonsus. Elaborate or abbreviate as necessary for time constraints or age level of listeners.
3. Use the follow up questions (below).
4. Present follow-up activities below (optional). Any follow-up activity can be substituted.

Saint Alphonsus Rodriguez, SJ

Born in Spain in 1532, Alphonsus Rodriguez was the son of a wool merchant and his wife. When he was just fourteen years old, his father died. Alphonsus left school to help his mother run the family business. After a few years, at the age of 23, Alphonsus' mother left him to run the business on his own. He soon married and he and his wife had three children. Tragedy would strike Alphonsus over and over within a space of three years. First, one of his children died, then another child passed away. Then, his young wife died in childbirth, leaving the young man alone to raise his son. Last, Alphonsus' mother passed away. When the saint-to-be was approaching forty years old, his remaining child died as well leaving Alphonsus to prayerfully consider the path his life should take.

Alphonsus decided that his vocation was to the religious life and approached the Society of Jesus (The Jesuits). He was rejected for the priesthood because of his lack of education. A deeply prayerful man, Alphonsus knew God was calling him, so he persevered. He approached one Jesuit house after another until he was accepted as a lay brother and given the job as porter at a Jesuit College in Majorca, Spain. He kept this position for forty-five years.

As a porter, it became Alphonsus' job to greet all visitors and find the person they sought at a very large monastery. He took messages for residents and visitors and was responsible for giving alms to the poor from the monastery. He was gracious as he worked, never complaining about even the most menial task entrusted to him. He treated every person who came to the door the same, whether that person was a bishop or a beggar. Soon people came to

him for advice and spiritual direction. Alphonsus always pointed them to the Blessed Mother, to whom he had a great devotion.

Alphonsus believed not in the popular idea that God will never give a person more than they can handle, but that God will never give a person more than they can handle *with prayer*.

Alphonsus' legacy is that it is not how grand the job is that we do that counts, but how much love with which we do it. This saint seems to embody Psalm 84:11—*Better one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere. Better the threshold of the house of my God than a home in the tents of the wicked.*

The feast day of Saint Alphonsus Rodriguez is October 30th.

1. **Pray:** *Saint Alphonsus Rodriguez, you knew many tragedies and sufferings in your life. Instead of turning to bitterness and despair, you turned to God and renewed prayer. Help us to live, as you did, with humility and love for others, knowing that every person has value in the eyes of God. Teach us to reach out in His name to all we meet on our daily journey to holiness. Amen*

Follow-up Questions: (add, omit, re-word as appropriate for your grade level)

1. Saint Alphonsus did not have an easy life and yet he always turned to God. Do you find it easier to turn to God to celebrate? How can you remind yourself to lean on God when times are hard?
2. Saint Alphonsus was known to be uneducated but sought out for his wisdom. What is the difference between knowledge from books and wisdom?
3. Even the smallest tasks were offerings to God in the eyes of Saint Alphonsus. How can you turn your daily tasks into prayerful offerings to God?

Follow-up Activities:

Younger students:

1. Act in a way that is like Saint Alphonsus—be humble, helpful, and prayerful. Draw a picture of your actions. Write how these actions made you feel.
2. Make a class altar for Saint Alphonsus for October. Include a container (a shoebox, a coffee can, etc.) to deposit slips of paper on which you have written your daily acts of humility, kindness, or generosity.

Older students:

1. Saint Alphonsus wrote, “What does it matter, my God, that I should endure for your love these small hardships? For you, Lord, endured so many great hardships for me.” Jesus did indeed suffer much for us and asks us to remember that every day, there are many who still suffer around the world. What could you do for the month of October to help them? Give up a treat and save the money? Sell hot cider after Mass at your parish? Host a car wash? Give the funds saved by your actions to the missions through MCA.
2. Because of his great devotion to the Blessed Mother, Saint Alphonsus would often recommend that people read and pray The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Go to this link: <http://bit.ly/1vMEVtc> to download a free .pdf version of The Little Office. Pray them as a class and discuss the different Psalms and their meanings.

All students:

1. Part of Saint Alphonsus Rodriguez' job as porter was to distribute alms to the needy. No one was turned away. During this Mission Month of October, help needy children in the world by having a fundraiser for Missionary Childhood. Pay \$1 to come to class dressed in the colors of the World Mission Rosary (green, red, white, blue and yellow). Pray for “your” continent that day and donate that money to the missions through MCA.
2. Saint Alphonsus was known for his kind words and his great spiritual counsel. Everyone loves to receive a kind note or an unexpected greeting from another person when they are sad or feeling unloved. Take time to make a few note cards. Give some to your pastor to be used for the sick and home bound of your parish when he, or Eucharistic Ministers, pay a Communion Call. Keep some of the cards so that when you notice someone who needs “a lift”, you can anonymously reach out and tell them that God loves them and so do you!