

Dear Mission Partners,

What a fast-track month! Can you believe we are coming to the last week of September! Autumn days are upon us! Next week the Universal Church honors St. Alphonsus on his birthday, September 27 - his feast day was back on August 1!

He is one of two patrons of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, because he was at the very beginning of the IHM story. In fact, I have heard it said that “without St. Alphonsus, there would be no Immaculata.”

Back in the time of letter writing, long before social media we use for communicating today, the IHM sisters had the beautiful custom of writing **JMJAT** at the top of their letters, above the salutation and greeting. **JMJAT** stands for Jesus, Mary, Joseph, Alphonsus and Teresa. These are two patron saints that the IHM community have celebrated throughout their history.

So, what is remarkable about St. Alphonsus Liguori? He was born in Naples, Italy, became a civil and a canon lawyer by age 16, practiced law for a while, but then studied for the priesthood, and used his God-given gifts of art, music, prose, and poetry, in his ministry as bishop and moral theologian – for the “care of the most abandoned poor.”

Others joined him and they formed the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, the Redemptorists, in 1732. Alphonsus’ desire - his outreach to the most abandoned poor, extended to IHM’s from Fr. Louis Florent Gillet, the Redemptorist who co-founded the IHM’s in 1845 with Mother Theresa Maxis, IHM, who shared this desire.

Love was at the heart of his spirituality, and the Immaculata Community inherited the charism of love and a preferential option for the poor, a focal point in Catholic Social Teaching today! A charism, just like the mission, is a gift and is located within each member of the Immaculata community.

We at IU are challenged to find new ways to love and to creatively reach out to the poor.

- Take a moment to consider your most recent experience of extending such love, and imagine a new way to live this Immaculata expression of gospel outreach!
- Ask our Redemptorists, Father Royce, Brother Ken, or our IHM sisters at Immaculata to tell you more about why love is their charism, and “care of the most abandoned poor” is a priority in their ministries!
- Thank God for our ancestors in the faith who inspire us by their holy lives!

May God bless you as you continue to live out the mission you have received!

Sincerely, in the Immaculate Heart of Mary,
Sister Antoine Therese, IHM