

# *Alter Christus*

*“As an **alter Christus** (another Christ) the priest is in Christ, for Christ and with Christ... Because he belongs to Christ, the priest is radically at the service of all people: he is the minister of their salvation” (Pope Benedict XVI)*

Monthly bulletin dedicated to all the Priests of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

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## *On the Advantages of the Holy Missions*

*By Saint Alphonsus Liguori*

[From the Book *The Complete Works, Volume XV, Preaching*]

See the following pages

## A Letter

ON THE ADVANTAGES OF THE HOLY MISSIONS, TO A BISHOP  
RECENTLY APPOINTED, BY WHOM THE SAINT HAD BEEN  
CONSULTED ON THE SUBJECT.\*

I HAVE received your lordship's most esteemed letter, in which I see your zeal for procuring missions for all the villages of your diocese, and in which your lordship states several objections which have been made against the advantages of the missions. In obedience to your lordship's commands I shall detail at full length my views on the matter, and shall answer all the groundless objections which have been put forward against the holy missions.

It is certain, my lord, that the conversion of sinners is the greatest benefit that God can bestow upon man. St. Thomas<sup>1</sup> says that the gift of grace by which God justifies the sinner is a greater favor than the beatitude of glory. But the conversion of sinners is precisely the end of the missions; for, by the instructions and sermons of the missions, they are convinced of the malice of sin, of the importance of salvation, and of the goodness of God, and thus their hearts are changed, the bonds of vicious habits are broken, and they begin to live like Christians.

In the old as well as in the new law the Lord ordained that the world should be saved by means of the missions. The faith, according to St. Paul, has been

<sup>1</sup> I. 2, q. 113, a. 9.

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\* This letter was printed in connection with *Sermons for Sundays*, which appeared in 1771 (*Villocourt*, tome vi, pages 304 et 472).—ED.

propagated by preaching; but preaching would have been ineffectual if God had not sent the preachers. *How, says the Apostle, shall they believe him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach unless they be sent?*<sup>1</sup> Hence, according to St. Gregory, the missions began at the commencement of the world: for God has never at any time neglected to send workmen to cultivate his vineyard.<sup>2</sup> In the Old Testament he sent the prophets to preach the law, and in the New he has sent his own Son to teach us the new law of grace, which is the perfection and accomplishment of the old law. *God who in times past spoke to the fathers by the prophets, last of all in these days hath spoken to us by his Son.*<sup>3</sup>

But because Jesus Christ was sent to preach only in Judea, he appointed the apostles that, after his death, they might preach the Gospel to all nations.<sup>4</sup> By the preaching of the apostles the Gospel began, as we learn from St. Paul, to fructify throughout the world.<sup>5</sup> The apostles sent their disciples to propagate the faith in the other nations, which they themselves had not been able to reach. And in after years, as we know from ecclesiastical history, holy workmen were sent by the Sovereign Pontiff and by other bishops to preach the Gospel in other kingdoms. In the fourth century St. Ireneus was sent to France. In the fifth, St. Palladius was sent to Scotland, and St. Patrick to Ireland. In the sixth, St. Gregory sent St. Augustine to England.

<sup>1</sup> "Quomodo credent ei quem non audierunt? Quomodo autem audient, sine prædicante? Quomodo vero prædicabunt, nisi mittantur?"—*Rom.* x. 14.

<sup>2</sup> "Ad erudiendam ergo dominus plebem suam, quasi ad excolendam vineam, nullo tempore destitit operarios mittere."—*In Evang.* hom. 19.

<sup>3</sup> "Novissime, diebus istis, locutus est nobis in Filio."—*Heb.* i. 2.

<sup>4</sup> "Euntes in mundum universum prædicate evangelium omni creaturæ."—*Mark,* xvi. 15.

<sup>5</sup> "In universo mundo est, et fructificat, et crescit."—*Col.* i. 6.



In the seventh, St. Eligius was sent to Flanders, St. Kilian to Franconia, Sts. Swidbert and Willibrord to Holland. In the eighth century Gregory the Second sent St. Boniface to Germany, St. Wulfran to Friesland, and St. Hubert to Brabant. In the ninth, St. Ascanius was sent to Denmark and Sweden, and St. Methodius to Bohemia, Moravia, and Bulgaria. In the tenth, St. Maynard was sent to Livonia, and St. Ottone to Pomerania. In the thirteenth century the Pope sent Dominicans and Franciscans to Greece, Armenia, Ethiopia, Tartary, and Norway. These facts have been taken from a work entitled *Historical Notices of the Church*.

Finally, we know that in later times immense numbers have been converted from paganism in the East Indies and Japan by St. Francis Xavier, and in the West Indies by St. Louis Bertrand. I abstain from mentioning the many provinces of infidels and heretics which were converted by missionaries. St. Francis de Sales was sent to the province of Chablais, and converted seventy-two thousand heretics. We also know that St. Vincent de Paul instituted a Congregation of priests, which was approved by the Holy See. The priests of this Congregation are called "The Fathers of the Mission," because their lives are spent in giving missions in all places to which they are invited.

In a word, wherever the faith has been planted or a reformation of morals introduced, all has been effected by means of the missions; and when the scourges of heaven—earthquakes, wars, famine, and pestilence—have failed to convert the people, when the civil laws with all their penalties have not succeeded in preventing murders, thefts, adulteries, and blasphemies, the missions have been found effectual; hence, the learned Con-  
tenson of the Order of St. Dominic says that by the missions alone souls obtain eternal life.<sup>1</sup> Hence, when

<sup>1</sup> "Per solas missiones impletur prædestinatio, quæ est transmissio creaturæ rationalis in vitam æternam."—*Theol.* l. 3, d. 6, c. 2, sp. 2.



a mission is to be given in any place, we can clearly perceive the efforts of hell to prevent it. For there is always some dissolute person who does all in his power to prevent the mission, because he knows that it will be an effectual obstacle to the execution of his wicked designs. But if in cities the missions are most useful, they are necessary in the villages and small towns as well for the instruction of the people as to give them an opportunity of making a good confession. First, in the small towns the missions are necessary for the instruction of the people. It is true, in all or in almost Catholic countries, sermons are preached to the people during the Lent. But the people derive far greater fruit from the sermons of the missionaries than from the Lenten discourses. For the preachers for Lent ordinarily preach in a high and flowery style, or at least in a manner not adapted to the capacity of the poor. They have their sermons committed to memory, and cannot change them, whether their audience consists of the learned or ignorant. When the preachers of the villages came to ask the blessing of Cardinal Pignatelli, Archbishop of Naples, his Eminence recommended them to address the people in a simple and popular style. For, said his Eminence, the greater part of the people being illiterate, they derive no fruit from the sermons unless the language be accommodated to their capacity. He then added, Perhaps you will tell me that the prescription is already written. I then answer, Oh, what a pity for the patients!

The remarks of this holy prelate were most just; for, what benefit can a sick man derive from remedies which have been prescribed without a knowledge of his disease?

Hence, when the poor people of the country places are asked what fruit they have received from the sermon, they answer that they could not understand it

because the preacher spoke Latin. It is not true that these preachers always speak Latin, but their language is so little adapted to the weak understanding of the ignorant that to them it is as unintelligible as if it were Latin. I assert, and in this assertion I believe I am not rash, that it would be sometimes better for the ignorant to be absent from these sermons. For after listening for an hour to a sermon, in the hope of deriving from it spiritual profit, they find that their time has been lost, and thus they conceive a dislike for the word of God, and become worse than they were before. Hence it is that after the sermons of Lent we see the same bad practices, the same animosities, and hear the same blasphemies and the same obscenities. The greatest misery of the poor in the country is, as Contenson says, that there is no one to break to them the word of God; and therefore, he says, woe to the bishops, woe to the negligent priest!<sup>1</sup>

But, it will be asked, are there not over the poor in the villages pastors who preach every Sunday? Yes, there are pastors who preach; but we must consider that all pastors do not, or cannot break the bread of the divine word to the illiterate in the manner prescribed by the Council of Trent. "They shall feed the people committed to them with wholesome words, according to their own capacity, and that of their people, by teaching them the things which it is necessary for all to know unto salvation, and by announcing to them, with briefness and plainness of discourse, the vices which they must avoid, and the virtues which they must follow after."<sup>2</sup> Hence it often happens that the people draw

<sup>1</sup> "Tot parvuli in oppidulis petunt panem et non est qui frangat eis. Væ, væ prælatis dormientibus, væ presbyteris otiosis!"—*Loco cit.*

<sup>2</sup> "Plebes sibi commissas, pro earum capacitate, pascant salutaribus verbis, docendo necessaria ad salutem annunciandoque cum brevitate et facilitate sermonis vitia quæ eas declinare, et virtutes, quas sectari oporteat."—*Sess. 5, c. 2, de Ref.*



but little fruit from the sermon of the pastor, either because he has but little talent for preaching, or because his style is too high or his discourse too long. Besides, many of those who stand in the greatest need of instruction do not go to the sermon of the parish priest. Moreover, Jesus Christ tells us that *No prophet is accepted in his own country.*<sup>1</sup> And when the people always hear the same voice, the sermon makes but little impression upon them.

But the sermons of the missionaries who devote their lives to the missions are well arranged, and are all adapted to the capacity of the ignorant as well as of the learned. In their sermons, as well as in their instructions, the word of God is broken. Hence, in the mission the poor are made to understand the mysteries of faith and the precepts of the Decalogue, the manner of receiving the sacraments with fruit, and the means of persevering in the grace of God: they are inflamed with fervor, and are excited to correspond with the divine love, and to attend to the affair of salvation. Hence we see such a concourse of the people at the missions, where they hear strange voices and simple and popular discourses. Besides, in the missions, the eternal truths which are best calculated to move the heart, such as the importance of salvation, the malice of sin, death, judgment, hell, eternity, etc., are proposed in a connected manner, so that it would be a greater wonder that a dissolute sinner should persevere in his wickedness, than that he should be converted. Hence, in the missions, many sinners give up their evil habits, remove proximate occasions of sin, restore ill-gotten goods, and repair injuries. Many radically extirpate all sentiments of hatred, and forgive their enemies from their hearts; and many who had not approached the sacraments for

<sup>1</sup> "Nemo propheta acceptus est in patria sua."—*Luke*, iv. 24.



many years, or who received them unworthily, make good confessions during the missions.

It has been said that, during the ten or fifteen days which the mission lasts, the missionaries have given absolution to many relapsing sinners, who would require a trial of many months before they could be safely absolved. Would to God that all confessions were made with the same dispositions with which they are made in the missions. Oh, how small should be the number of damned souls! Surely length of time is not the only means of ascertaining the dispositions of a penitent; it may be a very fallacious means. How many are there who, in order to receive absolution during the time of the paschal precept, abstain for a month and more from the habits of sin, who interrupt their evil practices, and relapse immediately after? I therefore am of opinion that the disposition of a penitent may be better known from the deep impression made by the sermons, from the compunction of heart which he manifests, from the resolution which he makes, and from the means which he adopts in order to avoid sin, than from length of time. St. Cyprian says that charity is perfected, not so much by length of time, as by the efficacy of grace. And St. Thomas says that God sometimes infuses so much compunction into the hearts of sinners that they instantly acquire perfect sanctity.<sup>1</sup> At a synod of the Bishops at Flanders, held at Brussels, the following decree was made: "The confessor, in the case of greater sinners, even when they are backsliders, should not ask that they should perform works of penance for a notable time, but he should with the holy Fathers be mindful that God in the conversion of the sinner considers not the measure of time but of sorrow."<sup>2</sup> Moreover,

<sup>1</sup> "Quandoque tanta commotione convertit (Deus) cor hominis, ut subito perfecte consequatur sanitatem spiritualem."—P. 3, q. 86, c. 5.

<sup>2</sup> "Confessarius a quibusvis peccatoribus gravioribus etiam recidivis.

since the matter of the sacrament of penance is moral and not physical, it is sufficient for the confessor to have a moral certainty which (as the author of the Instructor of Young Confessors says) is nothing else than a prudent probable judgment, not opposed by a prudent doubt of the dispositions of the penitent. Those who have assisted in giving missions, and who are accustomed to hear confessions, know well the difference between the confessions made on other occasions and the confessions made during the missions. They are fully convinced that in the missions penitents confess their sins with true sorrow, and with a firm purpose of amendment.

The reparation of so many sacrilegious confessions in which sins are concealed through shame, particularly by women, should of itself be sufficient to render the missions very desirable. This great evil of bad confessions is more common in small villages in which there are but few confessors, who are acquainted with all the inhabitants. Penitents are ashamed to confess their sins to confessors whom they meet every day, and thus through shame they continue to make sacrilegious confessions during their whole lives. Many, through this accursed shame, conceal their sins even at the hour of death, and thus sacrilegiously receive the last sacraments. Hence, the reparation of so many bad confessions is one of the greatest advantages of the missions. The people, knowing that the missionaries are strangers who will remain only for a few days, and whom they shall never see again, are easily induced, by the terrors of the divine judgments proposed in the sermons of the mission, to confess the sins which they had before concealed.

Hence I say that in every village the mission should

*stata lege, non exigit ut per notabile tempus præviae exercuerint opera pœnitentiæ; sed cum sanctis Patribus expendat Deum, in conversione peccatoris, non tam considerari mensuram temporis quam doloris."*



continue as long as will be necessary for the missionaries to hear the confessions of all the inhabitants; otherwise, many persons will not be able to make their confession to the Fathers, and thus their consciences will be perplexed and troubled. For, by the sermons, scruples are excited; but by the sermons alone, a person addicted to bad habits, to unjust contracts, or inveterate hatred is not sufficiently taught what he must do in order to tranquillize his conscience. But in confession everything is adjusted, and the penitent is instructed how to make restitution for injuries done to others in their property or character, how to remove the occasions of his sins, and how to pardon injuries. But if the doubts and scruples excited by the sermons be not removed in the confessional, many persons will be more perplexed and troubled in mind than they were before the mission began. And if a person whose past confessions were sacrilegious cannot confess to the missionaries, he will, being obliged to make his confession to the priests of the village, continue, as before, to conceal his sins. Where the mission is so short that all the inhabitants of the place have not time to make their confession to the missionaries, it will do more injury than service to many souls. For, some persons whose ignorance rendered the omission of certain sins in confession excusable, being instructed in their obligation, will be found to confess these sins, but will not have courage to disclose these to the confessor of the place: thus, they will commit sacrileges and be lost.

Finally, all the world knows the immense good which has been and is daily done by the missions. A description of the innumerable conversions of sinners, produced by means of the missions, would be too long for this letter; but I shall mention a few.

Speaking of the missions of Father Segneri the younger, the celebrated Muratori says that the entire



people gave up their employments to attend his sermons. He says that hatred for their sins and compunction of heart were plainly depicted in the countenances of all. Human respect and human feelings were trodden under foot, the most obdurate sinners were converted, and the confessors were obliged to hear confessions not only by day but by night. He adds that after the mission the whole town appeared to be changed: scandals were removed, abuses corrected, inveterate and obstinate animosities ceased, and blasphemies, imprecations, and obscenities were no longer heard. A similar description has been published of the fruits of the missions of Father Joseph Carabantes, a Capuchin; but in one city the people were so deeply penetrated with compunction that almost all of them went through the streets in the garments of penance, scourging themselves, and with tears asking of God the pardon of their sins.

Speaking of the missions given by the venerable priests of the congregation of St. Vincent de Paul, the author of his life says that, during a mission in the diocese of Palestrina in 1657, a young man whose arm had been cut off by an enemy, having met his enemy in a public street after the sermon, cast himself at his feet, asked pardon for the hatred he had borne him, and, rising up, embraced him with so much affection that all who were present wept through joy, and many, moved by his example, pardoned all the injuries that they had received from their enemies. In the same diocese there were two widows who had been earnestly entreated but constantly refused to pardon certain persons who had killed their husbands. During the mission they were perfectly reconciled with the murderers, in spite of the remonstrance of a certain person who endeavored to persuade them to the contrary, saying that the murders were but recent, and that the blood of their husbands was still warm. The following fact is still more won-

derful: In a certain town, which shall be nameless,\* vindictiveness prevailed to such an extent that parents taught their children how to take revenge for every offence, however small; this vice was so deeply rooted that it appeared impossible to persuade the people to pardon injuries. The people came to the exercises of the mission with sword and musket, and many with other weapons. For some time the sermons did not produce a single reconciliation; but on a certain day, the preacher, through a divine inspiration, presented the crucifix to the audience, saying: Now let every one who bears malice to his enemies come and show that for the love of his Saviour he wishes to pardon them: let him embrace them in Jesus Christ. After these words a parish priest whose nephew had been lately killed came up to the preacher and kissed the crucifix, and, calling the murderer, who was present, embraced him cordially. By this example and by the words of the preacher the people were so much moved that for an hour and a half they were employed in the church in making peace with their enemies and embracing those whom they had before hated. The hour being late, they continued to do the same on the following day, so that parents pardoned the murder of their children, wives of their husbands, and children of their fathers and brothers. These reconciliations were made with so many tears and so much consolation that the inhabitants long continued to bless God for the signal favor bestowed on the town. It is also related that many notorious robbers and assassins, being moved by the sermon, or by what they heard from others of it, gave up their arms

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\* In the Life of the saint by Abelly, l. 4, ch. 5, this place is called Niolo, situated in the island of Corsica, where a mission was given in 1652. This Life presents many other very interesting details about the good done in the missions given by the children of St. Vincent de Paul.  
—ED.



and began to lead a Christian life. Nearly forty of these public malefactors were converted in a single mission.

We read in his life of the stupendous effects produced by the missions of Father Leonard of Port Maurice, of the reformed Franciscans. In a village of Corsica called Mariana murders were so frequently committed through revenge that entire families were extinguished; such was the fruit of a mission given by Father Leonard that at the end of it there was not a single individual in the town who had not made peace with his enemies. In another place, called Casaccone, there was a family who obstinately refused to be reconciled with certain persons who had offended them. But when, at the close of the mission, the preacher declared that he did not intend to bless those who retained sentiments of hatred in their hearts, all the members of that family came forward, and with many tears made peace with their opponents. During the mission in this place, a young man came from a distance, for the purpose of killing an enemy, whom he expected to find at the exercises of the missions; but by hearing the sermon he was converted, laid aside his hatred and made a general confession. In a town called Castel d'Acqua, there was a great number of opposite factions: during the mission they came one day, armed, to the church. Great slaughter was apprehended; but by the sermon their hearts were filled with compunction: they went of their own accord to the preacher, and a common peace was established. In another place there were two parties who had been at variance for twenty years; in these contentions many persons were killed. Through the obstinacy of their chief, whose name was Lupo, one of the parties at the beginning of the mission refused to make peace; but at the end of the mission, seeing that his opponents were reconciled with God, and that he was still the enemy of



God, Lupo was struck with remorse, and offered to make peace: thus the two parties were reconciled. In Livorno great preparations were made for the amusement of the carnival; but as soon as the mission began, the masks and dances and, because no person would go to the theatres, even the public comedies were given up. These are ordinary, not extraordinary, fruits of all missions: I therefore abstain from saying more on this subject.

Let us now come to the objections that are made against the utility of the missions. It is said in the first place that the fruit of the missions is only temporary, that, though it appears great, it lasts but a short time, and that the wicked become worse than they were before. I answer, would to God that all who are converted would persevere! It is one of the miseries of human nature that many who recover the grace of God lose it again by sin. But though it should be admitted that the fruits of the missions are not permanent, it is at least certain that, during the mission, bad practices are given up, scandals are removed, blasphemies cease, a great deal of ill-gotten property is restored, and many bad confessions are repaired. But it is not true that, after the missions, all sinners become worse than they were before; many persevere in the grace of God, and others, if they relapse, abstain for many months from mortal sin. Moreover, by listening to the sermons of the missions, the people acquire a more perfect knowledge of God and of the importance of salvation, and a greater horror of sin; and if they relapse into sin, they endeavor to rise again at the time of the Paschal Communion. I hold for certain that, if among all those who have attended the sermons any one die within a year after the missions, he will scarcely be lost. The fruits of the mission are always visible at least for a year or two; and if they do not last longer, it is because the

priests of the place do not labor to preserve and maintain them by assembling the people to meditation and to the visitation of the Blessed Sacrament, and, above all, by attending to the confessional. “*Væ*,” says the learned Contenson, “*prælati dormientibus, væ presbyteris otiosis.*” But when, after three or four years, the land becomes dry, it is necessary to refresh it by another mission.

The second objection against the missions is that the consciences of many are disturbed by scruples excited by the sermons. Oh what an objection! Then, rather than disturb their conscience, it is better to allow sinners to slumber in the lethargy of sin, and in an accursed peace which is the seal of damnation! The devil wishes that the false peace of sinners, which keeps them in a state of perdition, should not be disturbed! But it is the duty of a pastor to awaken those who sleep in sin, and to warn them of the danger of damnation to which they are exposed; and surely than the missions, there is no better means of arousing sinners to a sense of the perils by which they are beset.

Hence, bishops should take care that missions be given in every village, however small. Where there are many villages near one another, some missionaries select for the mission a place in the midst of these villages. The greatest sinners, who are consequently the most blind and the most careless of their salvation, do not go to the exercises of the mission unless they are performed in their own church. They remain at home under the pretext that the church in which the mission is given is too distant, or that the weather is bad, and thus they continue in their miserable state of perdition. I speak from experience; for we found that many places derive little or no profit from the missions, either because these missions were given in the midst of several villages or because they were too short. Hence, when the mission-



aries of our little Congregation go into any diocese, it is usual to give the mission in every village, however small, at least for eight days, and in populous towns for fifteen, twenty, or thirty days, until the confessions of all are heard.<sup>1</sup>

The third objection is that the exercises of the missions generally end at night, and are therefore a cause of much scandal. I answer that they who attend the exercises are struck with the terror of God's judgments; and should any one during that time be disposed to tempt others to sin, he could not expect to succeed: but even though some attempt should be made to draw others into sins, must the mission be given up? If, to avoid all danger of evil, it were necessary to abstain from what is good and profitable, we should prohibit festivals of the saints, processions, and pilgrimages to holy places, because in these things there is always some disorder; we should prohibit confession, Communion, and hearing Mass, because even in these there are sometimes scandals and sacrileges. But we know that the Church not only permits but even approves and commands these things.

But it is said that from preaching at night many sins arise: and will there be no sins if the missions be given up? Ah, if the missions be given up, bad habits, quarrels, blasphemies, and all scandals will continue. But at least, during the mission, thousands of sins are avoided. But you will ask why are the sermons preached at night? I answer that, where the people attend by day, the sermons should be preached during the day and not at night; but, where they cannot attend by day, what can be done? It is certain that if, in the country places, the poor laboring classes, who form almost the entire audience, do not attend the sermons, the mission will be lost; but however strongly they may be exhorted to attend

<sup>1</sup> See treatise on the EXERCISES OF THE MISSIONS, ch. x.



at an early hour, these poor people cannot come till after the work of the day. Masters and employers are recommended to allow their servants and workmen to give up their work at an early hour during the days of the mission; but these employers look to their own interest and pay but little attention to such recommendations. The workmen, unless they complete the day's work, are not paid. Without their wages they are not able to provide food for themselves or their families: hence in the villages the poor cannot attend till about sunset; and if they do not attend, I say the mission is lost.<sup>1</sup>

The fourth objection is that some imprudent missionaries preach from the pulpit against the sins which they hear in the confessional, and excite in the people a hatred for confession. This objection has been made by some wicked persons who hate the missions, and is utterly destitute of foundation. The first thing the missionaries do after their arrival at the place of the mission, is to inform themselves of the prevailing sins and abuses of the place, and these they attack in their sermons. But they are careful never to mention in the pulpit any circumstance which could in the most remote manner reveal any sin heard in confession. But of what are they to speak in the pulpit? Is it of ecstasies, raptures, visions, or of revelations? No, they must preach against the vices which are most common, and which are ordinarily committed in all places, such as impurity, blasphemies, hatred, theft, and the like.

Finally, it is said that the missions, being repeated every three years, are too frequent, and therefore produce little or no impression on the minds of the people. I admit that, between two successive missions in the same place, there should be a considerable interval of time; but an interval of three years is quite sufficient. For,

<sup>1</sup> See EXERCISES OF THE MISSIONS, ch. vii. art. 8, n. 4.

ordinarily speaking, in that space of time many forget the sermons of the missions, many relapse into sin, and very many fall into tepidity. A new mission will renew the fervor of the tepid, and will restore God's grace to those who have relapsed. But it is not true that repeated missions do not produce much fruit. For although in the second mission the people do not manifest so much compunction as in the first, the fruit is notwithstanding very great. For, as I have already said, many who have returned to their former bad habits rise again from sin, many who became tepid begin again to serve God with fervor, and many are more firmly established in the practice of virtue. Hence, to renew the fervor and resolution of the people, the missionaries of our little Congregation usually return after some months to the place in which they have given missions. And we have learned by experience the great advantages which flow from these renewals.

I have said enough; I only entreat your Lordship to continue with your wonted zeal to procure every three years a mission for every village in your diocese. Do not attend to the objections of those who speak against the missions through interested motives or through ignorance of the great advantages of the missions. I also pray you to oblige the pastors and priests of the villages to continue the exercises recommended to them by the missionaries, such as common mental prayer in the church, visit to the most holy sacrament, familiar sermons every week, the Rosary, and other similar devotions. For it frequently happens that, through the neglect of the priests of the place, the greater part of the fruit produced by the mission is lost. I recommend myself to your prayers and remain,

Your very devoted and obedient servant,

ALPHONSUS, MARIA,

*Bishop of St. Agatha, etc.*