

Homily based on the readings from June 21, 2025 (2 Corinthians 12.1-10; Matthew 6.24-34)

As you may have noticed, today is the Memorial of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga. As with many of the saints, it is instructive to consider the details of his biography. From a human perspective, Saint Aloysius seemingly started off with every advantage. Born into a noble family in Renaissance Italy, he received a world-class education in preparation for a life of power and prestige. Like many of the holy men and women who came before him, Aloysius wound up abandoning the privileges of his upbringing in order to dedicate his life fully to the service of Jesus Christ. Despite his parents' objections, he entered the Jesuit order at the age of 17 – with the aim of becoming a missionary. It turned out, though, that he would never have such an opportunity. In 1591, a horrific plague engulfed the city of Rome. Even though his superiors had forbidden him from serving in the hospitals, Aloysius persistently sought permission to care for the sick. His request was ultimately

approved, after which he soon contracted the plague himself and died within a matter of months – at the age of 23.

Judging by worldly standards, one might conclude that Saint Aloysius did not amount to much. Despite the incredible advantages he had been given, his demonstrable accomplishments were negligible. We all know, however, that a résumé can never determine the value of a person's life. Through his humble service and heartfelt devotion, Saint Aloysius touched more souls than *any* of the so-called learned and influential men of his era – most of whom have now been completely forgotten. In many ways, his story is reminiscent of Blessed Carlo Acutis – who is scheduled to be canonized on September 7 – a young man, living at the dawn of *this* century, who dedicated his life to proclaiming the glories of the Eucharist and who died of leukemia at the age of 15.

There is a letter that Saint Aloysius wrote his mother as he was lying on his deathbed – which is included in the Liturgy of the Hours every year

on this date. Every time I read it, I am awestruck by the clarity with which Saint Aloysius articulates the heart-wrenching beauty of the Christian faith. I will share just a few sentences:

The divine goodness, most honored lady, is a fathomless and shoreless ocean, and I confess that when I plunge my mind into thought of this it is carried away by the immensity and feels quite lost and bewildered there. In return for my short and feeble labors, God is calling me to eternal rest; his voice from heaven invites me to the infinite bliss I have sought so languidly, and promises me this reward for the tears I have so seldom shed.

Take care above all things, most honored lady, not to insult God's boundless loving kindness; you would certainly do this if you mourned as dead one living face to face with God, one whose prayers can bring you in your troubles more powerful aid than they ever could on earth. ...

I write all this with the one desire that you and all my family may consider my departure a joy and favor and that you especially may speed with a mother's blessing my passage across the waters till I reach the shore to which all hopes belong.

As Christians, we all know – at least on an intellectual level – that our true citizenship is in heaven. One of the marks of sainthood is actually living that way. We are truly blessed to have the examples of Aloysius Gonzaga, Carlo Acutis, and countless other saints throughout the ages who remind us that – regardless of whatever measures the *world* uses to define success – the only accomplishment that *truly* matters is resting eternally in the radiant embrace of our Risen Lord.