Douglas, Kenneth

The six Sundays...

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SIX SUNDAYS

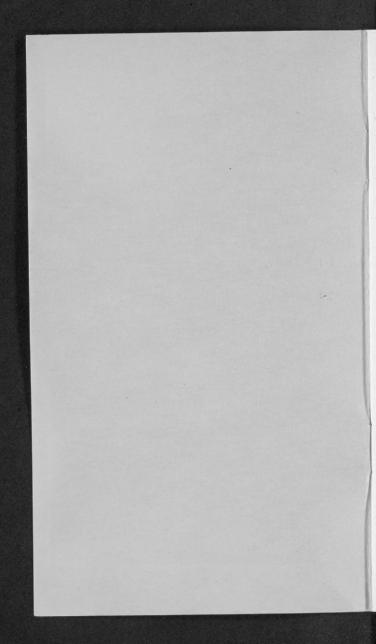
OF

SAINT ALOYSIUS GONZAGA



GRAIL PUBLICATIONS

ST. MEINRAD, INDIANA



Parish Saint Series No. 1

THE SIX SUNDAYS OF SAINT ALOYSIUS GONZAGA

COMPILED BY L. N. DOUGLAS

Price Fifteen Cents

GRAIL PUBLICATIONS

St. Meinrad, Indiana

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PART ONE

THE STORY OF SAINT ALOYSIUS GONZAGA

Donna Marta prayed for a son, and prayed, too, that he might one day serve God as a religious. And yet, she knew, a son would be heir to the title, the wealth, and the domain of his father, Don Ferrante Gonzaga, Prince Marquis of Castiglione, Prince of the Roman Empire. Let it be a boy; that was enough to ask of God. A life in religion was a futile aspiration.

A boy it would be, and a religious, too—such was God's will—but only after seventeen years of harsh and furious refusals had spent themselves, and Don Ferrante, exhausted and broken-hearted, told his son, "I will not stop you. Go where you wish, and I give you my blessing."

T is the ninth of March, in the year 1568, and there is little hope that either the baby or the mother will survive. Donna Marta prays through her pain that the boy might live, that she might live, that she would take him to Our Lady of Loretto if only He would hear her prayer. And so Aloysius was baptized before his mother's delivery was complete, and for an hour he lay still without a sign of life. But he did live, and his mother, too; and the next day Don Ferrante exultantly issued the official proclamation: Sing the Te Deum, ring the bells, and rejoice for my son and heir, Prince Aloysius of Gonzaga!

Five years later the troops pass in review before Don Ferrante whose stern expression softens an instant as he looks down at the boy at his side. Tomorrow he will hide the affectionate pride as he reproves Aloysius with mock gravity. Even a prince, if only five years old, has no right to filch gunpowder, and set off a field piece, and rouse the whole countryside in alarm!

Three years later, the Marquis returns from an expedition to find a serious boy of rare intelligence, quiet demeanor, and unmistakable piety. No taste for battle? Very well, we'll make a great statesman out of him!

But the leaven of grace was already at work. He was only seven, but he prayed daily the little prayers his mother taught him, and the seven Penitential Psalms, and the Little Office of Our Lady. The dazzling magnificence of the court life of sixteenth century Italy revolted him. The vicious scheming and smirking impurities only sharpened his awareness of the appalling effrontery and wickedness of evil in the sight of God.

The clarity of his vision was precocious if not miraculous in a child of seven. And the spirit of penance and humility were more than the passing sentimentalism of a sensitive and gifted child. He already had thought of the religious life, though it was as yet little more than an intimation confided to his mother.

Soon his father took him and his brother Rodolfo to Florence, the realm of the Medicis, and there the two boys, with Del Turco their tutor, stayed for two years in a residence offered them by the Grand Duke D'Medici. Don Ferrante was leaving no stone unturned to give his son the training he would need as Marquis and statesman—and God quietly took the identical events and formed a saint.

In Florence, Aloysius drew further away from the world and the avarice and ambition that motivated it, a society of "fraud, dagger, and hideous lusts," of castles and court life vain and ornate, the common people, the "vassals," plague-ridden and destitute.

He studied, he read, and he prayed; though, boy-like, he played with tops and cross-bows. He couldn't avoid all parties nor could he easily or safely go about without the ever-present retinue of servants, but he did his best to stay uncontaminated without antagonizing his hosts and the friends of his father. When he prayed he not only said but thought his prayers, and slowly won the insight that you're either with Christ or against Him. For Aloysius it was all or none; he would hold nothing back. And as he knelt before the image of the Virgin Mary, the beautiful Madonna of the Servite church at Florence, he promised her forever purity and chastity of body and soul

And if the singular grace never to feel the surge of temptation against purity is itself a temptation to others to minimize the courage of Aloysius, one can only recall that all who are stung by impure thoughts and desires can

constantly draw from the same Source the grace which "is sufficient for thee."

From Florence to Mantua for more education, but where, fortunately, Aloysius was able to live with his kinsman; and the chapel in the palace was a haven of welcome retreat. Never robust, he took sick and was put on a strict diet, though he had regularly fasted for several years previous.

Within a few months he was home again at Castiglione with his beloved mother. Already he had thought of the priesthood and of handing over his heritage to Rodolfo. Now he prayed more than ever for hours at a time. He read books not merely "pious" but instructive and intellectual. He read of the foreign missions, and thought of being a missionary—and gave practical impetus to his dreams by immediately beginning to teach religion to the young boys of the castle town.

And then the great Cardinal, St. Charles Borromeo came to Castiglione, and Aloysius was fascinated and inspired by the warmth, the humility, and the brilliance of the holy man. And the Cardinal was delighted with Aloysius, and after a brief and scarcely needed examination gave with his own hand to Aloysius his

First Holy Communion. From that day on, Christ in the Eucharist was the center of the young boy's life.

Don Ferrante was at Montferrato, another Gonzaga domain, and summoned his family to join him there. Here Aloysius read a great deal and prayed long and ardently before the crucifix. He practically haunted the nearby Capuchin and Barnabite monasteries-whose religious were quite convinced he would one day join them. This he never did, but it became clear that he could not merely abdicate and remain in an environment where he would be fawned on and patronized as a princeturned-priest. He must get away from the life they were trying to head him into and go, where?-that, as yet, he did not know. And easily he could have gotten off the track, strained too hard at sanctity and over-stepped grace; or succumbed to the subtle compromise to "work out his salvation" as prince and marquis.

That which saved him from false direction and tragic self-deception was the abandon with which he flung himself at God and begged Him "Direct me. Direct me for the best!"

In 1581, Don Ferrante attended the Empress of Austria on her visit to her brother Philip II, King of Spain, and took along with him Donna Marta, Aloysius, and Rodolfo. The two boys were made pages to the heir-apparent, the young Don Diego, Prince of Asturias, but Aloysius along with-or in spite of -the duties of page, followed his chosen regimen of prayer, asceticism, and intensive reading. His exquisite tact and genuine friendliness seem always to have disarmed the resentment that others might have felt at his quiet reserve. Yet his surprising humility and unwavering purity were a devastating contrast -and rebuke-to the jeweled and the titled. His confessor at the Jesuit College at Madrid was struck by Aloysius' maturity of judgment, abhorrence of idleness, and his refusal to say a word against others.

Here in Madrid, at long last, the decision to enter religion was taking a definite direction. He prayed to the Blessed Virgin, talked with his confessor, and made his decision: to ask to be received into the Society of Jesus. He told his mother, and asked her to approach his father—who flew into a violent, thunderous rage! He sent for Aloysius, threatened to have him stripped and flogged, and accused him of

only using the threat of a vocation to blackmail him into abandoning his disastrous gambling.

But with providential coincidence, the Father General of the Franciscan Order, a Gonzaga himself, was at that moment in Madrid. He, too, had left a world that confined itself to family, wealth, and nauseous indulgence. And it was he who finally convinced Don Ferrante of Aloysius' sincerity and determination, though as later events proved he did not win unequivocal consent. Don Ferrante was not one to take meekly the dashing of all. his hopes; for he really did love his son, knew his competence; and knew, too, that the Gonzaga name and possessions would probably slip like sand through the fingers of the weak and incompetent Rodolfo (which, in fact, they ultimately did, and most tragically). Why did Aloysius have to pick the Jesuits! The secular priesthood, any Order, but that: they aren't even permitted to accept the title Monsignor-and he could be a Bishop, a Cardinal, and still hold and enrich the Gonzaga name and estates. (And though the estates did vanish, the name of Gonzaga still endures, in a way Don Ferrante could hardly have anticipated.)

Then Don Diego suddenly died, and Aloysius felt free to carry out his decision. His father balked, and Aloysius finally, out of deference, agreed to wait until they had returned to Castiglione, and then-so Don Ferrante said-he could do as he wished. But back at Castiglione postponements were deftly planned. Aloysius and Rodolfo were sent to make the rounds of all the titled relatives, "on official business." All the statesmen, nobility, and prelates Don Ferrante could find tested, probed and pressured Aloysius to make "sure, absolutely sure" of his vocation, or at least to choose a religious life that would permit the acceptance of ecclesiastical dignities, and so augment the "illustrious name of Gonzaga." The Duke of Mantua sent Bishops to "prove" that it was Aloysius' duty to embrace a way of life that would not demand the relative obscurity of the Jesuits.

And against all this unremitting harrassment Aloysius only braced himself more firmly. The intensity of his interior life was hardly apparent; he kept his poise, and kept his convictions. The spirit of penance that so characterized his spiritual life only deepened, and his trust in God became more unwavering. In final exasperation Don Ferrante sent for

him asked him point blank: "What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to be a Jesuit, my lord."

"Get out of my sight!"

And Aloysius took him literally and went to their country house and took up residence. Don Ferrante thereupon sent for him; ordered him to come back home, and to go to his rooms in the castle. And his curiosity getting the better of him, Don Ferrante peeked into the room—to see his son stripped and scourging himself before the crucifix. Shocked and shaken, he went back to his own rooms and had the youth sent to him. Aloysius begged once more for permission to enter the Jesuit novitiate; his father gave in and wrote to Rome.

But months of frustrating negotiations lay ahead; and even after the lengthy abdication papers were signed, Don Ferrante put off the departure of his son. He sent Aloysius on "extremely urgent" business trips, had a noted theologian "test" the vocation by an intensive examination—and then told Aloysius if he left home he'd no longer consider him his son!

Aloysius, determined to have it over with once and for all, came to his father and told him: "Do as you please with me. But if you resist this vocation, you resist God." He turned and left the room. Then it was that Don Ferrante broke, sent for him, and told him, "Go where you wish, and I give you my blessing," and to Claudius Acquaviva, Father General of the Jesuit Order, he wrote, "I am giving into Your Reverence's hands the most precious thing that I possess in all the world."

And so in Rome, on the 25th of November, 1585, Aloysius walked to his little cell in the Jesuit Novitiate, his "rest forever and ever—here I will dwell, for I have chosen it."

The young novice threw himself into the letter and the spirit of the Jesuit Rule. But life was not easy even if he had found his rest. Not only weakened in body—his health was always precarious—he was battered by the temptation to be proud of his choice; and he fought this cross as vigorously as he resisted the virulent opposite that assailed him: to be despondent at his unworthiness. He kept the rules with an intense devotion to detail, and sought the most mean and humble tasks around the house. The superiors were keenly alert to his intellectual brilliance, mature judgment, and undoubted holiness of life; even then marked him in the privacy of their own

counsel as a potential superior of surpassing excellence.

Friendly and likeable, he was genuinely liked by novice and professed, brother and priest. His preoccupation with the thought of God only made the more penetrating his insight into the needs of others, and attracted rather than repelled less gifted associates. Never, in spite of his austerity and sensitive revulsion against not merely sin but shallowness and frivolity was he the aloof "holy-holy" that, unfortunately, later portraits would seem to paint him. (Even Pope Pius XI in his Apostolic Letter of 1925 remarked on the injustice of some of Aloysius' later biographers.)

If Aloysius saw the weakness of others, the appalling hypocrisy of the times, the grievous need for renascence, he would condemn no one—he would begin with himself. He would chastise his body and pray all the harder; and even *not* do these things when his superiors forbade it, though the strain of resisting the call to prayer and penance was often the more wracking.

Soon he received word of the death of his father Don Ferrante, and Aloysius was brokenhearted. And if his father had been obdurate one can only try to understand his love and his pride in the context of his own life. And there is no little pathos in the picture of Don Ferrante dying alone in grief, in humility, but in peace.

Then for a few months Aloysius was sent to Naples for his health. On his return to Rome he took up studies at the Roman College. His poise and brilliance in lectures and debates was exceptional. He seldom took notes in class; just dictated the entire lecture even to mathematical formulae at the end of the day! Before classes, between and after them, he knelt in the chapel before the living Saviour. At night he'd share his notes and his books with others; and didn't always get them back. He helped the sick as often as they'd let him go out in the hospitals of Rome; and fought his own repugnance to tend the sickest, and dress the festering sores.

But he was still a prince of the Gonzagas in the eyes of too many. And there is something ludicrous and pathetic in the frequency of the visits of the dignitaries to Rome to hear the debates of a youth that only wanted to be forgotten and left alone. They praised him to his face; and if he reddened, they praised his modesty! Aloysius was humble, and remained so; but it was no easy task. Sometimes, half-

provoked, he would deliberately be scraping dirty dishes or swabbing floors when some haughty kinsman came around to see how he was doing.

Simple vows were taken in 1588, and the road to ordination seemed clear and unobstructed. And then in 1589 he was ordered by the Father General of the Order and by St. Robert Bellarmine to go back into the world to plead for peace and decency. For the Empress of Austria had written that northern Italy was in a turmoil over the skullduggery of Aloysius' brother, Rodolfo, who had succeeded Don Ferrante as Marquis of Castiglione. Dukes, marquises, and grand dukes were at one another's throats; and, moreover, Rodolfo's open consorting with a woman to whom he was apparently not married was scandalizing everyone. So with obedient resignation-if with natural reluctance-Aloysius rudely interrupted his life at Rome and set out for Mantua and Castiglione.

The trip was uneventful, but intolerably annoying to Aloysius. Everyone he met tried to fawn over him, addressed him as "most Illustrious," or fell all over themselves to favor the "prince." When he reached home the sincerity of the welcome dismayed him, but

touched him deeply. The people he might have at that instant been ruling revered him, and he was hard put to convince them that they must treat him not as a prince but as a servant, the humble religious he so desperately wanted to be—and actually was.

And if Aloysius came and saw, he likewise conquered. Within a few months he had established peace among angry nobles whose Latin temperament and fierce pride had resisted the pleas of royalty. Rodolfo agreed to make public the fact that he had been married all along to his consort, Elena, but had thought it unwise to do so before "for political reasons."

At Milan, where Aloysius had gone to await the assurance of final settlement of the sorry business, he had the first intimation of his approaching death. And from here on the story of his life is the sudden fulfillment of a soul confirmed in grace. He returned to Rome to find the Black Plague rampant and merciless. He begged to be allowed to tend the stricken, even the most horrible cases. With reluctance, his superiors gave their consent, for Aloysius was none too well himself—and the Jesuits themselves had hopes and plans for their brilliant and saintly disciple.

And so Aloysius nursed the sick, bathed their sores, and comforted the dying. And like Father Damien who years later one day stood before his parish and said "Brother lepers," the day came when Aloysius could say "Brother sufferers," for the plague had gotten him, and now it was only a matter of time.

He died in pain, the crucifix in his hands, the name of Jesus on his lips. Today his relics are in Rome—he is with God. And because he is with God, he is with you—patron, guardian, and loving friend. Pray to God for us all, Aloysius.

PART TWO THE SIX SUNDAYS

The First Sunday
BEHOLD THY MOTHER

Prayer:

Most holy Virgin Immaculate, my Mother Mary, / to thee who art the Mother of my Lord, the Queen of the Universe, / the advocate, the hope, the refuge of all sinners. / I who am the most miserable of all sinners, have recourse this day. / I venerate thee, great Queen, and I thank thee for the many graces thou hast bestowed upon me / even unto this day; / in particular for having delivered me from the hell which I have so often deserved by my sins. / I love thee, most dear Lady: and for the love I bear thee, / I promise to serve thee willingly forever and to do what I can to make thee loved by

others also. / I place in thee all my hopes for salvation; / accept me as thy servant and shelter me under thy mantle. / thou who art the Mother of mercv. / And since thou art so powerful with God, / deliver me from all temptations, or at least get me the strength to overcome them until death. / From thee I implore a true love for Jesus Christ. / Through thee I hope to die a holy death. / My dear Mother, by the love thou bearest to Almighty God, / I pray thee to assist me always, but most of all at the last moment of my life. / Forsake me not then, until thou shalt see me safe in heaven, / there to bless thee and sing of thy mercies through all eternity. / Such is my hope. Amen. (St. Aloysius Gonzaga)

Silent Meditation

For all the goodness that you seek, the Blessed Virgin is the model. For the suffering and the contradiction that harass us all, she is our refuge and our hope. Pray to her, trust in her, and follow her to the heart of Christ. Practice for the week

Pray each day the Holy Rosary and ask of her the meaning of each mystery in your own life.

The Second Sunday

HUMILITY

Prayer:

THE MAGNIFICAT

(The Canticle of Our Blessed Mother)

- 1. My soul doth magnify the Lord.
- 2. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.
- 3. Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid: for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
- 4. Because He that is mighty hath done great things to me: and holy is His name.
- 5. And His mercy is from generation unto generation: to them that fear Him.
- 6. He hath showed might in His arm: He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart.

He hath put down the mighty from their seat: and hath exalted the humble.

8. He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich He hath sent away empty.

9. He hath received Israel, His servant, being mindful of His mercy.

10. As He spoke unto our fathers: to Abraham and his seed for ever.

11. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

12. As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen.

Silent Meditation

Humility is the truth—about God, about ourselves; that's why it's so hard to attain. God authors our abilities; our weaknesses are our own. Only the humble know His mercy and only the humble are grateful.

Practice for the week

Pray each day the Magnificat; no more humble prayer exists. And accept each day—at least for a week—all the

crosses that come your way: "Be it done to me according to Thy word."

The Third Sunday

PENANCE

Prayer:

Exalt him before all the living, for he is our Lord and our God; he is our father for all eternity.

He scourges you for your sins, but he will again take pity and gather you from all the nations where you have been scattered.

If you return to him with all your heart and do what is right before him,

Then will he return to you and no longer hide his face from you.

So now look forward to what he will do for you, and give thanks to him with full voice;

Bless the Lord of justice, and exalt the King of ages.

(Tobias 13:4-7)

Silent Meditation

If you're genuinely sorry for being less than you could be, for doing some of the things you've done, you'll do penance—gladly. And if you love the Blessed Virgin you'll "pray very much and make sacrifices" for others.

Practice for the week

Omit just one act once a day of useless self-indulgence—and keep it to yourself.

The Fourth Sunday

PURITY

Prayer:

"I know and am confident in the Lord Jesus that nothing is of itself unclean; but to him who regards anything as unclean, to him it is unclean." And "if thy eye be sound, thy whole body will be full of light. But if thy eye be evil, thy whole body will be full of darkness."

(Romans 14:14; Matthew 6:22-23)

"Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8) Silent Meditation

Purity is not merely half-way between prudery and license; it's far above both for it is the wisdom to see in all things the goodness of He who created all things, and to treat them accordingly. It includes, by the way, a recognition of our perverse tendency to do otherwise!

Practice for the week

You can't be pure for long without help: make no compromise with impurity and daily ask the Blessed Mother and St. Aloysius for the help you need, the grace they will swiftly send you.

The Fifth Sunday

THE LOVE OF GOD

Prayer:

Love watches, and sleeping, slumbers not. When weary it is not tired; when frightened it is not disturbed. Love is swift, sincere, pious, strong, patient, faithful, and never seeks itself. Love is cautious, humble, sober, chaste, and keeps a guard over all the senses. Love is always devout and thankful to God, always trusting in Him, even when it does not taste the relish of God's sweetness, for there is no living in love without sorrow. He that loves must willingly embrace all that is hard and bitter for the sake of his beloved.

(The Imitation of Christ)

Silent Meditation

The love of God is the beginning, the middle, and the end of all that matters. Seek, and you shall find; learn of Him, for He is meek and humble of heart. For "when the evening of love comes, you will be judged on Love."

Practice for the week

If you cannot receive Him every day in Holy Communion, the Sacrament of Love—you can at least want to. And where your treasure is, there shall your heart be also.

The Sixth Sunday

LOVE OF NEIGHBOR

Prayer:

"In this is my Father glorified: that you bring forth very much fruit and become my disciples."

(John 15:8)

"By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another."

(John 13:35)

Silent Meditation

This is the hard saying that exposes our love of God; but if you see in others what they mean to Him rather than what they do to you, you'll try to love them, for it's the only way you can teach them to love Him.

Practice for the week

Read the letter of St. Paul to the Romans, Chapter 12, verses 6 to 21—and examine your conscience. St. Aloysius *lived* these verses; ask him to help you to live them, too.

LITANY OF SAINT ALOYSIUS

(For private use only)

Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us. Christ, hear
us.

Christ, graciously hear us.

God the Father of heaven, have mercy on us.

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, God the Holy Ghost,
Holy Trinity, one God,
Holy Mary, pray for us.
Saint Aloysius,
Lover of Purity,
Model of Penance,
Aloysius most meek.

Aloysius most humble, Aloysius most patient,

Help of the sick,

Devoted servant of Mary, Friend of Christ Crucified,

Lamb of God who takest away the sins of the world, spare us, O Lord.

Lamb of God who takest away the sins of the world, graciously hear us, O Lord.

Lamb of God who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

- V. The Lord does wonders for his faithful one.
- R. The Lord will hear me when I call upon him.

Let us pray

O God, the Giver of all heavenly gifts, who in the angelic youth, Aloysius, didst join wondrous innocence with equal penance: be entreated by his merits and his prayers, and grant unto us who have not followed him in his innocence the grace to imitate him in his penance. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Prayer from the Mass of St. Aloysius)

BENEDICTION OF THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT

O Salutaris Hostia Quae coeli pandis ostium: Bella premunt hostilia Da robur fer auxilium.

Uni trinoque Domino Sit sempiterna gloria Qui vitam sine termino Nobis donet in patria. Amen.

Most Holy Redeemer, inspire us with hope and confidence in the loving intercession of Thy faithful servant, Aloysius, that we may follow Thee on earth in purity of heart and glorify Thy name forever. Amen.

> Tantum ergo Sacramentum Veneremur cernui: Et antiquum documentum Novo cedat ritui Praestet fides supplementum Sensuum defectui.

> Genitori, genitoque Laus et jubilatio; Salus honor virtus quoque Sit et benedictio; Procedenti ab utroque Compar sit laudatio. Amen.

Priest:

Panem de coelo praestitisti eis. (Alleluia)

People:

Omne delectamentum in se habentem. (Alleluia)

Oremus

Deus, qui nobis sub Sacramento mirabili, passionis tuae memoriam reliquisti tribue, quaesumus, ita nos corporis et sanguinis tui sacra mysteria venerari, ut redemptionis tuae fructum in nobis jugiter sentiamus. Qui vivis et regnas in saecula saeculorum.

People: Amen.

(O God, who under this wonderful Sacrament hast left us a memorial of Thy passion: grant us, we beseech Thee, so to reverence the sacred mysteries of Thy Body and Thy Blood, that we may ever feel within ourselves the fruit of Thy redeeming work: Who livest and reignest world without end. Amen.)

THE DIVINE PRAISES

(Repeat aloud after the priest)

Blessed be God!

Blessed be His Holy Name!

Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man!

Blessed be the Name of Jesus!

Blessed be His Most Sacred Heart!

Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar!

Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most holy!

Blessed be her Holy and Immaculate Conception!

Blessed be her glorious Assumption! Blessed be the name of Mary, Virgin and Mother!

Blessed be Saint Joseph, her most chaste Spouse!

Blessed be God in His angels and in His saints!

LAUDATE DOMINUM

Laudate Dominum omnes gentes: Laudate eum omnes populi.

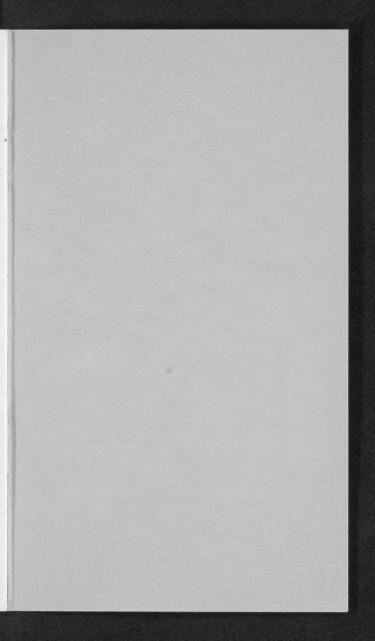
Quoniam confirmata est super nos misericordia ejus:

Et veritas Domini manet in aeternum.

Gloria Patri et Filio Et Spiritui Sancto

Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper

Et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.



For Review

THE SIX SUNDAYS OF ST. ALOYSIUS Compiled by L. N. Douglas Price 15¢

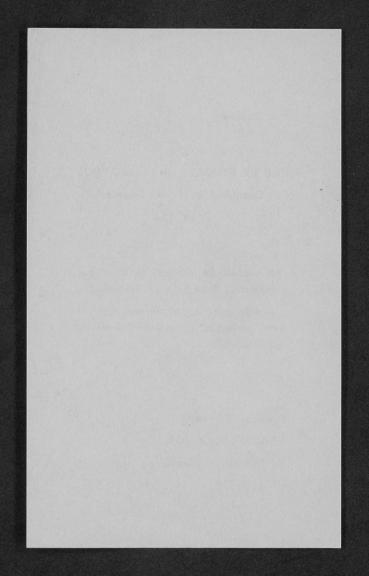
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"... and never cease from venerating him and invoking him, especially through those devout exercises, such as the pious practice of the Six Sundays, which long experience has demonstrated to be so fecund of many great fruits."

-Pope Pius XI