June 21st: Memorial of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, Religious

Gospel text (*Mt* 22,34-40): When the Pharisees heard how Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they came together. One of them, a teacher of the Law, tried to test him with this question, «Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the Law?». Jesus answered, «'You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind'. This is the first and the most important of the commandments. But after this there is another one very similar to it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'. The whole Law and the Prophets are founded on these two commandments».

«You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind»

Fr. Antoni CAROL i Hostench
(Sant Cugat del Vallès, Barcelona, Spain)

Today we celebrate Saint Aloysius Gonzaga (1568-1591), patron of Christian youth. Leaving behind all the perspectives offered by his family ancestry he gave himself to God when he was very young and gave his life with a reputation for holiness when he was just 23 years old.

Aloysius certainly died young (younger than Jesus Christ!). But what is the true "youth"? What does being young depend on? Being of young age or perhaps ...? Experience shows that there are young people "mummified" and, at the same time, older people full of vitality. In words of Pope Francis, "Youth is more than simply a period of time; it is a state of mind." An example: Saint John Paul II at the end of his life presented himself as "a young man of 84 years". He himself once stated that "the old ones are those without projects." And in fact, when this holy Pope died, he had a full work schedule for up to six months.

It is already seen that the calculation of the years is a superficial criterion to calculate the state of youth. Jesus Christ - "the eternally young" (according to Pope Francis) was born more than 2,000 years ago: would anyone dare to say that Jesus is very "old"? Seen from the supernatural perspective - the most decisive - and considered from the horizon of eternity - the most definitive - what does 70 years, or 80, or 2,000 mean? Nothing!

If Christ is risen, if "Jesus lives", then the scale of youth is another: love, that is, Jesus himself. Here is the "new scale": «That you love one another as I have loved you» (Jn 13:34).

Saint Aloysius was living charity when the Jesuits cared for the victims of an epidemic that affected Rome in 1591. He contracted the fever of that epidemic carrying patients behind his back and taking care of

them. But was his earthly existence really "short"? Perhaps not so short, since "our life on earth reaches full stature when it becomes an offering" (Pope Francis).