

A detailed sculpture of St. Anthony of Padua and the Christ Child. St. Anthony is depicted from the chest up, wearing a dark brown habit with a cowl. He has a serene expression, dark eyes, and a small, dark, curly-haired headpiece. He holds a large, dark book with red-leafed edges in his left hand. The Christ Child is seated on his lap, looking directly at the viewer. The child has curly brown hair and is wearing a light-colored, patterned tunic with a green collar and cuffs. The background is a plain, light yellow.

Father Thomas
de Saint Laurent

St. Anthony

OF PADUA

St. Anthony of Padua

NIHIL OBSTAT

Anastasio Olabarria

Chancellor

Februar 23, 2005

IMPRIMATUR

+ Ricardo Blázquez

Bishop of Bilbao

Februar 23, 2005

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St. Anthony of Padua

By

FATHER THOMAS DE SAINT LAURENT

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY FAUSTINE HILLARD



FR. RAYMOND DE THOMAS DE SAINT-LAURENT was born in Lyons on May 7, 1879 and died on November 11, 1949 in Uzès, France.

Ordained in 1909, he led a productive priestly life, quickly distinguishing himself as a preacher and prolific writer and carrying out prodigious apostolic activity.

Appointed to head the parish of Saint Perpetua in Nîmes one year after his ordination, he was named honorary Canon of the Cathedral of Nîmes in 1920 and became chaplain of the Carmel of Uzès five years later, serving in the last two capacities for more than twenty years.

A Doctor of Theology and Licentiate in Letters, Fr. Thomas de Saint-Laurent published over a dozen notable books on psychological themes. Prominent among these are *The Dominion of Oneself*, *On Timidity*, and *The Progressive and Complete Method of Psychological Learning*. The last, translated into English, German, Spanish, and Italian, is a best-seller.

His numerous pedagogical and spiritual works include *The Book of Confidence*, published in French, English, Portuguese, and Spanish, *The Virgin Mary, With Jesus Suffering*, and a collection titled *Souls of the Saints*.

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INTRODUCTION

Hardly did Saint Anthony's body lie buried in the Church of the Friars Minor in Padua when the faithful began to flock to his tomb. The pilgrims came from everywhere to venerate the remains of the extraordinary man who had inspired the crowd by his words and his miracles. They gathered around the glorious sepulcher with such respect that they removed their shoes when approaching it. Even the noblest of knights and the most well-known persons approached the remains of the man they considered a powerful protector in this humble fashion.

Candles burned unceasingly in the funerary chapel. A reputable mediaeval chronicler reports that some of the votive candles were decorated with delicate designs; others were so heavy that two pair of oxen were needed to haul them.

Anthony did not forsake those devoted to him. He healed the sick, and consoled the afflicted, multiplying signs and wonders. It is worthy

of note that in order to receive his favor, one had to have first received the sacraments. So great was the flow of penitents that there were not enough religious in the convent to hear all the confessions.

Moved by these manifestations of popular devotion, Pope Gregory IX solemnly canonized the servant of God on May 30, 1232 after thorough examination. Less than a full year had elapsed since the death of the new saint.

This initial fervor did not taper off. Devotion to Saint Anthony of Padua has spread to all of Christendom. Far from declining over time, it enjoyed renewed interest in the nineteenth century. In most churches, is found the statue of the great miracle worker with the Divine Child in his arms. Like their mediaeval predecessors, the faithful of our time implore his protection and burn candles in his honor. Numerous testimonies attest to his intercessory power.

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St. Anthony preaching to the fish. Painting on wood attributed to the Masters of Ferreirim, 16th Century (National Museum of Ancient Art, Lisbon)



Saint Anthony enjoys immense influence with God, for he reached a high level of perfection. Yet his life was short: he died at thirty-six, and spent most of his lifetime in obscurity. He devoted a mere nine years to preaching, yet his apostolate, made fruitful by extraordinary virtue and dazzling miracles, has borne rich fruit throughout history.

In these few pages, we would like to bring to life this privileged soul in whom strength is united to tenderness; a heroic and charming soul who found in the silence of contemplative prayer the source of his extraordinary eloquence, while embracing the glory of voluntary mortifications. May this, our undertaking, bear fruit! In helping our readers to better appreciate this great saint, we will have indescribable joy in making him better loved.

CHAPTER 1

The Hidden Life

The well-known miracle worker, whose portrait we will endeavor to sketch, was born in Lisbon in 1195, and christened Fernando. Later, after embracing Franciscan poverty, he would be called “Brother Anthony.” Future generations still know him by this name, adding to it that of Padua, the city where his preaching left the most indelible marks and where he breathed his last.

Whether or not the newborn was descended on his father’s side from Godfrey of Bouillon as some claim, or on his mother’s, from the royalty of Asturia, is uncertain. Yet, we do know that his parents were rich and of noble lineage.

Unfortunately, we possess only few authentic details of our saint’s childhood. His oldest biography recounts that he studied at the school of the cathedral adjacent to his father’s house.



The Church of St. Anthony in Lisbon, next to the Cathedral, stands on the precise spot where the Saint's childhood home was located.

In its crypt (left), is believed to be the room in which he was born, which turned out to be the only one –along with the main chapel– spared by an earthquake that devastated Lisbon in 1755.





Monastery of St. Vincent of Fora, in Lisbon.



**Baptismal font
(below) of the
Cathedral of Lisbon
(left), where St.
Anthony was
baptized.**



◀ **In 1782, Pope
Pius VI granted
a plenary
indulgence to
those who
devoutly visit
this church.**



There, he was educated in the ordinary curriculum of Catholic schools at the time: grammar, rhetoric, dialectic and plainsong. Prayer accompanied study. With his fellow students, he participated in liturgical ceremonies, either singing in the choir, or serving at the altar. In this atmosphere of piety, he undoubtedly received his first religious experiences, so profound and yet so gentle in souls predestined to the priesthood. His heart, in the freshness of its innocence, naturally turned toward God.

The sanctuary sheltering his childhood was dedicated to the Assumption of Our Lady. There, the body of Saint Vincent had been lain to rest, and the faithful of Lisbon venerated the relics of the glorious martyr. Memories evoked by the ancient cathedral seem to have profoundly impressed the young saint. In this privileged church, he developed a tender devotion to the triumph of the Immaculate Heart in Heaven, a devotion that he professed all his life. It was there that he first experienced his attraction to martyrdom.

Fernando was an exemplary student. Pious, hardworking, remarkably talented, he seemed to



Anthony professed great devotion to the Blessed Virgin from his early childhood. This seventeenth century lithograph represents his mother going to the cathedral to consecrate him to the Queen of Heaven (Museum Antonianum, Lisbon).

have a glorious future before him. Did God allow signs and wonders to present a preview to what would become of this child of grace? Portuguese legends depict the future miracle worker already accomplishing marvels.

One day, as he was playing with his friends, one of his companions accidentally broke the water jar of a servant who was going to draw water. Moved with pity for the poor girl, the saint—so the story goes—carefully gathered the pieces together, and the vase was restored instantaneously.

Another time, his brother told him to shoo a few sparrows from the garden. But he instead felt an impelling desire to go to church. How does one reconcile the duty to obedience and the movement of the soul for prayer? He called to the birds who, docile to his voice, allowed themselves to be herded into a cabana. Fernando shut in the winged flock, and serenely proceeded to go and pray before the Blessed Sacrament.

The Franciscan flavor of these stories reminds one of the Fioretti of Saint Francis, yet it is difficult to grant their historical accuracy. However, it is a fact, and one rendered all the more touching due to

our own miserable condition, that this young man, so pure, living in such a sheltered environment, was tested by temptation.

Like other saints before him, like the Apostle to the Gentiles, he experienced the “thorn in the flesh.” The devil, envious of his virtue, tempted him with impure thoughts. It is said that he even appeared to him in the most seductive of forms, hoping to ruin in an instant the treasures of grace stored in his soul. Fernando opposed the enemy with the sovereign weapon of prayer.

One day, while the struggle was at its most intense, he took refuge in his beloved cathedral. Exhausted from struggling against temptation, he traced a cross on the steps of the sanctuary. Tradition has it that the stone softened under his fingers and retained the imprint of the sacred sign.

Our saint emerged victorious from these painful struggles. To his very death, he preserved his innocence.



Fernando understood what dangers lurked for an ardent and wealthy young man such as



Assaulted by violent temptation, St. Anthony takes refuge in the cathedral and draws a cross on the wall of the stairs going up to the choir. The temptation recedes and the stone softens under his fingers, leaving the sacred sign, venerated to this day in a tower of the Lisbon Cathedral.



himself in a town that offered a life of pleasure. He felt powerless to overcome so many obstacles without help from above, wanting at all cost to save his soul and preserve his heart for God. At the age of fifteen, he entered the regular Canons of Saint Augustine, occupying the Monastery of Saint Vincent Outside the Walls in Lisbon.

The piety of his childhood set the stage for the life he led at the convent. From his y first day as a novice he faithfully observed the Rule. A devout soul, Fernando plunged himself in continual recollection and prayer. Yet, though he had left the world, the world had not forgotten him. His parents, friends and old companions often sought him in his retreat. The saint welcomed them with graceful charity. Yet, such visits caused him to suffer, disturbing the profound peace of his union with God. To preserve the quality of his interior life, he obtained permission from his Prior to be sent to Coïmbre at the monastery of Holy Cross where the mother-house of the Portuguese congregation of regular Canons was situated.

Coïmbre, then the capital of the Kingdom of Portugal, did not yet possess the famous

University which, when founded a century later, would shine so brilliantly. Yet, Holy Cross was already the hub of both literary and scientific culture in Portugal.

At the new monastery, the young religious studied diligently, throwing himself wholeheartedly into his priestly studies, while taking care to maintain his regular prayer life. It appears that he was introduced to the Church Doctors through the lengthy commentaries so widespread in the Middle Ages. At times, so the author of his first biography tells us, he would read well into the night.

Fernando possessed the power to recall information with incredible accuracy; he never forgot what he committed to memory. Consequently, he acquired such a thorough knowledge of Sacred Scripture that his teachers and religious brothers were astounded. Several years later, clothed in the Franciscan habit, he would preach from place to place with no other book than his breviary. Drawing from the riches committed to memory and quoting the Bible with accuracy, he provoked admiration even

from the Holy Father. Upon completion of his theological studies, our saint, poised to fulfill the extraordinary mission reserved for him by God, received Holy Orders.



After his ordination, Fernando was appointed to direct the inn adjacent to the monastery. Such a modest task placed him in a position of having contact with the Friars Minor, who had settled in Portugal in 1217. Welcomed by the Queen with special fondness, they received a small house standing among a grove of olive trees. The convent Saint Anthony d'Olivarès undoubtedly owed its elegant name to the garden surrounding it.

Franciscans live on alms. Each morning several religious went into the town to beg for food for the day. They often knocked at the door of Holy Cross. The opulent monastery would come to their aid, generously fulfilling what was lacking in the poverty they so voluntarily embraced. As an innkeeper, Fernando often welcomed the mendicant Friars. Thus he came to

know five Franciscan missionaries that the patriarch of Assisi sent to Morocco to preach the faith.

The names of these missionaries were Bérard de Corbio, Pierre de San-Geminiano, Othon, Adjuto and Accursio. To reach infidel territory, they had passed through Coimbre and paused for a few days. With a holy and heroic lack of preparation, they marched with hearts full of enthusiasm, less concerned with reconciling their mission with the rules of human prudence than with spilling their blood for Jesus Christ as soon as possible. Their sublime and joyful spirit must have touched Fernando, consumed since his childhood by the dream of martyrdom.

Upon reaching Morocco, the Friars requested an audience with the Muslim prince, who, at the time, was Abu-Jacub. They planned to share the dogmas of the Faith with him, but were denied the privilege. The Friars were not discouraged, but instead began to preach in the streets and public places. One day, as they were addressing a crowd, the monarch passed near them. The fearless missionaries did not balk, but continued their exposition of holy doctrine with-

out hesitation. Meanwhile, Abu-Jacub had them brought to Ceuto with the order to have them deported to Europe. The Portuguese Prince, Don Pedro, estranged from Portugal by family disputes, was then present at the Moroccan court. He escorted the Franciscans to ensure their safety during their trip.

However, Bérard and his companions refused to leave the country where they had hoped to earn the crown of martyrdom. Eluding their guards, they managed to escape and return to their dangerous apostolate. Abu-Jacub then had them locked in a dungeon for twenty days with neither food nor water. Yet, when they were released from prison, still in good health, they were more desirous than ever to preach and to give their lives.

The Lord did not delay in granting such ardent desires. The Friars Minor encountered the Muslim prince once again. Bérard climbed onto the very chariot which held the monarch. From there, as from a pulpit, he exhorted the Muslims to renounce the crescent, a symbol of their beliefs, and embrace the Cross of the Savior.

Abu-Jacob could no longer hold back his fury. In a fit of rage, he ordered the courageous apostles to be tortured.

They were whipped cruelly, boiling water and vinegar poured into their open wounds. They were rolled onto broken glass and pottery. Then, after a vain attempt to have them abjure their faith, their heads were split. The Muslim prince was not above taking the role of executioner himself. With his own hand, he inflicted the mortal blows upon the martyrs. It was January 16, 1220.

The enraged crowd defiled the corpses. Yet Prince Don Pedro was able to gather the sacred relics and returned them to the borders of Portugal. From there, one of his knights carried them to Coïmbre.

Received with the highest honors, among effusions of joy and piety, the precious relics were laid to rest in the church of the regular Canons, Holy Cross, in the presence of the king and queen and a countless multitude. The chapel of a Franciscan monastery had seemed too small to shelter such a treasure.



As an innkeeper, Fernando often welcomed the mendicant Friars. Thus he came to know five Franciscan missionaries that the patriarch of Assisi sent to Morocco to preach the faith (Tile of the church of the Holy Cross, Coimbra).



Above, views of the exterior and interior of the convent of St. Anthony of Olivares. Next to it, the Church of Santa Cruz, downtown Coimbra. Below, the bell used by the five Martyrs of Morocco and a sculptural ensemble representing them.



What did Fernando feel as he stood before the remains of such heroic victims? These poor religious, haloed now with the bloody crown of martyrdom, he had known them. He had spoken with them on more than one occasion. His heart had pulsed in union with theirs, when they confided in him their dreams of martyrdom. Now, he envied their fortune. He anticipated the blessed moment, when for the name of Jesus, he himself would fall under the executioner's sword.

But how to attain that goal? He would renounce his life in the monastery and enter the Franciscan Order. With filial piety, he confided his thoughts to his Superior. Despite the sorrow of losing such a remarkable companion, the regular Canons recognized the work of grace in his aspirations. They yielded to the divine will and generously authorized Fernando to go to the Franciscan militia.

The saint donned the habit and withdrew into the small convent of Olivarès, where his name was changed to Anthony.



The Minors had only good things to say about such a recruit. Brother Anthony was well educated. He was already adjusted to the spiritual exercises of common life. Therefore, rather than enter as a simple novice, he was simply initiated into the practices of his new religious family. In early fall of 1220, he was sent to Morocco accompanied by a brother by the name of Phillip. Our saint departed from his country, whence he was not to return. He left, his soul flooded with joy in the hopes of soon fulfilling his dream of martyrdom.

As so often happens, Providence had other plans for him. As soon as he arrived, Anthony fell so seriously ill that he was bedridden for months. His extreme weakness, and perhaps also an order from his Superiors, forced him to return to Europe.

Assailed by a violent tempest, the ship he had boarded with his companions could not reach the coast of Spain. After a difficult crossing, the saint arrived in Sicily. There he learned

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**St. Anthony receives the Franciscan habit. Oil by
PascoalParente, Sacristy of the church of the Convent of
St. Anthony of Olivares, Coimbra.**



of the convocation to the general Chapter meeting in Assisi for the celebration of Pentecost, which fell on May 20th that year. Saint Francis had called every brother who was not detained elsewhere by duty.

Three thousand religious responded to the invitation of the Blessed Founder. Coming from the most diverse regions, they brought with them the self-same spirit of simplicity, overflowing with the spiritual joy which is the true treasure of voluntary poverty. They lodged in huts made of branches. They camped in the woods around the sanctuary of Portiuncula. The lack of comfort mattered little to these men detached from everything. Only the divine ideal mattered on which they focused all their efforts, without worry about tomorrow. The inhabitants of Assisi spontaneously fed such a crowd with alms, who depended solely upon Providence for their daily bread.

Brother Ely, whom the Founder had chosen as vicar general, presided. Saint Francis himself sat humbly at his feet, content only now and then to make a remark or two.

Accustomed to the regular order of cloistered life, Anthony contemplated the new scene before him with admiration. Freshly introduced into the family of the Minors, he spoke little. No one knew him. Nothing drew the brothers' attention to him. Francis himself did not seem to notice the young religious. If, as some of his biographers have maintained, Saint Francis received supernatural enlightenment about Anthony, he showed no such indication.

He knew the ways of the interior life too well to draw Anthony prematurely from the obscurity where God fashions His great workers before showing them to the world. Anthony did not attract notice. He kept his origin, his learning, and his desires for apostolate hidden. He had understood the heroic paradox: only by a radical dying to self can one achieve fullness of life.

The general Chapter had reached its end. The religious dispersed, returning to the posts to which obedience had consigned them. Anthony remained without work. He spoke to Brother Gratien, Provincial of Romagno, and asked to accompany him, if the Vicar General consented

to it. The affair was soon settled. The Provincial left then with our saint, not really knowing at the time what mission to entrust to him. After discovering his companion to be a priest, however, he gave to him as residence the little hermitage of Monte-Paolo, near Forli. Anthony would serve as chaplain to the religious engaged in solitary preparation for apostolic work.

During this time, Saint Anthony led a life of pure contemplation for several months. He spent a great part of his days absorbed in prayer in a grotto adjacent to the convent. At nightfall, he would come out so exhausted from his long dialogues with heaven that at times he even stumbled returning to the monastery. Already the flames of love consumed him, for our God is a devouring fire (Deut. 4:24).

To his life of prayer, Anthony joined manual labor. He generously offered to take on the most menial of duties. He was seen, silent and smiling, sweeping the house and washing the dishes. He accomplished his tasks with so much ease and such joy that no one around him thought him fit for anything else.



Anthony went to North Africa with the intention of preaching the Gospel and obtaining the grace of martyrdom, but a huge storm dragged his ship toward the coast of Italy, where the saint would exercise his ministry (17th century color lithograph, Museum of St. Anthony, Lisbon).

An unforeseen event abruptly interrupted this daily existence of prayer and humility. The saint was asked to accompany some of the religious of Monte-Paolo going to Forli to receive holy orders. In the monastery of this town, he met young Dominicans, graciously hosted by the Minors, also converging to take part in the upcoming ordination.

It so happened that the guardian of the convent asked the Dominicans to say a few words of exhortation to the ordination candidates gathered there. Declining, they pleaded lack of preparation. So, the Superior turned to Anthony, ordering him to speak and proclaim simply what God would inspire him to say.

Saint Anthony obeyed. He began in a modest tone. Little by little, his voice became more vibrant. Scripture passages flowed from his mouth in marvelous abundance. The divine fire consuming his heart set his words ablaze. The speaker allowed the flow of his eloquence to carry him, and those who heard him were moved and delighted.

It was a revelation for the Franciscan family.

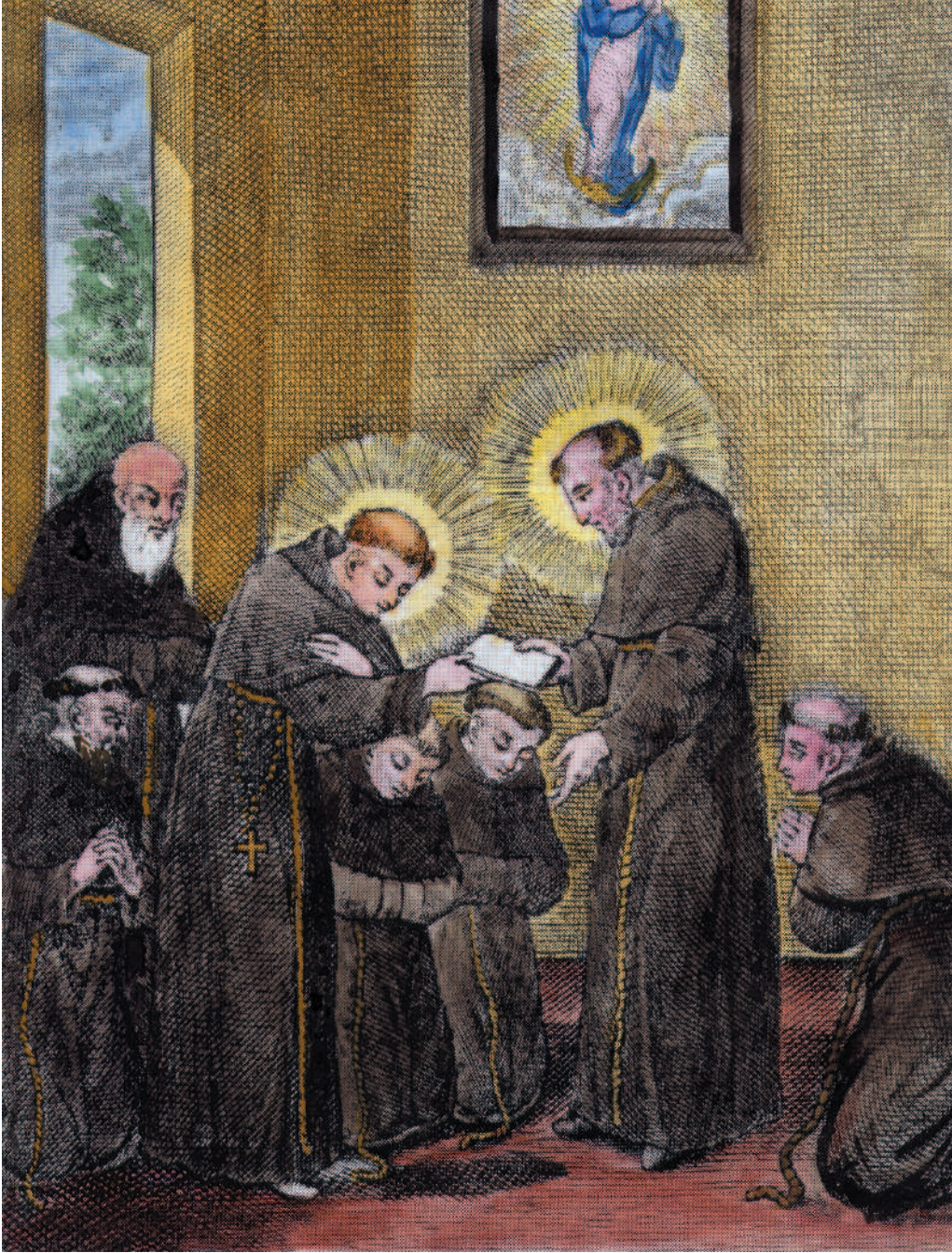


Friar Anthony, whom everyone considered ignorant, reveals himself to be an incomparable teacher (17th century color lithograph, Museum of St. Anthony, Lisbon).

Brother Anthony, who everyone took to be ignorant –was an incomparable master! One did not know what to admire the most in him: his knowledge, so vast and sure, or his incredible humility, which had buried such treasures in anonymity for so long.

The Provincial of Romagno, the Patriarch of Assisi, himself, was immediately informed. From now on, the saint would devote himself completely to preaching.

Nine years later, when he would die, exhausted by the ardor of his charity and the fatigue of his ministry, thousands of souls had been converted. To harvest the fruit of his labor, silence, humiliation and prayer were needed: in these hidden virtues, and in them alone does one discover the secret of all life-giving apostolate.



The glorious Patriarch of Assisi orders St. Anthony to dedicate himself entirely to preaching and teaching theology to the friars minor (17th century color lithograph, Museum of St. Anthony, Lisbon).

CHAPTER 2

The Apostolic Life

Francis of Assisi abhorred that false knowledge used by the mediocre to puff themselves up. On the other hand, true learning and piety he held in respectful awe. The unexpected triumph that our humble saint scored at Forlì filled him with joyful hope. Saint Francis moved quickly to encourage the young speaker whose brilliant success had so newly inaugurated his career. He even assigned to him the task of teaching the Friars theology. “Provided a study of this kind,” he cautioned, “did not extinguish in the monks the spirit of true prayer and devotion, as prescribed by the Rule.” The letter that St. Francis wrote to Anthony on this occasion bore the following inscription: *Fratri Antonio, episcopo meo*. “Brother Anthony, my bishop.” This formula shows how highly the Founder regarded the sacred learning of his peer.



Our saint entered with generous heart into the way obedience stretched before him. He poured into his work the same vibrant enthusiasm which had earlier led him to Morocco. God had refused him a martyrdom of blood in order to grant him one of the apostolate. Preaching without respite, hearing confessions for entire days, granting himself no other rest than prayer, Anthony quickly succumbed to the immensity of his task. Not counting the cost, he gave of his time and energy for the salvation of souls and the greater glory of God, literally becoming victim to his zeal and love.

He exercised his ministry in various countries, Romagna (area surrounding present-day Bologna) benefiting from the first fruit of his apostolate. For over two years, the citizens of Rimini, Bologna and the surrounding area listened attentively to his words. Saint Anthony engaged in a vigorous campaign against the Cathares and the Patarins. These heretics, direct descendants of the Manichean sects, all too often concealed their perversion of intelligence and mores beneath an



St. Anthony (left) and St. Francis of Assisi; oil on panel attributed to the Master of Lourinhãe Funchal (17th century, National Museum of Ancient Art, Lisbon).

apparent austerity. Unfortunately, they attracted numerous adherents. Efforts to bring them to repentance had garnered only mediocre results, since those who tried lacked the depth of knowledge necessary to win them back to the true Faith. Anthony brought to the controversy a solid doctrine, which challenged their minds, while the example of his holiness succeeded in drawing their hearts. Conversions abounded. Several of these souls who returned to the faith, not content merely with renouncing error, entered into the way of perfection.

While pursuing his difficult ministry among the heretics, Anthony taught the fundamentals of theology to the Brothers of Bologna. It is easy to surmise the price of fatigue he paid in order to succeed in simultaneously conducting two such delicate and important works.

From 1224 to 1226, he evangelized France. We find him now in Montpellier, now in Toulouse directing the studies of young religious. In Puy-en-Velay and Limoges, he fulfilled the office of superior; at Brive, he founded a convent. There, he often withdrew into a nearby grotto in order to abandon himself freely to prayer. In this



Apparition of St. Francis of Assisi during a sermon of St. Anthony at the Provincial Chapter of Arles in 1226. The audience, captivated by Anthony's eloquence, did not notice the apparition. Only a man religious called Monaldo (first to the left), raised his eyes and witnessed the prodigy (13th century fresco by Giotto in the Upper Basilica of Assisi).

wild retreat, he tasted divine joys, attained the highest contemplation, and underwent the assaults of hell. Once, a demon attempted to strangle the zealous missionary, whose word reclaimed so many souls from him, but the Immaculate Virgin came to the rescue of the saint who implored her intercession and put the evil spirit to flight by her presence.

The provincial Chapter, held in Arles at the end of the summer of 1226, brought Anthony to Provence. His reputation as a speaker and miracle worker had preceded him. The Brothers welcomed him with joy and asked him straightaway to preach. The saint granted them their request. On the 14th of September, he spoke to them of the Holy Cross, whose glorious Exaltation the Church celebrated that day. He took as the text of his sermon the title "Pilate had nailed to the cross of the Savior: "Jesus Nazarenus, Rex Judaeorum." While he developed his subject, Francis of Assisi, still alive, appeared in the Capitular room. The Blessed Founder seemed to hover above the assembly. For several moments, he listened raptly to the ardent preacher, worthy son of his soul, and then with his

hand, moist with the blood of the stigmata, he blessed his children and disappeared. The audience, captivated by the eloquence of Anthony, did not heed this unusual event. Only a religious by the name of Monaldo lifted his eyes and witnessed the miracle. Relying on the report of Thomas of Celano and Saint Bonaventure, this detail remains indubitable.

From Provence, Anthony returned to Italy for the last five years of his short life. He probably embarked at Marseille and disembarked in Sicily. He did not stay there long, but left deep memories of his time there that the centuries have not erased.

Unfortunately, the lack of documentation prevents us from following Saint Anthony step by step in his apostolic itinerary. His miracles so astounded his first biographers that they remained focused on the marvelous events of his life. They thus left less brilliant events in darkness, though they would have been of vivid interest to us.

Anthony came to Rome during the pontificate of Gregory IX. The illustrious Pontiff, who



had previously been the protector and the advisor of Francis, took a paternal interest in his saintly friend's disciple. Quickly discerning his exceptional gifts, he made him preach in front of the Cardinals reunited in Consistory. The eminent assembly admired his piety, eloquence and vast knowledge. The Pope awarded him the highest praises, extolling his knowledge of the Scriptures, which Anthony knew by heart; Gregory IX called the humble religious *Arci Testamenti*, "the Arc of the Testament."

That was not the only ministry which Anthony fulfilled in the Eternal City: he gave several sermons there, and perhaps even preached an entire Sunday station. Attracted by the magnificent solemnities of Holy Week, numerous pilgrims flocked to listen to him speak. Some, who did not understand Italian very well, came only to see this Friar Minor to which so many miracles were attributed. God renewed in their favor the miracle of Pentecost: while the saint spoke, each of these foreigners heard him in his native tongue.



Fresco of St. Anthony at the Basilica of Padua considered the most faithful portrait of his features (14th century fresco of the Giotto School).

Several years later, the Sovereign Pontiff solemnly alluded to the facts that I have reported here. After having canonized Anthony in the Cathedral of Spolete on May 30, 1232, he addressed an encyclical letter to the Bishops of the entire world. "We have," wrote Gregory IX, "ourselves formerly appreciated the holiness of his life and the marvels of his ministry, since he exercised it for a time under our own eyes in the most praiseworthy of ways."

The saint did not settle definitively in Padua until 1229. In this powerful and rich city, given to pageantry, and made famous for its university, he outshone himself. His activity doubled. His influence transformed the city that had been ravaged by the scourge of usury. Lent of 1231 was a triumph for the missionary, a victory for God in the realm of souls. It was also his swan song: several weeks later, Anthony was to receive eternal reward for his labor.



How did this incomparable orator preach?
What form did the eloquence, which the thir-

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**Apparition of the Child Jesus to St. Anthony; oil on panel
attributed to Fray Carlos (16th century, National Museum
of Ancient Art, Lisbon).**



teenth century annalist, Rolandino, judged “sweet as honey” take? Francis of Assisi traversed the towns of Umbria and Tuscany, exhorting the people to praise God. He spoke as befitted the occasion, at times in public squares, at others on the by-ways. With no preparation other than prayer, he allowed the feelings that filled his soul to overflow. Even when he climbed into the pulpit of churches, his sermons remained extremely simple. The divine flame which consumed him, his poetic imagination, and finally the example of his voluntary poverty gave his words a turn that was both moving and elegant.

The preaching of Anthony was different in that he did not limit himself to merely exhorting his listeners. He instructed them. He gave to them a solid and profound doctrine. His written Sermons testify to this.

These “sermons” were less orations in the strict sense, and were condensed outlines prepared with care. When the time came, the speaker would improvise the final form and develop his theme according to his inspiration. Even though they do

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St. Anthony makes a newborn speak during one of his sermons. Fresco by Girolamo Tessari, 1524 (Camposampiero, Sanctuary of Noce, Italy).





Anthony promises a devout woman from Assisi who was about to give birth that the child to be born would become a Franciscan and obtain the palm of martyrdom among the infidels, as indeed happened. (17th century color lithograph, Museum of St. Anthony, Lisbon).

not divulge the secret of his eloquence, these outlines do give us precious information on the preaching of our saint, including which subjects he favored and how he treated them.

Anthony based his teaching on the Scriptures which he knew perfectly. He used the texts in their literal sense, but also enjoyed setting forth their symbolism. He frequently extracted from them the allegories and symbols cherished by the medieval man.

He would explain to his audience the main points of Christian doctrine. His sermons on the Blessed Virgin Mary are utterly remarkable from a dogmatic point of view. He recalls the privileges of Our Lady, the power of her intercession, her special role in the plan of Redemption. He insists, in the footsteps of Saint Bernard, on her motherhood of grace. In their entirety, the sermons form a veritable treatise of Marian theology.

He stood up against vice with fierce intensity, denouncing it with intrepid spirit. Here, one discerns no doubt the heritage left by the chivalrous knights, his ancestors. He especially

denounced pride, sensuality and avarice. The latter especially caused him great indignation, and rightly so: is there nothing that offends Christ so thoroughly? The Master has given us everything. He gave Himself up for us without counting the cost. Would He not spurn the hardened heart unmoved by his neighbor's distress?

Original biographers recount a related anecdote, which lives on in a legendary vein. Anthony, they say, was to speak at the funeral of a usurer. Having learned, by private revelation, of the sinner's final damnation, he wanted the tragic destiny of the unhappy man to serve at least as a lesson to the living. Having preached with burning words on the dangers of avarice, he concluded with the following Gospel passage: "The evil, rich man died and was buried in Hell. *Mortus est ... dives et sepultus est in inferno*" (Luke 16: 22). The audience was shocked at such audacity, so the preacher added: "This man placed his heart in his treasure. Go and open his safe and you will see this same heart, struck down by Divine Justice." Upon this, the crowd went to the dead man's home. The saint's prophecy proved true: the dead man's heart lay there amidst his gold.



“This man had his heart dedicated to his treasures. Go to the chest and open it; there you will find his heart, punished by the justice of God.” (17th century color lithograph, Museum of St. Anthony, Lisbon).

Anthony presented his rich doctrine in the most winsome ways. Sometimes, by picturesque descriptions, for example, a Christmas homily beginning with a poetic description of spring, whose freshness recalls the graceful imagination of Saint Francis. At other times, by the sustained flow of mightily inspired words and images, leaving the audience trembling with the mystery that elevated eloquence alone can communicate. Above all it was the tone of the speaker that captivated his listeners: the powerful expression, the ardent conviction, and the elegant style that only the love of God transformed into holy passion can lend.

Such preaching met with immense success. In France as in Italy, crowds inundated the churches where the saint spoke. At times, the numbers of the faithful were so great that the largest of the cathedrals could not contain the congregations. Then Anthony, instead of taking the pulpit, would deliver his homily outdoors on a makeshift platform. His initial biographers reported that he would sometimes deliver his sermons before nearly 30,000 people.



A penitent wanted to confess in writing because in deep repentance for his sins he was unable to hold back his tears. St. Anthony, who could read people's sins, saw them mysteriously being erased from a piece of paper, something he interprets as a clear and wonderful sign of God's forgiveness. (17th century color lithograph, Museum of St. Anthony, Lisbon).



At Anthony's rebuke, the tyrant of Treviso who terrorized the Padua region throws himself at his feet and puts a cord around his own neck as a sign of repentance. (17th century color lithograph, Museum of St. Anthony, Lisbon).

When he would pass through a city, people would hasten from near and far to hear him. Many city dwellers came several hours before the ceremony began in order to make sure they had seats.

The details of his final Lent passed on to us by his contemporaries reveal much. Anthony had resolved to preach in each of the churches of Padua, one after the other. He soon found himself forced to modify this project and set up a platform in a spacious field in order to satisfy the crowd's spiritual hunger. The entire city flocked to hear him. The venerable Bishop Jacopo Corrado sat in the first row, surrounded by his clergy. Merchants closed their shops so as not to miss his preaching. Ladies of the upper class, usually not early risers, would arrive at the meeting area before daybreak when the saint spoke early, and, biographers note, were careful to exchange their luxurious dresses for humbler garb.

When the priest appeared, a profound silence would settle over the crowd. Still and silent, the great assembly would gaze with rapt attention at the saint, intent on his every word, as if by secret fascination, one might say. Once the exhortation

had ended, the crowd would press the preacher, expressing its enthusiasm, even indiscreetly. People wanted to see him more closely, to kiss his hands, and receive his blessing. Women brought scissors and snuck snippets of his clothing to keep as relics. Despite his modest objections, the humble monk finally surrendered to an escort of strong men to keep him from the frenzied crowds.

The eloquence of the saint bore greater fruit than such fleeting encounters. Many conversions occurred. Enemies reconciled, while thieves and usurers restored ill-gotten goods to their rightful owners. Sinners turned to the sacrament of reconciliation to receive forgiveness for transgressions. They came in such great numbers that Anthony had to solicit the help of several priests to assist him, while he heard confessions from morning until night, enjoying neither respite nor nourishment. While he devoted himself to the salvation of souls, he suffered already from the illness that was to claim his life a few months later.

The Friar Minor, Jean Rigaud, who became bishop of Tréguier in 1317, reported that he met



On one occasion, at the beginning of a sermon St. Anthony announced that the devil will try to make the session difficult but will not cause serious accidents. A few minutes later, the platform from which he was speaking collapsed with a loud bang. Anthony comes out of the rubble safe and sound. (17th century lithograph, Museum of St. Anthony, Lisbon).



In Limoges, while speaking in an ancient Roman amphitheater, a tempest broke out and thunder roared. The saint managed to calm down the audience and nobody got wet while torrential rain poured only around the amphitheater. (17th century color lithograph, Museum of St. Anthony, Lisbon).

a former penitent of the saint. Advanced in age, the man, once a thief running with a gang, experienced a conversion along with his accomplices upon hearing the preaching of Anthony. The blessed missionary reconciled these poor souls with God. He prophesied a tragic end for them were they to return to their robbery and assured them everlasting happiness should they persevere in the good. The prophecy came true. Several of them resumed their thieving and perished wretchedly. As for the old man, he faithfully observed the advice given to him and awaited the eternal beatitude promised by the glorious apostle of Padua in peace.

So great a success can only be explained by the brilliance of the saint and the height of his holiness, but more especially by the wonderful atmosphere in which he moved. Throngs venerated him as a miracle worker. Indeed, he accomplished countless miracles of unquestionable authenticity. Miraculous events sometimes accompanied his words, thus stamping his preaching with the seal of the divine. In the surrounding area of Puy, one day, his voice carried

for several kilometers, consoling an unfortunate woman, prevented from attending the sermon by a brutal husband. In Limoges, while he was speaking in a former Roman amphitheater, a storm burst overhead and thunder boomed. The saint retained the audience ready to run for shelter, yet no one was touched by the rain, although around the arena, it fell in torrents. Yet another time, announcing at the beginning of one of his talks that the devil was trying to disrupt the meeting, but that he would be unable to provoke any serious accident, several minutes later, the podium upon which the orator stood collapsed with a great crash. Anthony emerged from the rubble intact.

It would be easy to multiply examples such as these, which abounded in the life of the illustrious missionary. We shall return to these in a later chapter.

CHAPTER 3

The Interior Life

For the secret of his apostolic success one must probe Saint Anthony's interior life. To influence souls in the way of salvation, talent, even joined to boundless activity does not suffice. Indeed, merely ordinary causes cannot produce supernatural effects. Great evangelists are always great contemplatives, drawing from their union with Christ the divine sap, which makes their labor bear fruit. Anthony of Padua was no exception: to the utmost degree, he was a man of prayer.

In all aspects of his life, he practiced the precept of the Master: *Oportet semper orare*. "Pray at all times." We have already seen him follow his penchant for piety during his childhood. The ancient Church of Lisbon attracted him. Not only did he and his fellow disciples attend its

lengthy liturgical services, but he also took pleasure in visiting it alone during his spare time. He would prostrate himself before the tabernacle and implore the Queen of Heaven whom he loved with filial devotion. He would kneel before the relics of the illustrious martyr Saint Vincent. There, at the hour of temptation, he sought the strength to overcome the enemy.

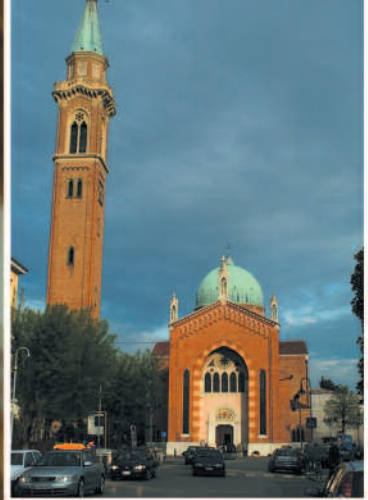
The child's naive piety evolved over the years to become manly and firm, while losing none of its sincerity. As a novice, professed religious, then young priest, prayerfulness always distinguished Saint Anthony who devoted his time to prayer and study. He studied for the sole purpose of knowledge of the Creator, under the ever-present gaze of the loving Father.

With the Friars Minor, Anthony plunged himself even more deeply into contemplation. Recently entered into the Franciscan family and still unknown to his peers who were unaware of his caliber, he led a purely hermetic life at Monte-Paolo for several months. With no other book than his breviary, he spent entire days in the grotto: absorbed, lost, and engrossed in his dia-



In search of the recollection that his soul craved, Anthony ordered a kind of small cell built on the branches of a large walnut tree. In the image above, we see him preaching from his walnut tree as depicted in the fresco attributed to Annigoni, in the saint's Basilica in Padua. Below, the hermitage of the Sanctuary of Noce; on the right, the image of the saint in Padua, by Donatello.





logue with Heaven. Like the glorious solitary saint of the desert whose name he had borrowed, he complained that time, ever fleeing, would all too soon tear him away from the mystery of the Godhead.

During the full years of his apostolate, while the pulpit and the confessional seemed to have taken up all his time, he found the means to act in the spirit of prayer. He spoke, directed souls, and labored under the gaze of the Father, in His presence, and in union with Him. Each day, he reserved a few hours to silent prayer and meditation. In keeping with the practice of Saint Francis of Assisi, he carved moments of solitary retreat from his busy schedule of preaching by which to renew his strength in deeper contemplation. Thus did he, as we have said, take refuge at Brive in a grotto close to the monastery.

Death surprised him in one of these solitary retreats, so dear to his heart. At the end of the spring of 1231, he sought the rest and solace for which his soul longed in the countryside around



Sanctuary of Arcella, where the saint died after arriving by oxcart. It is located about three miles from Padua. Below, detail of the “transit chapel”.

Padua. He had withdrawn to the rural area of Camposampiero, belonging to Count Tiso. This nobleman, a great friend of the Franciscans, welcomed the saint with joy. He endeavored to render his stay as pleasant as possible, having a kind of miniature cell fashioned high in the branches of a great walnut tree upon Saint Anthony's request. Anthony would then relinquish his hiding place in the sky only to take his meals. Upon coming down from his tree on June 13, he felt faint. In the little convent of Arcella in Padua where he had been rushed, the face of Anthony lit up in his agony and a smile brushed his lips. He seemed to be gazing into the Divine. The monk who witnessed this radiant transfiguration asked the dying man what he was seeing:

"I see," Anthony responded, "the Lord Jesus Christ calling me."

I see the Lord: triumphant proclamation, which could serve as epigraph to our hero's life. Throughout his entire life, Anthony held Jesus Christ, his adored Master, in view. With the eyes of faith, he fastened upon him, by his prayer, the simple gaze of contemplation, and proposed no

other goal to his work than to serve Him. At last, Anthony perceived Him directly, radiant, beckoning him to follow Him into His Kingdom, and to love Him in the beatific vision throughout all eternity. To see God in all things and all things in God, this is the sublime path pursued by the holy saints.

How did our saint pray? What joys did he taste in his colloquies with God? Did his soul, like those of the great mystics, lose itself in the abyss of ecstasy? He knew from Scripture that divine favor should remain hidden. With a few rare exceptions, he guarded the secrets of his interior life without divulging them to a single soul. The little we do know allows us, however, some limited understanding of what his prayer life consisted.

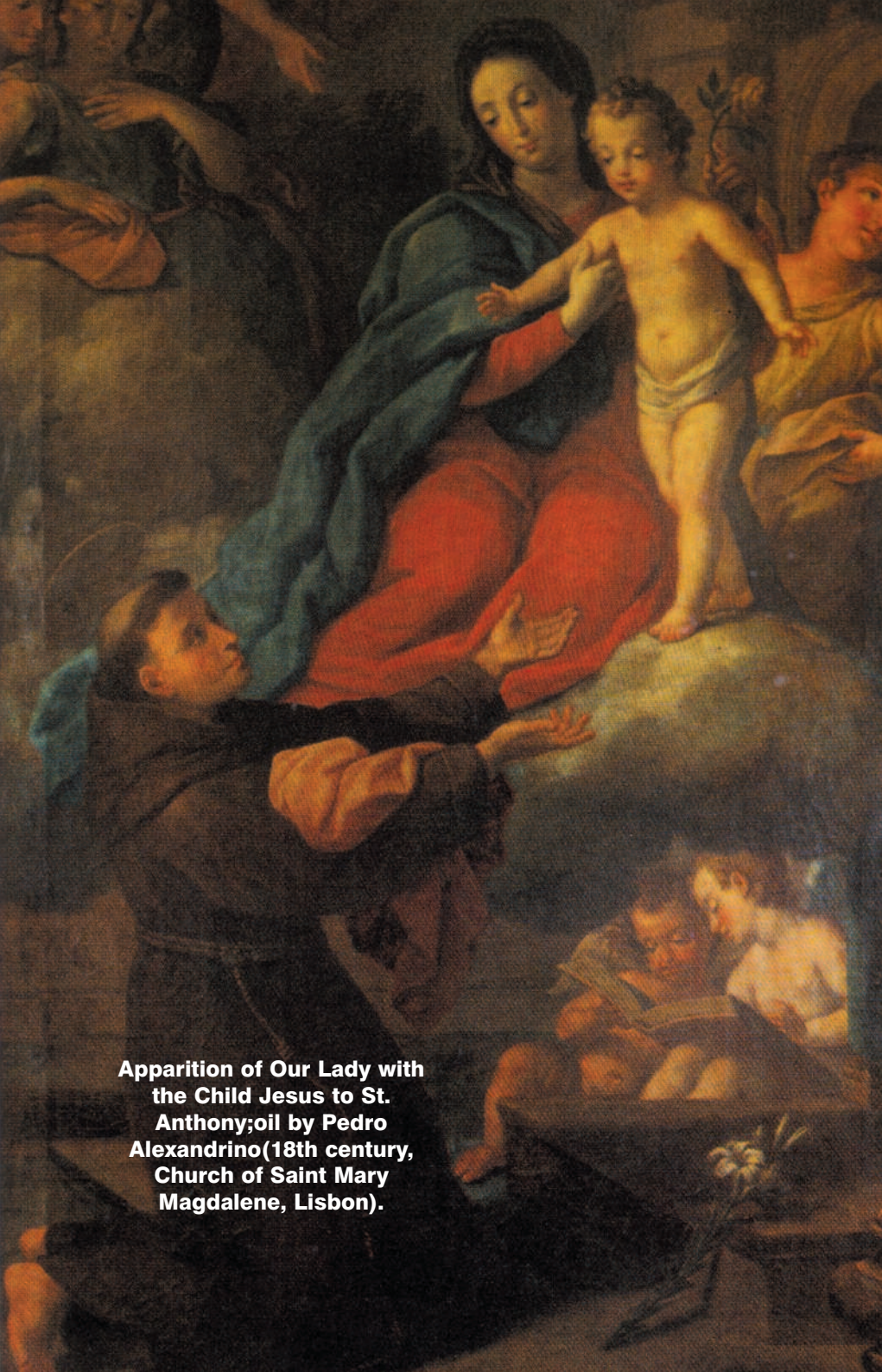
That Anthony had risen to the heights of passive contemplation is beyond dispute. Is it not extraordinary that a soul, however energetic, would spend five to six consecutive hours in the laborious exercise of discursive meditation and concentrate upon it to the point of losing awareness of the external world? Our saint consecrat-

ed entire days to prayer. When leaving his grotto of Monte-Paolo, he would falter, as if returning from a distant and mysterious land.

We know, moreover, by his own admission, that on several occasions, he received celestial visitations. In particular, Our Lady appeared to him on an Assumption vigil, while he was in the South of France. She deigned to assure him of the truth of her Assumption, that glorious privilege to which he was particularly devoted but certain writers were then calling into question.

The Immaculate Virgin also rescued her faithful servant by visible interventions. Twice, at Brive and at Padua, the demon assailed the ardent preacher who labored to reclaim so many of his victims. In desperation, Anthony called out to Mary, reciting the hymn: "O gloriosa Domina," that he liked to recite often. The Queen of Heaven appeared in brilliant light and chased away the evil spirit.

The Savior also visited Saint Anthony who, an ancient tradition reports, had received the hospitality of the Lord of Chateauneuf in the Limousine region of France. This lord proposed



**Apparition of Our Lady with
the Child Jesus to St.
Anthony; oil by Pedro
Alexandrino (18th century,
Church of Saint Mary
Magdalene, Lisbon).**

to attend carefully to the needs of the religious whose reputation awed him. At dusk, with indiscreet curiosity, he peeked into his guest's room to see what he was doing. He was witness to a grace-filled miracle: the divine Child rested in the arms of Anthony who adored him reverently.

Present-day critics dare not attribute historical accuracy to this tale. On the other hand, they recognize that Our Lord appeared to the saint during his agony. Jesus, glorious and smiling, came to strengthen his apostle in his final struggle and, by His presence, temper the agony of the terrible passage.

In a famous painting, le Pinturicchio represented Saint Anthony of Padua gazing heavenward ecstatically, holding in his left hand a flaming heart: symbolically signifying the most intimate sentiments of this blessed soul. It was in his continuous and profound prayer that his heart burned with love. Sincere love, without dishonesty, was that of our saint: he bypassed the realm of mere feelings and proved himself by action.

Young, rich, possessing the most seductive gifts of mind and heart, of illustrious descent, a

brilliant future stretched out before him for whom the world held both its joys and its honors in store. The pious adolescent had only to stretch out his hand to pick them. However, at this carefree age when most allow themselves to be fascinated with pleasure and fame, Saint Anthony scorned corruptible goods. He renounced his fortune, his family and his freedom, withdrawing into a cloister. What inspired this decision? He feared that remaining in the world would blight the flower of his innocence. He feared succumbing to the temptations which haunted him. He wanted to offer to God an undivided heart. Is this not true love? Is this not perfect charity? "He who loves me observes my commandments," (John 14:21) said the Savior.

Soon, the stable and prayerful life that he experienced with the Canons of Holy Cross no longer satisfied his thirst for more rigorous austerity, higher perfection and greater abandonment. He longed for the heroic adventures of the martyrs. He dreamed of preaching the faith to infidels and of spilling his blood for Jesus Christ. To fulfill this goal, he donned the humble

Franciscan cloth and left his homeland, impatient to confront the enemy for the Master's glory. It was an intense love indeed which filled the heart of the young saint with enthusiasm, for there is no greater love than to give one's life for the divine Friend.

Providence withheld from Anthony the martyrdom for which he so intensely longed. What then? If he could not spill his blood in one fell swoop, he would sacrifice himself daily in that slow immolation which religious perfection demands. He would fulfill with his utmost the gospel ideal, as proposed by the Patriarch of Assisi to his children. By the practice of voluntary poverty, pushed to its extreme limits, he would imitate the loving Master who made himself poor for our sake. Is this not to love God with perfect charity, to conform oneself to the image of His only Son?

Poverty! Anthony held "Lady Poverty" in high esteem, prizing her as a precious belonging. He who had previously dwelt in abundance and luxury rejoiced in walking barefoot, clothed in a simple tunic, at times lacking the necessities of



**The Sovereign Pontiff
Gregory IX asks St.
Anthony to preach to the
Cardinals gathered in
consistory. Fresco by
Girolamo Tessari,
Camposampiero,
Sanctuary of Noce (Italy)**



Anthony defends before Pope Gregory IX the early spirit of the Franciscan Order that risked being lost after its founder's death. With his authority, the Pontiff confirms the saint's opinion.

life, and in eating, as did the Savior, the sacred bread of alms. He had so immersed himself in this state of abandonment to divine providence, and lived it with such simplicity, that the Friars of Italy, ignoring his origin, at first mistook him for a man of poor means.

Anthony defended poverty as the most precious possession of the Franciscan family. After the death of Francis, a faction demanding a softening of the Rule formed within the Order. Brother Elias, who the Founder had loved more than all the others, originated and led the movement. In this, the former vicar general of the Blessed Founder unscrupulously betrayed the ideals of his master. He wanted to establish foundations, which, though they would not equal the wealth of the opulent Benedictine abbeys, would insure the Friars Minor ample revenue. Such a change would have abolished the work of the Patriarch. Religious congregations prosper less by the abundance of temporal goods than by their fidelity to their initial charism. In freeing themselves of their complete dependency on Divine Providence, the children

of Saint Francis would have inevitably forfeited their apostolic freedom and prestige together with the loss of their ideal. Saint Anthony vehemently opposed the all-too-human position of Elias. During the general Chapters, where his reputation gave him a dominant influence, and even before Pope Gregory IX himself, he zealously pleaded the cause for poverty and won.

The utmost degree of charity resides in complete submission to the will of the Most High. One may go so far as to say that holiness has but a single watchword, encapsulating in it all the forms of perfection: “Fiat.” Anthony excelled in practicing this virtue of abandonment to Divine Providence —the most eloquent expression of love. He allowed himself to be led with docility along often difficult and incomprehensible pathways.

Let us recall the obscurity in which he spent the first two years of his life as a Franciscan. Moved by generosity, no sacrifice was too great. He had left everything to fulfill his dream of the apostolate and martyrdom. Suddenly interrupted in his journey toward martyrdom, he was

directed to Assisi by providential circumstances. In the Chapter of 1221, which he attended, none of the 3,000 religious present at this immense assembly knew him, nor rightly appreciated him. While provincials and local superiors fought over the brilliant friars, none requested this humble and silent religious, barely recovered from a serious illness and, to all appearances, devoid of health. Who would choose to take on such a sickly and languid young man? Apostolic labor requires a more robust temperament: what work could be entrusted him?

Yet, Anthony had received to an eminent degree the gifts that make for powerful laborers of the Lord. If the Franciscan Order abounded in elite souls, they still lacked learned men. God was sending to them, in the person of this Portuguese brother, a brilliant luminary, that the Order did not recognize, for it was still veiled under a lackluster appearance.

What would the Saint do? Would he attempt to claim the limelight for himself? It would be easy for him to show off his knowledge and worth. He would in fact have an excellent

pretext to do so: does not the glory of God summon us to put the talents we have received to good use? Yet, Anthony preferred to keep silence. He yielded to the Father the privilege of directing according to His good pleasure. It is better to have, he rightly thought, a hidden station, but one that was willed by God, than to enjoy a brilliant apostolate, yet to act outside the Divine Will.

He would go then, unknown and joyful, to hide away in a small remote hermitage lost in the mountains. There, he would peacefully lead the humble existence the Lord had prepared for him. He would conceal his great knowledge and fiery eloquence until the day the Lord Himself would reveal such hidden treasure to an awestruck world. Is this not the triumph of abandonment and hence of true love?


CHAPTER 4

The Wonderful Life

Saint Anthony is one of the greatest miracle workers within the life of the Church. The numerous miracles accomplished during his lifetime and after his death contributed to his immense popularity. To fail to mention the extraordinary power with which the Almighty anointed him would certainly be to sketch an incomplete picture.

Christ had granted the gift of miracles to the first preachers of the Gospel so to stamp their words with the divine seal. It was necessary to prove by irrefutable signs the Master's doctrine and thus bring the faithful to the true Religion.

Anthony, too, exercised his ministry among unbelievers. Often, he was called to defend the dogmas of our faith to heretics, Patarins, Cathars and Albigensians, who were multiplying in the



St. Anthony
makes a newborn
child speak to
confirm the
innocence of his
mother. (School of
the Saint, Padua).

South of France and the North of Italy. However, theological arguments alone were not enough to convince minds closed by prejudice. Our Saint presented them with the irresistible argument of miracles.

Among his first biographers stands Jean Rigaud, a witness of considerable importance, who reports on an incident that occurred as Saint Anthony was speaking with a heretic on the Eucharist. The unfortunate man obstinately refused to admit the mystery of transubstantiation, for he perceived no change in the sacramental species after the words of consecration. In vain, Anthony presented proofs drawn from both Scripture and Tradition. When his efforts failed before the stubborn obstinacy of his interlocutor, he decided to alter his strategy.

“You possess,” he told the man, “a mule that you ride often. I will present a consecrated host to it; if it falls on its knee before the Blessed Sacrament, will you recognize the real Presence of the Savior under his Eucharistic appearance?”

“Certainly,” responded the unbeliever, who felt confident that the outcome of such a proposition would be to the apostle’s detriment.

They agreed to attempt the test three days later. The heretic, in order to insure victory, starved the beast of all food. At the set day and time, Anthony, who had prepared himself by doubling his prayer, left the church, carrying a ciborium in his hands. The skeptic arrived leading the famished animal by the bridle. A considerable crowd had gathered on the square, curious to attend such a remarkable sight. With a smile on his lips, the unbeliever, thinking that victory was already his, set a sack of oats before the animal. But, given free rein, the mule turned away from the feed extended to it and instead bent down before the sacred Host. It did not straighten or stand up again until it had received permission from the saint to do so.

It is easy to imagine the effect the miracle produced. The heretic honored his word and converted. Several others who had shared his stubborn unbelief also abjured their errors.

Jean Rigaud does not say where this occurred, but it is now thought to have been in Rimini. In 1417, a chapel destined to commemorate this miraculous event was built.



When theological reasoning was not enough to convince highly prejudiced minds, the saint resorted to an irresistible argument: a miracle. In this lithograph we see a mule kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament (Museum of St. Anthony, Lisbon).

The sermon to the fish (St. Anthony's chapel in the Royal Collegiate Church of San Isidro, Madrid)



Many years earlier, a column had been erected at the site.

Anthony performed another miracle in the same city, when heretics made fun of his preaching.

“Since men refuse to hear the word of God,” he retorted, “I will speak to the fish.”

He turned towards the teeming channel of the Marecchia. In the footsteps of Saint Francis, with charming simplicity, he invited the inhabitants of the limpid water to praise the Lord. At the surprise of the attendants, the fish gathered near the bank, peaking their heads above water, in all evidence, listening with rapt attention to the speaker.

Profoundly validated by such supernatural manifestations, the saint’s ministry bore abundant fruit.

Burdened by work and crushed by his apostolic labor, our miracle worker struggled at times in reconciling his duties as a religious with the ardor of his zeal. Though he fulfilled his monastic obligations in due time, he found it difficult to refuse requests to preach. In extreme cases, he used the miraculous power he had been given.

On Easter day of 1224, he was to preach at the cathedral of Montpellier and sing the gradual and the Alleluia at the high Mass of his monastery. He found the means to do both.

Calmly, he climbed the stairs into the pulpit. He spoke in front of the Bishop, clergy and an immense crowd eager to hear him. Suddenly pausing, he covered his head and seemed absorbed in deep meditation. At that very moment, the Friars Minor also perceived him in their own chapel, prayerfully fulfilling his duty.

At the Cathedral, the congregation, astounded by such extraordinary silence, believed he had gone into ecstasy. After a few minutes, the preacher came to himself and finished his homily.

The faithful, sensing a mystery, sought to uncover what had really occurred. After inquiring into the matter, they quickly realized that the saintly man had accomplished one of those marvels of bilocation so rarely observed even in the lives of the greatest of saints.

Like the true friends of God, Anthony had a tender heart, supremely sensitive to pity. By compassion for the suffering of his neighbor, he



The miracle of bilocation: while St. Anthony preaches in Montpellier's cathedral, his brethren monks see him singing the office at the convent's Mass.

performed most of his miracles. He healed the sick, and even resurrected the dead.

Among the countless traits of his goodness, his innocence and exquisite grace, wonderfully demonstrated the power of intercession and the sensitivity of his charity.

Returning to Italy with a companion by way of Provence, Anthony knocked at an inviting door to implore the favor of a meal. The lady of the house was not wealthy, but had a few provisions and some wine in a barrel. With gracious generosity, she welcomed the mendicants of Jesus Christ, and prepared for them, as best she could, a frugal meal. In order to garnish her modest table with something a little special, she borrowed a pure crystal pitcher from her neighbor. She went down to her cellar to fill the precious container with wine. As the Friars Minor took their meal, the saint's companion was regrettably heavy handed. With a sweep of his hand, he clumsily knocked the costly carafe to the floor, where it shattered.



The son of a woman who was listening to the saint falls into a cauldron. When she realizes it, she discovers in awe that the child remains unharmed in the middle of the boiling water. (School of the Saint, Padua).





“Know,” the miracle worker replied, “that one day you will shed your blood for religion. In you I venerate a future martyr of Christ.” (Museum of St. Anthony, Lisbon).

Hiding her dismay as best she could, the hostess bit her lip, and returned to the cellar to fill another bottle. Alas! She had forgotten to shut the faucet of her barrel: the wine had run out.

People from the South of Europe have the reputation of being emotional. The poor woman came back up the stairs and exploded into tears. Moved by her distress, Anthony rested his elbows on the table and, putting his head into his hands, he prayed silently. While he besieged Heaven, the fragments of the pitcher returned to their original configuration as if by enchantment. Upon witnessing the miracle, the hostess cried out in amazement. She rushed to the basement, wondering if she would not find there another miracle. Her hope saw the day: the barrel brimmed with wine.

Wild with joy, she hastened back to thank her benefactor. The saint, however, fled such demonstrations of recognition. He had already left with his companion.



As well as miracles, God granted the gift of prophesy to his servant. While Anthony was in

Puy, he met a rich young attorney living a life of worldly pleasure. He was certainly not one of those who listened to the saint's preaching. He worried little about his duties as a Christian and, finding the sermons depressing, he preferred the conversation of friends such as himself, who lived recklessly.

Curiously enough, Anthony recognized among the crowd the very attorney who had hardly given him a second thought. Whenever Anthony would see him, he bowed before him with respectful tenderness. The young man responded with naïve laughter, thinking the monk had mistakenly judged him on his comely appearance. After many such encounters, he began to wonder if the zealous religious were attempting to indirectly reproach him by such excessive demonstrations for his irresponsible behavior. It irritated him, but being mild mannered, he managed to avoid the saint from that day forward.

►

St. Anthony is transported to Lisbon and resuscitates a young man who had been murdered so he would testify to the innocence of an unjustly accused relative who was already walking to the gallows. (Anonymous oil painting of the 17th century, Museum of the City of Lisbon).



But, one day the two men found themselves suddenly face to face. As usual, Anthony bowed respectfully. The lawyer, furious, let fly his rage and angrily demanded from the Minor the reason for such extraordinary salutations.

“Know that,” the miracle worker responded, “I venerate in you a future martyr for Christ. You will later spill your blood for the Faith.”

History confirmed the saint’s prediction. Sometime later, the Holy Spirit melted the hardened and worldly heart of the attorney. He sold his goods, and after distributing the proceeds to the poor, he left on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In a disputation with Muslims, he vehemently criticized their false prophet, and so valiantly defended our dogmas that they murdered him out of hatred for his faith.

Anthony prophesied too many other events to enumerate here. We will only relate his final prophecy, uttered two weeks before his death.

Accompanied by a friar, Anthony was walking in the countryside around Padua. Ascending to the top of a hill offering a view of the city, he contemplated the vast and magnificent panora-

ma. With an artist's sensitivity to the beauty of nature, he admired the open landscapes of Venetia. He praised the fertile plain extended before him, and seeming to gaze into the future, he pronounced these mysterious words:

“Oh Padua, blessed city, you will become famous and your fame will extend throughout the Earth.”

The saint did not elaborate. But, primitive legend has it that he foresaw the glory with which future devotion to him would crown this city, so dear to his heart.

The death of the miracle worker did not interrupt the course of miracles worked through his intercession. When he had breathed his last, the Friars Minor, predicting difficulties between the inhabitants of the suburbs and those of the city, resolved not to reveal his blessed death. The effort proved vain. Moved by a supernatural instinct, the children of Padua ran along the streets of the city crying loudly: “The saint is dead! The saint is dead!”

At the very moment of his death, he appeared to his friend, Thomas Gallo, the

famous Abbot of Vercell. The holy man was studying in his cell when suddenly, he looked up and saw the saint before him.

“Lord Abbot,” the Friar Minor said to him, “I left my body in Padua and now hasten to depart to my homeland.”

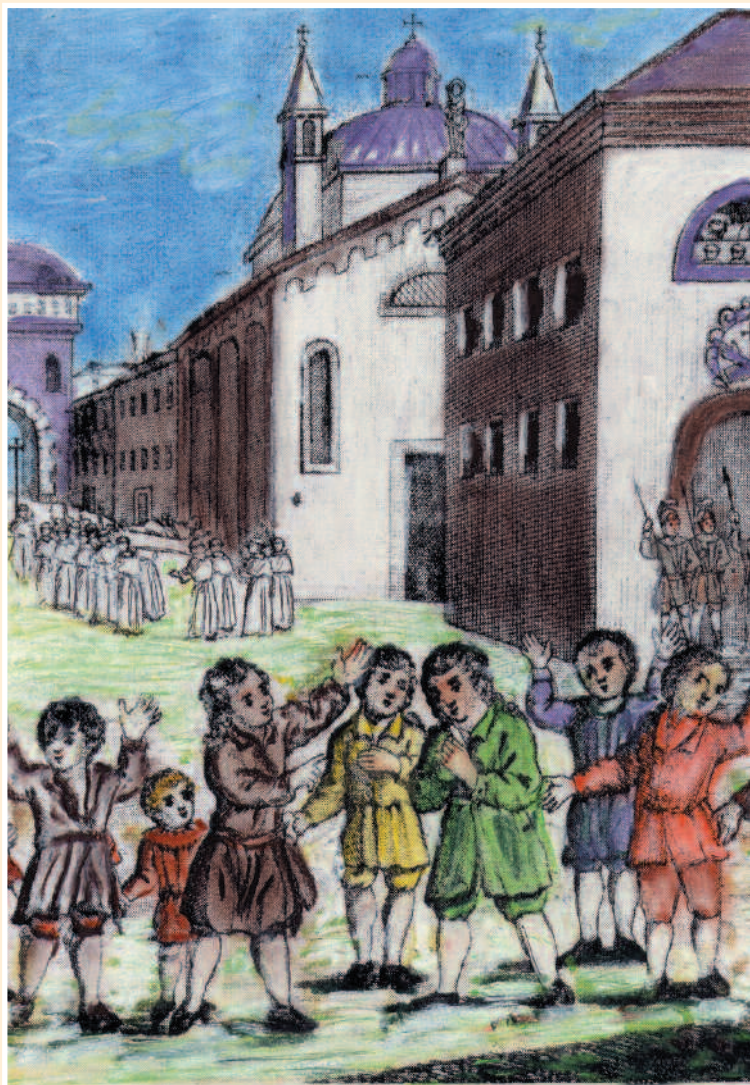
Then he disappeared.

Thinking the saint had departed through the door to his room, Thomas Gallo rushed out into the hallway to detain him, but Anthony was not there. Indeed, no one had so much as seen him enter the monastery.

Several days later, the abbot learned that the saint had been dead at the time of the apparition. He then understood the meaning of his words: Anthony had just left his body in Padua and his soul was ascending to Heaven.

The funeral of the incomparable apostle proved less an occasion for grief than a celebration of victory. The streets of the city were too narrow for the lengthy procession. The Franciscan Chapel could not contain the crowd of those gathered there.

From the very first day, the pilgrims came from all over to pray at the gravesite, which God



**Moved by a supernatural feeling, the children of Padua travel the city shouting:
“The Saint is dead! The Saint is dead!” (17th century colored lithograph, Museum of St. Anthony, Lisbon).**





Above, facade of the Basilica of St. Anthony in Padua. On the left, above, the saint's chapel. In the center, the back of the tomb with numerous ex-votos (votive offerings), through which thousands of pilgrims pass. Below, the 1981 recognition of the saint's bones. On the side, a reliquary bust of St. Anthony.



glorified by frequent miracles. Several months after the death of Anthony, the Roman Cardinals, charged with examining the cause of his canonization, retained forty-seven miracles as authentic among those submitted to their judgment. Gregory IX considered the number sufficient and rushed to enlist the humble friar in the catalog of saints.

From century to century, Anthony granted to those who called on him, the wonderful power of his intercession. Down through the centuries, he has multiplied the miracles in favor of those who invoke him with confidence. A more detailed account can be found in the major biographies of the saint in which one finds temporal favors, healings, astonishing conversions and even the raising of the dead. In particular, Saint Anthony returned life to his own nephew who had accidentally drowned in the Tago.

Also and often, one attributes to the saint lost objects found against all hope. Don Inigo



Throughout the centuries, St. Anthony made his devotees feel the wonderful power of his intercession by multiplying prodigies in favor of those who invoke him with confidence. (statue of St. Anthony at the Brompton Oratory, London)

Maurique, who was the bishop of Cordoba in the sixteenth century, had lost an ecclesial ring of great value. He had invoked Saint Anthony in vain; it was impossible to find the band. He related his frustration to his secretaries who were eating with him. "I have obtained great graces through the intercession of this illustrious miracle worker," he said to them, "but this time, I cannot acclaim his services." Hardly had he pronounced these words when an invisible hand dropped onto the table the lost ring. This vividly impressed the people so worthy of faith who witnessed the miracle.



May these few pages contribute in their small way to glorify Saint Anthony of Padua. May they inspire our readers with a profound confidence towards this great servant of God. They will find in him a perfect model and a powerful protector. They will learn by his example to seek in the faithful practice of prayer the ordinary path leading to divine love. As he did, they will base their interior life on devotion to the Immaculate Virgin: no one possesses Jesus fully who does not receive His Blessed Mother.

By his intercession, they will obtain signal graces of both a spiritual and temporal order. In our troubled times, how many need his help! Some have lost the high and easy situation they once had. Others, intoxicated by unexpected success, have lost their former simplicity, their sense of moderation and moral elegance. Many have forsaken that more precious treasure, the innocence and faith of their youth. So great, indeed, are the goods in need of restoration!

“Is quaeris miracula” says an ancient response, dear to the Franciscan Order, “if you are looking for miracles” ...seek the help of Saint Anthony, and your request will soon be granted.

9) PSALMODY OF ST. ANTHONY

If you look for miracles, see death and error banished, misery and devil avoided, lepers and sick restored to health.

The sea calms its anger, prisoners are freed, young and old men recover lost limbs and goods.

Danger withdraws, the poor are helped, let the Paduans who were succored tell you about it.

The sea calms its anger...
Glory be to the Father...
The sea calms its anger...

– Pray to Christ for us,
O glorious and holy Anthony,

– So that we may be worthy of
His promises. Amen.

Prayer

Lord, may the intercession of thy Confessor and Doctor St. Anthony fill thy Church with joy so that she may always be protected by spiritual help and deserve to attain the eternal joys. Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

SE TERMINÓ DE IMPRIMIR
EL 13 DE JUNIO DE 2006,
FIESTA DE SAN ANTONIO DE PADUA,
EN LOS TALLERES DE
GRÁFICAS FERNÁN, EN BILBAO.

