

St. Anthony of Padua

Franciscan Thaumaturgist, born at Lisbon, 1195; died at Vercelli, 13 June, 1231. He received in baptism the name of Ferdinand.

His father was Martin Bouillon, descendant of the renowned Godfrey de Bouillon, commander of the First Crusade, and his mother, Theresa Tavejra, descendant of Froilal fourth king of Asturia. His parents were noble, powerful, and God-fearing people. Having been educated in the Cathedral of Lisbon school, Ferdinand, at the age of fifteen, joined the Canons Regular of St. Augustine, in the convent of St. Vincent, just outside the city walls (1210). Two years later to avoid being distracted by relatives and friends, who frequently came to visit him, he betook himself with permission of his superior to the Convent of Santa Croce in Coimbra (1212), where he remained for eight years, occupying his time mainly with study and prayer. Gifted with an excellent understanding and a prodigious memory, he soon gathered from the Sacred Scriptures and the writings of the Holy Fathers a treasure of theological knowledge.

In the year 1220, having seen conveyed into the Church of Santa Croce the bodies of the first Franciscan martyrs, who had suffered death at Morocco, 16 January of the same year, he too was inflamed with the desire of martyrdom, and resolved to become a Friar Minor, that he might preach the Faith to the Saracens and suffer for Christ's sake. Thus Ferdinand left the Canons Regular of St. Augustine to join the Order of Friars Minor, taking at the same time the new name of Anthony, a name which later on the Convent of Olivares also adopted.

A short time after his entry into the order, Anthony started for Morocco, but, stricken down by a severe illness, which affected him the entire winter, he was compelled to sail for Portugal the following spring, 1221. His ship, however, was overtaken by a violent storm and driven upon the coast of Sicily, where Anthony then remained for some time, till he had regained his health.

His only desire was to follow Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Accordingly, he applied to Father Graziano, Provincial of Coimbra, for a place where he could live in solitude and penance, and enter more fully into the spirit and discipline of Franciscan life. Father Graziano, being just at that time in need of a priest for the hermitage of Montepaolo (near Forli), sent him thither, that he might celebrate Mass for the lay-brethren.

With the zeal of an apostle he undertook to reform the morality of his time by combating in an especial manner the vices of luxury, avarice, and tyranny. The fruit of his sermons was, therefore, as admirable as his eloquence itself. Among the many miracles St. Anthony wrought in the conversion of heretics, the most important miracle is that of the poisoned food offered him by some Italian heretics, which he rendered innoxious by the sign of the cross.

The zeal with which St. Anthony fought against heresy, and the great and numerous conversions he made rendered him worthy of the glorious title of *Malleus hereticorum* (Hammer of the Heretics).

After the death of St. Francis, 3 October, 1226, Anthony returned to Italy. , Anthony retired to the Convent of Padua, which he had himself founded. The last Lent he preached was that of 1231; the crowd of people which came from all parts to hear him, frequently numbered 30,000 and more. His last sermons were principally directed against hatred and enmity, and his efforts were

crowned with wonderful success. Permanent reconciliations were effected, peace and concord re-established, liberty given to debtors and other prisoners, restitutions made, and enormous scandals repaired; in fact, the priests of Padua were no longer sufficient for the number of penitents, and many of these declared they had been warned by celestial visions, and sent to St. Anthony, to be guided by his counsel. Others after his death said that he appeared to them in their slumbers, admonishing them to go to confession.

At Padua also took place the famous miracle of the amputated foot, which Franciscan writers attribute to St. Anthony. A young man, Leonardo by name, in a fit of anger kicked his own mother. Repentant, he confessed his fault to St. Anthony who said to him: "The foot of him who kicks his mother deserves to be cut off." Leonardo ran home and cut off his foot. Learning of this, St. Anthony took the amputated member of the unfortunate youth and miraculously rejoined it.

In 1230, while war raged in Lombardy, St. Anthony betook himself to Verona to solicit from the ferocious Ezzelino the liberty of the Guelph prisoners. At the end of Lent, 1231, Anthony retired to Camposanpiero, in the neighbourhood of Padua, where, after a short time he was taken with a severe illness. Transferred to Vercelli, and strengthened by the apparition of Our Lord, he died at the age of thirty-six years, on 13 June, 1231. He had lived fifteen years with his parents, ten years as a Canon Regular of St. Augustine, and eleven years in the Order of Friars Minor.

Immediately after his death he appeared at Vercelli to the Abbot, Thomas Gallo, and his death was also announced to the citizens of Padua by a troop of children, crying: "The holy Father is dead; St. Anthony is dead!" St. Anthony wrote several works: "Expositio in Psalmos", written at Montpellier, 1224; the "Sermones de tempore", and the "Sermones de Sanctis", written at Padua, 1229-30.