

May Holy Hero... St. Anthony of Padua

Doctor of the Church, Finder of things lost, and patron of the poor - Feast day June 13



St. Anthony of Padua is one of the most beloved and honored saints of the Catholic Church. He was born in Portugal in the year 1195. His father was a captain in the Royal Army, and his parents wished him to become a great nobleman, but when Anthony was just a child, he knew he wanted to devote his life to God. At age 15, Anthony became an Augustinian brother. In 1220, the bodies of five Franciscan friars, martyred in Morocco (St. Bernard and companions) were brought through Anthony's monastery on their way to burial. Deeply touched by their deaths, Anthony desired to also shed his blood for the love of Jesus.

Being attracted to the simple, Gospel lifestyle of the Franciscan friars, he joined their order in 1221. He was sent out as a missionary to Morocco in Africa, but God had different plans for him. He became ill with malarial fever and had to turn back to Portugal. On the journey home, a storm drove the boat off course where it landed in Sicily, Italy instead. There, Anthony was given shelter by the Franciscans on the island.

He led a quiet, simple life until one day he was asked to stand in as a speaker at an ordination Mass. His gift as a great and powerful preacher was revealed. He brought many sinners back to the Lord with his passion for knowing, expressing, and speaking the Word of God. His voice was loud and clear. He was friendly, full of wisdom, and possessed a powerful memory. He challenged those listening to repent and live a true Christian life. Anthony wanted to proclaim the Catholic faith with his whole heart, mind and soul at every moment.

Known as the "wonder worker", God worked many miracles through Anthony. While preaching in a rainstorm, not one person was touched by a drop of water. Another time, heretics (ones who reject the beliefs of the Church) tried to kill him by serving him poisoned food. He simply made the sign of the cross over his meal and no harm came to him. He died on June 13, 1231, at the age of 36 in a monastery outside of Padua, Italy. In a vision he had during his life, St. Anthony received the child Jesus in his arms. You will often see him represented this way in works of art. Look for the statue of St. Anthony in the back of church the next time you go to Mass!

He was canonized less than one year after his death, making him the "quickest" saint in history. Many years after his death, his remains were brought to Padua. Although his body was in decay, his tongue was as fresh as one living because of the extraordinary teachings that had been formed upon it.