

THE LIFE OF SAINT ANTHONY OF PADUA

Foreword

The saints authenticate our Christian living. They show us what we might become. So we admire and honour them, the true heroes of life, and praise God's gifts in them.

The Saints are our leaders in a vast "Communion of Saints"—of those already in heaven, of those expiating for faults in purgatory, and of we who enjoy the state of God's grace on earth.

We reserve the name "Saint", in its technical meaning, to those whom we believe to be already in heaven because of the Church's declaration, and we look to these for intercession with God on our behalf. We are taught that we may ask them to help us in gaining spiritual and temporal favours.

Saint Anthony of Padua has sometimes been called "The World's Favourite Saint" because of the almost excessive liberality of God's favours granted through his intercession.

Anthony was not born in Padua, Italy, he was born at Lisbon in Portugal. The date was 1195 and his baptismal name was Ferdinand. His parents were substantial citizens and the family name was something like Bulhom.

He was baptised in the cathedral church of old Lisbon, the Se Patriarcal, and on its ancient font you read: "Here the waters of holy baptism cleansed Anthony from all stain of original sin. The world rejoices in his light, Padua in his body, heaven in his soul."

Augustinian, then Franciscan

Anthony Bulhom received his early schooling from the clergy of the Se Patriarcal school and at fifteen years of age he joined the Augustinian monastery of St. Vincent de Fora, Lisbon. When seventeen, 1212, he transferred to the Coimbra monastery of Santa Cruz and there was taught for nine years by the very religious and very capable Canon John: the experience equipped him unusually well for the extraordinary life that was to be his.

When 25 years of age, and quite likely unordained—for in those days it was normal to receive priestly ordination at 30 years, he was lifted from Augustinian monastic observance into the itinerant missionary life of a Franciscan Friar Minor. It is a most interesting example of the strange ways of God's providence in men's lives.

The new Order of Friars Minor had been in existence less than twenty years when Ferdinand the Augustinian crossed to it. Despite its youth the Order had made an astonishing beginning attracting hundreds of recruits. Some of these were already found in Coimbra, Portugal, and five of their number boldly ventured into the Saracen-held Morocco to preach Christ's gospel. They were murdered (or, as we would hold, martyred) by the Saracens in January 1220, and their bodies were carried back to Portugal by local seamen and brought to Santa Cruz monastery, Coimbra.

Ferdinand, it is told, was very moved and irresistibly attracted as he knelt to pray beside the martyred bodies of Friar Berard and companions. And to their brethren from the Coimbra convent of St. Anthony of the Olives (named for Anthony the Hermit) he said: "If I may go to Morocco and imitate these brothers, I will gladly join you."

And this is what he did with due permission. As a friar minor he became "Anthony", the name no doubt being assumed in honour of St. Anthony the Hermit, and within months he crossed to Marrakesh, Morocco. But not for martyrdom! God's Providence entered again and a persistent malarial fever laid him low until it was necessary to give up and set sail for home.

Italy

At sea a violent storm arose and the ship ran before it to find harbour south of Messina, Sicily. Here Friar Anthony was delighted to find some of his new family of Franciscans, and with these he headed north to come to Assisi, Italy, for the famous Chapter of Mats at Pentecost 1221.

Unheralded and unknown, he surely saw Francis of Assisi—the founder of the Friars Minor—at this Chapter, but there is no report that they met in person. It would not have been easy to do so with more than 3,000 men gathered for this unique meeting.

Friar Gratian, Provincial of Romagna (North Italy), took the new man under his protection and sent him to a hermitage at Montepaolo near Forli, and there he lived in prayer, poverty and study for twelve months.

In the summer of 1222 there was a priestly ordination ceremony at Forli conducted by Bishop Ricciardellus Belmonti. Ordained were Dominican and Franciscan friars, “amongst them Anthony” (as his first biographer put it). He was 27 years of age.

At a reception in the Dominican convent following the ordinations, the new Father Anthony, was induced to speak. “He began without flourish—writes Fr. Clasen O.F.M.—but as he spoke his words became vivid and forceful until the assembly came under the spell of the Holy Spirit who spoke through him”. (St. Anthony, p. 38J).

And the friars minor, and all present, realised that a man of God and a ‘gifted intellectual’ was with them. In a later sermon Anthony said: “When the Holy Spirit enters a soul, He fills it with his fire and lets it enkindle others. All things that draw near to Him feel his renewing warmth.” (Sermons of St. Anthony).

Scholarly Man and Leader

The fame of Anthony—of Lisbon and later of Padua — rests on his deep sanctity and the burning zeal of his ten year period of missionary preaching. These are certainly the highlights of his life as it has come down to us. Actually we have too few precise details about this friar, more famous around the world than the intimately known and extraordinary Francis of Assisi. Yet a few other facts of his life deserve to be told before we write of his preaching and his holiness.

These facts are: Anthony was a most capable teacher of the friars minor, and he was an inspiring leader in their midst.

As teacher, he holds the unique distinction of being personally appointed to teach theology to the friars by St. Francis himself. “Friar Anthony, my bishop and theologian” wrote Francis. When you know that Francis of Assisi had a deep ingrained suspicion of learning, of showy learning, and manifested his opposition to it in several determined ways, you realize what a decision it was for him to appoint Anthony to teach the others. Father Clasen thinks that Francis’s decision in this matter “marked a turning point in the history of the franciscan brotherhood.” (St. Anthony, p.44.)

Anthony, of course, taught Sacred Scripture and he taught St. Augustine — the Augustine that Canon John had opened up to him. Ever afterwards the friars minor were to lean towards this “Augustinian” flavour in matters of philosophy and theology. He organised classes for the friars at Bologna; Italy, and soon at Montpellier and Limoges in France. None of his courses could have lasted more than a few months at a time, for he was heavily committed to public preaching year by year, yet his teaching left its mark.

The excellence of his mind may even now be gauged by a testimony of Canon Thomas Gallus, an Augustinian of Vercelli, Italy, a considerable scholar who knew Anthony as a personal friend. Thomas Gallus wrote: “As a close friend I have been able to observe in Brother Anthony of the friars minor a readiness to grasp mystical theology. For though he was not well read in natural sciences, he had a pure spirit and a burning heart and was a man on fire with God. All this enabled him easily to understand all the riches and depths of mystical theology with all his heart.” (Commentary on Dionysius.) It is a precious testimony.

As Leader of the friars, Anthony was Guardian and Custos of Franciscan houses in France 1225-27: Le Py-en-Velay is one, the district around Limoges is the other. And he personally founded the convent of Brive in Central France where, to this day, his cult is best kept in France, Then back in Italy in 1228 he became Provincial of northern Italy at the Order’s Pentecost Chapter. After three years he retired from this onerous office to remain on in his beloved Padua.

Preaching with Power

“A burning heart, on fire for God” wrote Thomas Gallus of his friend Anthony. And this is the image of Anthony the preacher handed down in northern Italy and southern and central France. It reminds one of St. Paul’s “I came amongst you with power, invested with the power that raised Jesus Christ from the tomb.”

There is no possible doubt about the amazing success of the man as a preacher. In sober fact he set a standard in the Order of Friars Minor, a standard that was to influence many of his brethren for the Franciscans have had great renown in Catholic history for their enthusiastic gospel preaching.

Anthony began in the Romagna area of north Italy and moved around in Lombardy and Emilia: Rimini, Venice, Friuli, these are cities where his memory is preserved. “He began by speaking to half-empty churches (writes Alice Curtayne),’ for good preachers were rare and preaching being in decline, there was a bored indifference to sermons. But he never preached twice in the same half-empty church. In general, the people’s response was prompt. The churches packed to hear him until windows and doors were filled with faces and all the square outside massed with people. Anthony was forced to take a platform out into the streets the better to command his audiences. But when the numbers mounted to thirty thousand, the streets and squares were found cramping, and the platform had to be carried out of the town to a bare hillside, say, or to a meadow, and thither that spectacular mass of people followed him . . .”

“Within a year of his accepting the mission of preacher, when it was known in a city or town that he was coming, shops were shuttered up and the law courts closed in order that no one should be forced to miss the event . . . When the crowds moving to one of his sermons crested a distant hill, some onlooker likened them to a dense flock of birds rising in flight. “Their manner of listening made a deep impression on observers for these thirty thousand were in the habit of standing without movement, and voicelessly, listening together as one man might listen. But sometimes, when the saint paused, they sighed in unison, and then the sound was like a great wind sighing. Another eyewitness left on record this vivid detail: he said that large numbers used to assemble at the platform the night before the sermon to make sure of a good place. Crowds would be seen crossing the fields at night, carrying lanterns to guide themselves.”

Curtayne’s words may sound more like oratory than sober history, yet they can be reasonably verified. Rimini (Italy), Montpellier (France), Limoges (France), Padua (Italy) are four cities and countrysides which still bear witness in memorial stones and in partly written traditions to the amazing power of his preaching, and to the crowds that listened. And these are only a few of many, many places.

A new Elias, a Prophet sent by God, a Hammer of heretics, a Burning Fire — these are ancient encomiums of the preacher Anthony.

And tradition is so insistent on the gospel signs that accompanied his preaching, viz. “that the sick were healed, the lame walked, lepers were cleansed” that it would be quite arbitrary to put them aside. One may say, of course, that the greater wonder still was the penetration of the gospel word into the minds and hearts of the hearers, for it is also traditional that spiritual conversions came almost en masse.

Miracles

An excellent modern life of Saint Anthony by Father S. Clasen O.F.M. — published in English by Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago 1961 — holds that the saint performed only a few miracles while living; the flood of wonders came after his death.

Two of the most famous are of St. Anthony speaking to the fish at Rimini after the residents ignored him, and the Eucharistic miracle of Bourges.

The Bourges miracle is the one where the Jew challenged Anthony to back up his belief in the real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist by a sign. It was agreed upon to starve an ass and then lead it before some sheaves of hay and a container holding the Eucharist, and see what would happen. The story is that the ass bent its front legs before the Sacrament before attacking the hay and the Jew converted.

Tradition gives us the story of the Child Jesus resting in the arms of Anthony, and we also have the wonder that happened at Arles, France in 1224. Anthony was speaking to the friars in a local chapter when suddenly Frances of Assisi — then alive and well at Assisi! — was seen to appear in the doorway with his arms uplifted in the sign of the cross. A case of bilocation.

Padua

Earlier it has been said that Anthony returned from France to Italy in 1228 and was then elected Provincial of the Romagna Province. Here he again taught and led the friars, and evangelised the people. Late in 1228 he was in Rome and preached before Pope Gregory IXth and the clergy, as well as to the people. Gregory is said to have called him an “Armory of the Bible” after hearing his biblical sermons.

Padua now became a centre of attraction for the holy man and more and more did he come to visit the city. Then by 1229 he was a permanent resident.

In ancient times the friars minor were called “mendicants” and “Itinerants”, the latter because they wandered here and wandered there. Anthony was surely an itinerant. Portugal - Spain -Morocco - Sicily - Italy - Assisi - Romagna - Bologna. Then north to Arles - Montpellier - Toulouse - LePuy en Velay -Limoges - Bourges - Brive; all in France. Then returning to Italy we can follow him to Monte Luco - La Verna (for several months) - Verona - Mantua - Rimini - Venice - and finally Padua.

In all these places, it would seem, the friars and the people have kept memories of his visits and of his goodness. The mildest of men in company, and with a heart of compassion for suffering and sin, he could be forceful against usury, double-dealing and unfairness. (There’s a record of him dressing down a bishop, and a good one, in the middle of a sermon with the words: “And now let me speak to you who wears the mitre!”) As said of Francis, so may it be said of Anthony: “He was not so much one who prayed, rather was he a person who was prayer.”

A born teacher; a born leader, and with superb gifts in both, he would as willingly bend his arms to wield a hoe in the field or to prepare a meal for his companions. A homely man.

In the last two years of his brief life he captured the city of Padua. For his Lenten courses of sermons the crowds were enormous, Paduans and country folk, hanging on his words. It was Christ and the multitudes over again!

Somehow as you re-read the meagre details of Anthony’s life, you form the impression: how like, in so many ways, is his life with that of the Lord and Master!

Father Clasen details the splendid effects of Anthony’s preaching in the Paduan area: “Quarrels were patched up, mortal enemies reconciled, poor debtors released from prison and given their freedom, restitution made of ill-gotten goods. Immoral women reformed their lives, thieves and criminals changed their ways, the public life of Padua - which had been something of a disaster area -was considerably changed.” (St. Anthony, p. 105).

The Senate of Padua city “on the plea of Friar Anthony” made a statute in 1231 “to forbid the imprisonment of a person for the sole reason that he had fallen into debts; his goods could be seized but he was to be allowed his liberty”.

In this same period Anthony composed the only writings we have from his hand. It is a large volume of Sermons and sermon notes.

Death

At the early age of 36 years death came to him. Following the Lent of 1231 which left him very exhausted he left the city of Padua to live in solitude at Camposampiero. A nobleman named Tiso had built him a hut under a large walnut tree with similar accommodation for his companion friars, of whom Luke Belludi was one. Here in retirement he dealt with God about his own life. “God permits his judgment to be exercised by the pious Christian”—wrote Anthony. “For the Christian judges himself and then God finds nothing in him that is worthy of blame”.

On Friday, June 13, 1231, when the friars’ bell called him to noonday meal, he left his hut to eat with the others. As he sat to table he had an attack of weakness and was taken to bed, but soon he asked the friars to bring him back to Padua. They got as far as Arcella with the holy man resting on a waggon. As he got worse they stopped there. He made confession, took Viaticum, and then sang gently ‘*O Gloriosa Virginum*’ to Our Lady. One of the friars asked him, “What are you gazing at so intently?” And Anthony replied, “I see my Lord”. He was then anointed, joined the friars in the seven penitential psalms, and in about half an hour “his soul peacefully left his body and was received into the happiness of God’s infinite love.”

Padua Acclaims a Saint

It is said that the friars thought to bring his body quietly back to Padua knowing that the people of Arcella and Capo di Ponte would try to keep the holy man with them. They were frustrated, however, when children began to run through the streets of Padua calling out: “The holy father is dead; St. Anthony is dead!”

For four days the people of Arcella and Capo di Ponte strove to keep his remains. They blocked the bridge over the river and cut down a temporary one. Eventually by a ruse the Mayor of Padua outwitted them and Bishop Jacopo

Corrado, the clergy and friars, and a procession of thousands of people brought the remains in triumph back to the Friars' church at Padua.

“Immediately after his death—writes Clasen, p. 120—Anthony became the object of an extraordinary devotion, and miracle followed miracle as the prayers of the sick and the afflicted were answered by sudden cures and wonders”. A wave of enthusiasm followed, crowds flocked from the neighbouring towns and villages to visit the tomb. The bishop, the senate, the knights and university students, formed a council to put some order into these noisy gatherings. Candles of enormous size were brought and lighted—one of these needed sixteen men to carry it!

Scarcely a month had passed when the city of Padua sent official requests to Pope Gregory to canonise their man. The canonisation was held at Spoleto on May 30th, 1232.

Shrine at Padua

The Saint, *Il Santo*, this is how the Paduans have always referred to Saint Anthony. Our man, our treasure, our protector!

Soon they set to work to build him a shrine that would rival the magnificent church of St. Mark the Evangelist at Venice, and this they succeeded in doing. When the new basilica was well under way in 1263, it was decided to exhume the remains and relocate them within it.

St. Bonaventure, Minister General of the friars, was present and bore witness to a wonder. It was discovered on opening the coffin that the body had decayed leaving only the bones, but the tongue of the saint was seen to be fresh and intact. Reverently taking it up Bonaventure exclaimed, “O blessed tongue, you always praised the Lord and led others to praise Him! Now we see how great indeed were your merits before God!” (To this day the tongue is preserved at Padua)

Devotion to Saint Anthony

For nearly 750 years devotions to The Saint, and petitions for favours through his intercession, have never flagged in the Catholic church. These have always been of a popular, even domestic kind. Some thought when Pope Pius XII added his name to the list of important Doctors of the Church in 1946 that the intention was to restore a truer picture of this powerful personality to the people who had made him “The Finder of Lost Articles”. But only time shall tell.

At Padua, Italy, the Conventual Franciscans reverently maintain the beautiful basilica and guard the treasures of the ages accumulated around the tomb of the saint. Enthusiastic devotions are regularly conducted, and an endless flow of devotees and sightseers come and go from all parts of the world. From the frequently published lists of favours granted (cf. *Il Messaggero di Sant' Antonio*), one can see that his cult does not diminish. Many are the special shrines of St. Anthony in the churches of the Catholic world.

DEVOTIONS, PRAYERS, CUSTOMS IN HONOUR OF ST. ANTHONY

Devotions

A client of St. Anthony should note that in the making of a Novena, the Thirteen-Day Prayer, or any other special prayer to which a Plenary Indulgence is attached, the conditions ordinarily prescribed for gaining the plenary indulgence are the following: confession, Communion, a visit to a church, and prayer for the Pope's intentions. Done in this way, the Church grants you a Plenary Indulgence which assures you of God's special blessing.

It has long been a custom, that should God grant you a special favour through St. Anthony, you on your part ought to make some kind of thank-offering, e.g. by an alms to the poor.

Tuesday Devotion as a Novena

(Tuesday is traditionally St. Anthony's Day because he was buried on Tuesday at Padua in 1231 amidst an outpouring of divine favours, A Novena runs for nine Tuesdays.)

Prayer:

O glorious Saint Anthony, safe refuge of the afflicted and distressed, encouraged by the wonderful favours and graces which God bestows upon those who piously invoke your intercession,

I come to you today with a contrite and hopeful heart. To you, I lift my heart in prayer imploring your blessing, your aid and your protection.

Obtain for me, I beseech you, what I ask in this my necessity (name it).

But if it should be opposed to the Will of God and the welfare of my soul, obtain for me such other graces as shall be conducive to my salvation.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn (a Paduan traditional hymn)

1. The dower of gifts and miracles
Within the power forever dwells
Of Anthony; seek then, and find
Him ever gracious, just and kind.

Chorus.

Peace does he give, and gloom departs
Beneath his touch from troubled hearts;
While treasures lost and sought in vain
He finds for young and old again.

2. Then unto him upraise a prayer
In direst need and dark despair,
For know that in your cares and needs
Your plaint he ever hears and heeds.

Chorus:

3. To God the Father and the Son
And to the Spirit, ever one,
Today as in the days of yore
May glory be for ever more.

Chorus:

Aspirations

St. Anthony, whom the infant Jesus so much loved and honoured: Grant me what I ask of you.

St. Anthony, powerful in word and work: Grant me what I ask of you.

St. Anthony, attentive to those who invoke you: Grant me what I ask of you.

Pray for us, Saint Anthony! That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Prayer:

O God, may this commemorating of blessed Anthony, your Confessor and Doctor, fill your people with joy. May they always be so defended by your spiritual assistance that they may merit to possess everlasting happiness. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer in Gratitude for Favours

St. Anthony, the miracle-worker, father to the poor and comforter of those in distress, you have come to my help with such understanding and have brought me peace of mind. For this, I offer you my heartfelt thanks. With my gratitude, accept also my promise, which I here and now renew, to live always in the love of Jesus and my neighbour.

Continue to watch over me protectively, and obtain for me this final grace of being able one day to enter eternal glory and there to join with you in praising God's mercy. Amen.

Thirteen Petitions to St. Anthony (Tredicina)

These are said on thirteen Tuesdays, or on thirteen days before the Saint's feast of June 13th, or simply as your regular form of petition through St. Anthony. The Italians have great faith in these petitions which they call the "thirteen" (Tredicina), and it is commonly believed that the author was Saint Bonaventure O.F.M. who died in 1274.

1. O glorious St. Anthony, empowered by God to raise the dead to life, raise me from my present tepidity to a new life of fervour.

Between each petition it is the custom to insert a Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

2. O wise St. Anthony, endowed by God with true wisdom, enlighten my mind and open it up to God's truth. Glory.

3. O pious St. Anthony, ever ready to help those who seek your aid, assist me in my present need. Glory.

4. O generous St. Anthony, you who listened to God's inspiration and consecrated your life to his service, help me to listen to and to heed God's inspirations in my life. Glory.

5. O St. Anthony, man of great purity, keep me safe from immoral conduct and help me to live an innocent life. Glory.

6. Dear Saint, through whose intercession a multitude of sick people regained their health, assist me to recover full spiritual health and to conquer evil desires. Glory.

7. O St. Anthony, on fire with zeal for the salvation of souls, guide me in my life and help me to come to eternal salvation. Glory.

8. O compassionate St. Anthony, deliverer of captives, obtain for me the grace to be free of the bonds of sin and to avoid God's displeasure in my final judgment.. Glory.

9. O holy Wonderworker, gifted by God with power to restore limbs severed from the body, help me to stay united in love with God and with the Church. Glory.

10. O helper of the poor, ever ready to find for them the things they had lost, help me never to lose God's friendship throughout my life. Glory.

11. O most dear Saint, with a ready ear for all petitioners, listen graciously to my prayer and present it to God so that my request may be granted. Glory.

12. O St. Anthony, unwearied preacher of God's Word, help me to bear witness to my faith by word and example. Glory.

13. O most loving St. Anthony, whose tomb is so honoured at Padua, have care of me in my needs. I pray that your miraculous tongue may speak to God for me so that I be heard and given consolation. Glory.

PRAYERS FOR SPECIAL FAVOURS

Prayer for Recovery of Lost Things

O Blessed St. Anthony, God's grace has made you a powerful advocate in all our needs and the patron saint for the finding of things lost or stolen; to you I now have recourse with love and confidence.

You have assisted in countless requests for the recovery of lost goods. I recommend my present loss to your care in the real hope that you will help me find it, as long as my request is for God's glory and the welfare of my soul.

Obtain also for me a strong faith, peace of mind, a love for the things of God, and a sincere active will to do good to others. I make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer for the Gift of Children

St. Anthony, we sincerely pray to you to obtain from God the blessing of a child for our marriage. We acknowledge God's power over our lives. We acknowledge your special intercession with God, and should our favour be granted we promise to teach this child a special devotion to you.

Students' Prayer

Blessed Anthony, brilliantly endowed with Christian wisdom, I wish to place my studies under your protection. Guided by your example I wish to draw my best knowledge from the lives of Jesus and Mary. May God the Father of Light grant me, through your intercession, a clear understanding, a retentive memory and a sound judgment. Assist me to study with perseverance so that I may develop God's gifts in me and use them according to His will. I ask, through you, for success in my examinations as long as it is for God's honour and my true benefit.

Customs observed in his honour

Brief or Blessing of St. Anthony.

When seriously tempted by the devil during months spent in solitude, Anthony made for himself a small cloth—something like the square of a scapular—and on it he wrote the words: “Behold the Cross of the Lord! Begone you evil powers! The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David has conquered! Alleluia!” He had evidence that this brought Christ's help quickly to hand so he recommended the practise to people afflicted by the devils' buffetings. (You could make such a talisman for yourself.)

S.A.G. - Written on back of letters.

S.A.G. stands for St. Anthony Guide. The custom apparently arose because of the reputed extraordinary delivery of letters between Spain and the New World in some urgent cases following prayers to St. Anthony.

Blessing of Bread (in honour of St. Anthony)

A prayer that may be used for this blessing:

“Lord Jesus, in a desert place You blessed and distributed five loaves to feed the hungry multitude: So now we ask You to bless + these loaves. We will share our meal in honour of your great lover St. Anthony, who was ever so anxious to provide for the poor. As we share the loaves, we ask Your constant care in our lives.”

St. Anthony's Bread

The giving of alms to the poor in gratitude for favours received. The custom got the name of “Bread” because an Italian woman promised the weight of her apparently dead child in grain should St. Anthony restore him to life. Apparent death had followed a drowning accident. When the child recovered, she is said to have duly given its weight in grain to the poor. In other places also the “bread-line” was the way to express gratitude to the saint. Donations of bread are still made in some places and bread is blessed and eaten together as a sign of community on his feast.

Blessing of Lilies

This is a fairly modern custom. It is done on the feast of the saint and the blessed lilies are kept in the home as a reminder of the beauty and purity of God imaged in the saint. The following prayer may be used for the blessing.

Almighty God, Provident Father of men and Lover of purity, look with favour on these lilies (flowers) which we present to you for blessing in honour of the great Saint Anthony!

May this sign of the Cross invest them with sacramental meaning, and may You who created them to gladden our hearts with their beauty now permit them to convey to us something of your infinite healing power.

May those who devoutly keep these lilies (flowers) in their homes, and invoke the help of St. Anthony, find healing for their sicknesses, an incentive to joy and purity of life, and strength to resist the temptations of the devil. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Words of St. Anthony

Christ is our Centre

“From Christ, as from the centre, stream forth all graces to us who are in the circumference. When the soul lies before him like fertile land, it is the Garden of Eden in which bloom the rose of love, the violet of humility, and the lily of purity.”

Gazing on the Cross

“Nowhere can a man more clearly grasp his dignity than in the mirror of the Cross. In it, you see how you must bend your pride, and mortify the concupiscence of your flesh, pray to the Father for those who persecute you, and commend your spirit into his hands.”

On Contemplation

“Souls dedicated to God are like the birds of the air, for they are lifted up on high by the wings of virtue and behold the King in his glory. Not in body, but in spirit, they are carried upward to the third heaven and see with the clear eyes of the spirit the majesty of the triune God, perceiving with the ears of their heart things which they cannot express in words or grasp with their minds. The taste of God in contemplation is more precious than anything else; for, no matter what a man might wish for, it is nothing when compared to this. For, when the spirit of a man stands before God and sees his happiness and tastes his delights, then in truth has he attained to paradise . . . All the graces of God in this present life are only a little drop in comparison with his eternal recompense.”

On Solitude

“Alas, how many disturbing thoughts go through our heart. As a result we lack the leisure to enjoy the bread of heavenly delights and to taste the joys of interior contemplation. For that reason the good Master invites us: Come apart from the restless throng into a desert place, into solitude of mind and body.” And from personal experience Anthony added: “When a man withdraws from the turbulence of the world and rests in quiet and solitude, tasting the bread of tears as he thinks over his sins, and relishing the delights of heaven, then does the Lord make himself known to him”.

The Holy Spirit and Fire

“The power of fire overcomes all things and is not itself subdued; it imparts its action to the things it encompasses, renews everything that comes near it, and does not decrease as it spreads itself. So too does the Holy Spirit pervade all things by his power, for he is ineffable in his might. When he enters a soul, he fills it with his fire, and lets it enkindle others. All things that draw near him feel his renewing warmth. He leads all hearts upward to heaven.”

Apostles

“The world is like a field, and to bear fruit there is as difficult as it is praiseworthy. The hermits bloom in solitary places and shun the company of men. The monks blossom in a garden enclosed and hide themselves from the eyes of men. How much more glorious is it if a Christian brings forth fruit in an open field, the world, for all too easily the twin sprouts of grace, the spirit of a life of virtue and the fragrance of a good name, wither there and die. Therefore did Christ glory in being a flower of the field, since he said of himself: “I am the flower of the field.”

Demons

“Christ’s love and Christ’s sufferings drive out every kind of demon . . . When we are tempted by the Devil, we should pray with great fervour: In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, who once commanded the seas and the wind, I command you, depart from me, you wicked spirit!” (Note the custom he introduced of wearing the Brief or Blessing.)

Love of Our Lady

“The praise of the most glorious Virgin is the sweet voice which delights the ears of the Spouse, Jesus Christ, the Son of that Virgin. For Wisdom, the Son of God, has built himself a house in the womb of the ever-blessed Virgin, and has set up this tabernacle on seven columns, the seven-fold gift of grace in Mary. Truly, blessed is the womb that bore you, O Son of God, Lord of the Angels, Creator of heaven and earth, Redeemer of the world!”

“O Cherubim and Seraphim, Angels and Archangels, cast down your gaze in awe and bend your head, and reverently venerate the temple of the Son of God, the shrine of the Holy Spirit, and exclaim:

“Blessed is the womb that bore you. O earthly sons of Adam, to whom this grace, this solitary boast is given! With faith and devotion, prostrate yourselves and honour the ivory throne of our true Solomon, the high and elevated throne of our Isaias, saying: Blessed is the womb that bore you!”

On the Effects of the Sacraments

Confession

“A leper came to Jesus, fell down before him, and said: If you will it, you can make me clean. So should the sinner in confession kneel before the priest as the representative of Jesus Christ, who has given him the power of binding and loosing. The sinner must have such faith in the dignity of this office that he too will say: Lord, if you will it, you can make me clean and absolve me from my sins. The leper was freed at once of leprosy. God does this very thing each day in the soul of the sinner through the priest, for the priest also must do these same three things: he must stretch forth his hand, touch and will. He stretches forth his hand when he prays to God for the sinner and is filled with compassion for him. He touches the sinner when he consoles him and promises forgiveness to him. He has the will to make him clean when he absolves him of his sin.”

Holy Communion

“On him who receives the Lord worthily, he bestows his twofold anointing: he lessens temptations and he incites devotion.”

On Preaching

“The sermon must be true, not false, without frivolous, jesting, or high-sounding words, and it must call men to weep and do penance, Just as a thorn draws blood when it pierces the skin, and a nail that is driven through the hand will cause great suffering, so should the words of the wise man like a thorn pierce the heart of the sinner and draw forth the blood of his tears, and cause him to have sorrow over his past sins and fear of the punishment of hell. The sermon, moreover, must be sincere, which means that the preacher may not deny by his actions what he says in words, for the whole force of his eloquence is lost when his word is not helped by his deed. Lastly, it must direct its hearers to correction in such a way that, having heard the sermon, they will change their lives for the better.”

Actions Speak Louder than Words

(from a sermon by St. Anthony)

“The man who is filled with the Holy Spirit speaks in different languages. These different languages are different ways of witnessing to Christ, such as humility, poverty, patience and obedience; we speak in those languages when we reveal in ourselves these virtues to others. Actions speak louder than words; let your words teach and your actions speak. We are full of words but empty of actions, and therefore are cursed by the Lord, since he himself cursed the fig tree when he found no fruit but only leaves. Gregory says: ‘A law is laid upon the preacher to practice what he preaches’. It is useless for a man to flaunt his knowledge of the law if he undermines its teaching by his actions.

“But the apostles ‘spoke as the Spirit gave them the gift of speech’. Happy the man whose words issue from the Holy Spirit and not from himself! For some men speak as their own character dictates, but steal the words of others and present them as their own and claim the credit for them. The Lord refers to such men and others like them in

Jeremiah: ‘So, then, I have a quarrel with the prophets that steal my words from each other. I have a quarrel with the prophets, says the Lord, who have only to move their tongues to utter oracles. I have a quarrel with the prophets who make prophecies out of lying dreams, who recount them and lead my people astray with their lies and their pretensions. I certainly never sent them or commissioned them, and they serve no good purpose for this people, says the Lord.’

“We should speak, then, as the Holy Spirit gives us the gift of speech. Our humble and sincere request to the Spirit [or ourselves should be that we may bring the day of Pentecost to fulfilment, insofar as he infuses us with his grace, by using our bodily senses in a perfect manner and by keeping his commandments. Likewise we shall request that we may be filled with fiery tongues for confessing the faith, so that our deserved reward may be to stand in the blazing splendour of the saints and to look up to the triune God.”

APPENDIX

A RECENT REMARKABLE CURE

(Details given here come from Elia Bruson, *Il Messaggero do Sant’Antomo*, Padua, Nov. 1976, p. 42-43.)

At Lappano near Cosenza, Italy, a remarkable cure happened in 1975 through prayer to Saint Anthony.

Cosenza is found at the extreme south of Italy, in the ‘toe of the foot’ that gives southern Italy its peculiar shape. And Lappano is a village in the high Sila mountains fifteen kilometres from Cosenza.

Here on July 28th, 1975, a remarkable thing happened to Iolanda Gervino under God’s healing hand mediated by St. Anthony. Iolanda is an unmarried woman and was then 57 years of age.

When Iolanda Gervino was thirty one years, in 1949, she became a complete invalid unable even to move from her bed and to do anything for herself. A complicated thyroid complaint laid her low, robbed her body of all its strength; resisted all medical cures, and prostrated her in bed for 26 long years. She was attended by her wonderful sisters and brother in every possible way. But, of course, over 26 years her body had greatly deteriorated, she was anaemic and emaciated.

Then as the long hopeless years rolled by she began to pray almost desperately that God would not allow her to outlive her two sisters and one brother who attended so carefully to her needs. When one of the sisters died her prayers became even more pointed.

Sudden Relief

And then, after this long ordeal, and precisely on July 28th, 1975, relief came suddenly. With reserve and simplicity she told Fr. Bruson—in August 1976— what happened on that unforgettable day.

“It was about ten past three p.m. on a very sultry day. I was lying on my bed as usual and quite listless. In the same room taking siesta lay Lida, my sister, and Giovanni, my brother. As I lay half-asleep and half-awake there suddenly came to me a Friar who stood nearby and ordered me to get up. I said to him that I could not do it, I couldn’t even move . . . but he repeated his order three times. The third time he put his hands under my head and urged me on assuring me that he would help me to walk. In that instant I felt perfectly well. He took my right hand and helped me lift myself up, and then he vanished. Since that moment I have had no suffering and I am well.”

“Naturally my sister and brother were bewildered to see me out of bed and active, they rushed to help me. And when we got to the front room, where St. Anthony’s picture hangs on the wall, I pointed to it and said to them, ‘There he is, he’s the one who cured me.’ I took down the picture, laid it on the floor and knelt in front of it and kissed it with my heart bounding with joy and thanks. After a while my brother and sister began to calm down, they had been seized with a fear that I was about to die!”

Her Brother’s Statement

Of this marvellous incident Giovanni Gervino says: “Such a strong wind blew just after three o’clock that day that I said to my sister Lida, ‘It must be an earthquake?’ And at that instant I saw a white cloud from the balcony and my sister Iolanda was up on her feet. I jumped from my bed to support her but she kept saying she was cured and could stand on her own feet. It was an incredible happening for us . . . Iolanda told us about the vision, and immediately

asked me to telephone Don Saverio Greco, our parish priest, to have a Mass of Thanksgiving said the next day which was Tuesday in honour of St. Anthony. Then she asked me to take her to Padua to thank the Saint.” (Padua is 1000 kilometres distant.)

“That afternoon and evening we hid the news except from a few close friends” said Giovanni, “because we really thought she might collapse and die. But Iolanda gradually took on a good colour and was relaxed and happy: she moved about freely as we watched her carefully. Next morning she got herself up and attended to her personal toilet. So we decided to tell our neighbours and the marvellous news ran around the neighbourhood like lightning.”

Giovanni and Lida then decided to wait for a year before telling the world about the event, and when Iolanda was perfectly well after the year and able to work hard they allowed newsmen to publish the story.

“We firmly believe (they said) that on July 28, 1975, through the intercession of St. Anthony with God a miracle happened in our house.”

The Doctor’s Evidence

Doctor Scarpelli, who knew Iolanda for many years, says that when he was rung in July and heard the news he left an uneaten meal and ran to the house: “I experienced a tremendous and unforgettable emotion (he recalls), not only because the lady was on her feet and walking in a normal way, but because her general condition had altered so dramatically.

She was no longer a wasted, anaemic, listless person, there was colour in her face and strength in her body. Afterwards I quizzed my colleagues and the hospital people where I work on the chances in such a case, and I have become convinced that an extraordinary and inexplicable event happened in the Gervino household”.

Don Greco, parish priest, was deeply moved when he found Iolanda so transformed on the day after the vision. He notified Enea Selis, Bishop of Cosenza, and depositions were taken and made public in August, 1976. The Bishop has simply stated that from the evidence something remarkable happened on July 28, 1975.

This event, given in detail, should amply reassure us that the power of God, through the intercession of the Saints, is very near.

St. Anthony of Padua, Pray for us.