

Saint Anthony of Padua (and Lisbon)

Doctor of the Church

Patron of Seekers of Lost Articles

Feast/Memorial Day

June 13th

Fernando de Bulhões, baptized Anthony, was born in Lisbon, Portugal, to powerful and wealthy parents about the year 1195. Although his parents wished for him to become a noble, Anthony wanted to be poor and also be a missionary for Christ. However, his parents arranged for his education at the Cathedral School and Anthony subsequently entered the Augustinian Abbey of St. Vincent located outside of Lisbon. Anthony was blessed with a great memory and excellent understanding. Later, upon his request to avoid being distracted by relatives and friends, he was transferred to the Augustinian Santa Cruz Monastery in Coimbra, then serving as the capital of Portugal. Following his ordination, Fernando was placed in charge of hospitality at this monastery. It was in this position that Anthony came in contact with the newly founded Franciscan order.

Five Franciscans were traveling through Portugal on their journey to preach to the Muslims in Morocco. These five Franciscans were later martyred and Anthony was so moved by their faith and heroism, that in the summer of 1220, he obtained permission from his superiors to join the Order of Friars Minor, Franciscans. Shortly thereafter, Anthony left with another Franciscan to teach the Gospel to the Saracens in Morocco. He fully intended to die preaching the Good News as the five Franciscans had done. However, he fell desperately ill in Morocco and was compelled to return to Portugal. During his return voyage, a storm drove the ship to Sicily, Italy and from Sicily Anthony made his way to Assisi. Due to his poor health at the time, he was assigned to a rural hospice in Forli, near Bologna, Italy.

On the occasion of an ordination at Forli, someone was needed to provide the homily. Although many Dominican monks were present, and the Franciscans fully expected that they would preach, they had come unprepared. Anthony was advised to speak "whatever the Holy Spirit should put into his mouth." Believing Anthony was only able to read the Breviary and Missal, the Dominicans and Franciscans present at the ordination were astonished at his rich voice and understanding of the Scriptures. With this homily, Anthony's public career began.

Assignments in teaching followed for Anthony. However, it was as an orator and preacher, not as a professor, that Anthony excelled and had the most impact. He had a loud voice, a winning personality and smile, a wonderful memory and had a profound educational background. To this was added a spirit of prophecy and an extraordinary gift of miracles.

With the drive and zeal of an apostle, Anthony set out on his public career to reform morality and combat the heresies of his day. His efforts earned him the title of "Hammer of the Heretics."

Following the death of St. Francis of Assisi on October 3, 1226, Anthony returned to Italy and was elected Minister Provincial of Emilia. Inasmuch as this position detracted from his preaching, Anthony resigned this office in 1230 and moved to Padua. At Padua, as many as 30,000 people would come to hear and be present for his teaching. Through Anthony's efforts, the city of Padua passed a law in March, 1231, in favor of debtors who could not pay their loans.

At the end of Lent in 1231, Anthony became severely ill and died at the age of 36 on June 13, of that year. Within a year, Pope Gregory IX canonized St. Anthony of Padua, placing his name in the calendar of saints. His was the second fastest canonization in Church history and Anthony is sometimes called the "Evangelical Doctor." He is best known for his love and devotion to the Eucharist and as the saint to pray to for the finding of lost articles. On January 16, 1946, Pope Pius XII named Anthony a Doctor of the Church. Saint Anthony remains among the most popular of all saints.

In the United States, the city of San Antonio is named after Anthony as early Spanish explorers in the area stopped in there on his feast day and named the settlement and river after him.

On January 27, 1907, in Beaumont, Texas, a church was dedicated and named in honor of St. Anthony of Padua. The Church was designated a cathedral in 1966 and on April 28, 1974, St. Anthony Cathedral was dedicated and consecrated by Bishop Boudreaux. Pope Benedict XVI designated St. Anthony Cathedral a minor basilica in 2006.