



## St. Anthony of Padua: Worker of Wonders in Word and Deed

By Fr. Russell Becker, OFM

*Dear Friend of the Missions,*

*June 2007*

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*The Easter Season has come to a close with Pentecost, but continues from Sunday to Sunday. In June we celebrate the many Solemnities. It would be good to try to get to Church those days and pray for peace and the missions and the needs of all people.*

*June 3 is the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity; June 10 is the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. On June 13 is St. Anthony of Padua. June 15 is the solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and June 16 is the memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. June 24 is the Solemnity of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist and June 29 is the Solemnity of the Apostles Peter and Paul. (They are the patrons of the Roman Church, a good day to pray for Pope Benedict.)*

*June 17 is Fathers Day; let us pray for all fathers, grandfathers, godfathers, stepfathers and all who serve in a fatherly capacity. Thank you so much for your continued support of the missions. Be assured of our prayers and gratitude.*



**T***he Church proclaims the Paschal Mystery achieved in the saints who have suffered and have been glorified with Christ. She proposes them to the faithful as examples, drawing all to the Father through Christ; and through them, she pleads for God's favor.*

*(Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 104)*

This quote from the Second Vatican Council reminds us of the traditional esteem with which the Church holds the holy men and women who have gone before us. We celebrate the saints because they give us the courage to believe that living by the Gospel is not impossible, but very possible. On June 13, the whole Church joins the Franciscans in keeping the feast of St. Anthony. He is beloved by

some many because of all that he did in his very short life. Because he was a preacher who made people's hearts stir, like Jesus did, and his preaching was confirmed by marvelous deeds in a way similar to the Lord, he is called the Doctor of the Gospel. When people came in contact with St. Anthony, they began to know the Gospel because of his preaching and life. He made Christ visible to them and seen as the One worthy of being followed:



*Christ is our way in example, truth in promise, life in reward; a way that is straight, a truth that does not deceive, a life that never ends.*

In his preaching, following in the footsteps of St. Francis, Anthony proclaimed the Good News. As he went about, he reminded people that God hears their cries for help, that all are called to be faithful followers of the Lord, and that we serve the Lord most particularly in caring for the poor.

### **God hears our cries for help.**

Tradition tells us that St. Anthony is considered to be a wonder worker. Go to any Shrine of St. Anthony and you will see people who seek his intercession. In Padua, there is always the sound of people asking for help at his tomb.

As St. Anthony preached and prayed for people who were trapped by sickness, sin, misfortune and even disbelief, people began to experience peace. They knew that God would listen to them and that God cares for everyone in a special way. Many of the miracles attributed to St. Anthony helped people to face the confusion in their lives with confidence, as they began to understand just how closely God watches over them. This is what he believed and helped others to come to trust:

*The compassion of God is without limits or measure; it is incomprehensible to our finite intelligence. God's compassion embraces and includes all.*



**Called to be faithful followers.** St. Anthony constantly challenged his listeners to faithfulness:

*To say, “Lord, Lord” in the right sense means to believe in our heart; to praise God with our lips, and to bear witness with our deeds. If one of these is lacking, we are not confessing but denying; if our life belies our belief, it counts for nothing to shout God’s praises.*

St. Anthony poses a difficult challenge indeed. Faith, which does not result in a change in the way we live, is NO

FAITH. Just as St. John in his first epistle challenged early Christians to remember that the only way they could prove that they loved God was by loving their brothers and sisters, so St. Anthony to the people of his time. And just as St. John speaks to us, so do the words of St. Anthony.

Without deeply loving, cherishing and serving all that the Creator creates, we could not really say that we love, cherish or serve the Creator:

*Love is essential, so that without love all our efforts are in vain, no matter how much good we do... With love in our hearts, we will approach God in humility, others with compassion and ourselves with respect.*

### **And this love spreads:**

When a crystal is touched by the rays of the sun, it gives forth brilliant sparks of light. When people of faith are touched by God's grace, they too must give forth sparks of light in their good works and deeds, and so bring God's light to others.

We can easily see St. Anthony in this quote, but he was not speaking of himself, he was really inviting his hearers to be the crystals of the ages to come.

**Caring for the Poor.** St. Anthony was gifted with a special vision: he could see Christ in the poor. Since his lifetime many people have been helped, through his compassion and the compassion he stirs up in those who look to him for a guide. Today there are all kinds of ministries to the poor and the outcast all under the patronage of St. Anthony: hungry people are fed because of St. Anthony's bread; there are shelters for the sick, the homeless, AIDS ministries, homes for battered women and families, help for refugees often called Anthony House. This all continues because he has shared his special vision with all of us. Anthony calls us to recognize Christ in the poor:

**Today Christ stands at our door and knocks in the person of the poor. It is Christ that we honor when we give aid. For he tells us plainly: "When you did this to one of the least of my brothers or sisters, you did it to me."**

There is a special vision Anthony shares. He does not just encourage people to help large services to the poor, he wants all of his followers to realize that it is Christ who comes to us in the poor, personally when someone asks for help. He does not want us just to

help answer the knock on the door of the church or institution, but also the knock on our personal doors. This knock he asks us to answer too! For that is Christ knocking too.



God is wonderful in his saints. In them we find hope. St. Anthony is one of those wonders. His preaching echoes the quote from the Council at the beginning:

*The stonemason and the bricklayer are careful to use measuring lines, pendulums and bobs to make walls straight. Can we not say that the virtuous lives of the saints are the measuring lines stretched out over our souls to make sure our lives take the proper shape and measure up to their good example? Whenever, then, we celebrate the feast of a saint, let us look to them as giving us the pattern our lives should take.*

**Let us join St. Anthony in prayer especially on his feast:**

*Let us ask the Lord Jesus Christ to pour out on us his grace, that we may ask and receive the fullness of true joy. May he ask the Father for us to grant us true piety, that we may deserve to come to the place of eternal life. Amen.*

1. Do you use any saints as special patrons and guides?
2. Do you hear Christ when he knocks at the door? Have you had the courage to answer?
3. Do you trust in God's compassion? Do you witness to God's compassion?

**Please pray for our missionaries who are celebrating their birthdays this month:**

**June 2: Archbishop Roberto Gonzales, O.F.M. (Puerto Rico)**

**June 16: Fr. Paul Williams, O.F.M. (Home Missions)**

**June 21: Archbishop Luis Sainz, O.F.M. (Bolivia)**

**June 29: Bro. Daniel Murray, O.F.M. (Peru)**

*May bless them, keep them and lead them!*

**Please remember our missionaries who are ill:**

**Bishop Benedict Coscia, O.F.M. (Brazil)**

**Fr. Charles Finnegan, O.F.M. (Brazil)**

**Bro. Rosario Vieira, O.F.M. (Brazil)**

**Fr. Robert Nee, O.F.M. (Brazil)**

**Fr. Peter Sheridan, O.F.M. (Home Missions)**

**Fr. Arthur Murray, O.F.M. (Home Missions)**

**Fr. Clement Healy, O.F.M. (Jamaica)**

**Fr. Campion Lally, O.F.M. (Japan)**

**Fr. Finian Riley, O.F.M. (Africa)**

*May God give them strength and good health!*

Fr. Thomas Fox, OFM, a professed Franciscan friar for 65 years and a priest for almost 61 years, died on June 4 at Holy Name Friary in Ringwood, N.J. The Wake was held June 4 at the Cortona Chapel of Holy Name Friary in Ringwood. At his request, Thomas was buried in Anapolis, Brazil.



Photos and layout, Br. Octavio Duran, OFM

*St. Anthony Pray for us...*