

a light was seen shining from Anthony's room. The Count looked in and saw Anthony in ecstasy, embracing the Infant Jesus. The Infant Jesus appeared to be resting on the Bible that Anthony was reading and stroking his face. Anthony begged the Count not to tell anyone about this experience; his wishes were respected until after his death. That's why almost always St. Anthony is depicted holding a Bible with the Baby Jesus even to this day.

Another depiction of Anthony is that sometimes he is shown in a tree! The friars had noticed that Anthony admired a tall walnut tree on the property. They had a treehouse built for him, which raised him off the damp ground to help his asthma. It was also a place for quiet contemplation. However, Anthony's health continued to worsen.

On the day of his death, he had come down from the tree to join the brothers in community for their meal, but he collapsed before the meal was finished. He told the brothers that his wish was to be taken to Padua. So, the brothers put him in a cart pulled by oxen and set off for Padua. On the way, they stopped at a community of Franciscan brothers just outside of Padua because he was near death. Here they heard Anthony's confession. Anthony sang a hymn to the Virgin Mary, and his last words were, "I see the Lord!"

He was buried at the church of Santa Maria in Padua. Soon, the bishop along with Pope Gregory IX immediately promoted Anthony's cause for canonization, as miracles began happening at his tomb.

The people of Padua and the pilgrims that began visiting St. Anthony's tomb all worked together to construct a beautiful basilica. It was finished in 1263, and St. Anthony's remains were transferred there. When the casket holding his body was opened, the tongue and the vocal cords of the Saint, the instruments with which he had glorified God in so many homilies, were found to be intact instead of decayed.

Socials with the Saints
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Sources include Jack Wintz, OFM, "Who Was St. Anthony?" *St. Anthony Messenger*
and Debra Garza (Pilgrim Center of Hope Pilgrimage Group Leader)

St. Anthony of Padua

Born: 15 Aug 1195 in Lisbon, Portugal

Died: 13 Jun 1231

Canonized *May 30, 1232*



Born Fernando Martins de Bulhões into a wealthy family, he was educated by religious on the outskirts of Lisbon. However, he must have wished to focus more on his studies instead of being 'distracted' by family members; he requested to move to the Monastery of the Holy Cross in Coimbra, where he focused on theology and Latin. He joined the Augustinian Order, which had recently been organized. At 19 years old, he was ordained to the priesthood, and the Augustinians assigned him to care for various hospitality needs at the abbey.

News caught his attention in 1220 when the first five Franciscan martyrs shed their blood preaching the Catholic faith in Morocco, north Africa. Their headless and mutilated bodies were processed to a monastery just outside Coimbra named for the desert father St. Anthony of Egypt, on their way back for burial. Father Fernando was so inspired by the witness of these martyrs that he went to the Franciscans in Coimbra and said, "I would gladly put on the habit of your Order if you would promise to send me as soon as possible to the land of the Saracens, that I may gain the crown of the holy martyrs."

After some trouble being released from the Augustinians, Fr. Fernando was accepted into the Franciscan Order, and he took the name Anthony. True to their promise, the Franciscans allowed Anthony to go to Morocco. However, he became seriously ill. After several months, he headed home in hopes of recovering his strength. On his return journey, the ship faced storms and high winds, blowing it east across the Mediterranean. Months later, it landed on the coast of Sicily. The friars at nearby Messina, though they didn't know him, welcomed him and began nursing him back to health.

Although he was not fully recovered, Fr. Anthony attended the Pentecost Chapter of Mats (so called because the 3,000-5,000 friars could not be housed and slept on mats). Saint Francis was there, also sick. History does not reveal if Anthony met Francis.

Since Anthony was generally unknown, he received no assignment at the meeting. He requested to accompany a provincial superior from northern Italy. “Instruct me in the Franciscan life,” he asked, without mentioning his prior theological training.

In 1222 during a meal after an ordination of Dominicans and Franciscans, the provincial suggested that one of the friars give a short sermon. Since no one volunteered, they asked Fr. Anthony to offer ‘something simple’. Fr. Anthony began to speak in a simple manner, but the fire within him became evident. His knowledge was unmistakable, but his holiness was most impressive.

When Francis heard about the power of Anthony’s words, he appointed him as the first theology professor of the Franciscan community. The original document that Francis wrote has survived and it is believed to have been written at the beginning of 1224. The letter reads: “Brother Anthony, I, Brother Francis, send you my greetings. It is my pleasure that you preach the holy theology to the brothers, provided you do not extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotion as it stands in the Rule.”

At this time, there was a movement by a group called the Cathari. This group opposed the official Church, citing corruption and abuses within the Church; they abandoned the sacraments and the belief in the Incarnation. The Cathari had taken a real hold in Northern Italy and in Southern France. Anthony was the ideal man to take this on.

He traveled through the area in about 400 trips—choosing to enter the cities where the heretics were strongest, earning him the nickname “Hammer of the Heretics.” Yet, the sermons he has left behind rarely show him taking direct issue with the heretics. As the historian Clasen interprets it, Anthony preferred to present the grandeur of Christianity in positive ways. It was no good to prove people *wrong*: Anthony wanted to win them to the *right*, the healthiness of real sorrow and conversion, the wonder of reconciliation with a loving Father.¹ When he heard heretical speech, he would call on the holy name of Mary.

While he passed through the town of Rimini, the people refused to listen to Anthony and mocked him. He then turned from the crowds to the ocean and began to preach. A large school of fish rose up from the

water and appeared to listen intently, only leaving after the sermon was over! Today, Anthony is revered as patron saint of sailors, fishermen, travelers, priests, and the poor.

Anthony traveled everywhere barefoot, just like St. Francis. Most people were mesmerized by him. He spoke against those within the Church who were abusing their power and the corruption of the rich in society. The churches soon became too small to hold all the people who gathered to hear Anthony speak; he had to preach in other places like marketplaces, fields, and even cemeteries!

After the death of Francis in 1226, the Franciscans came together for another General Chapter in Assisi in 1227. Anthony was appointed the provincial for all of Upper Italy, and he chose to live in Padua because he had come to feel closest to its people. Anthony was called upon to reconcile feuding families, political parties, and cities. He constantly preached love and forgiveness. At that time, there was a growth of unscrupulous business practices that exploited people like the lending of money at exorbitant rates of interest, resulting in the poor being thrown into debtor prisons. Anthony and his brothers condemned these practices and worked to change them, preaching about the dignity of every person. He also believed that the sermon and the sacrament of penance worked hand-in-hand; he wanted his listeners to make a new start, recognize their own errors, and desire God’s forgiveness. So besides preaching, he spent endless hours hearing confessions.

Anthony is venerated as the patron saint of lost things, stemming from a time in his life when he was staying in a monastery and a novice left the grounds with Anthony’s treasured book containing his notes. Back then, books were highly valuable and handwritten—not easily replaced! After Anthony’s earnest prayers, the novice returned and begged forgiveness for taking the book, which he also returned.

Anthony’s health began to decline. He suffered from asthma and what was known then as “dropsy”, which today is what we know as edema or fluid and swelling in the body tissue. He wished to retreat for a while to the quiet of a little village about 8 miles outside of Padua called Camposampiero. There was a small hermitage on a piece of land a wealthy Count had given to the friars. It was here that one night,