Saint Anthony of Padua

1195 ca - 1231

Saint Anthony gives an account of an afflicted man who, at the peak of his sufferings, asked God to be liberated from his pains. Then an Angel appeared to him, and who said to him: "The Lord sends me to give you the choice between a year of sufferings on the earth, or one single day in Purgatory."

The sick man did not have any doubts and replied: "One single day in Purgatory, at least my sufferings will cease." Immediately, the sick man died and was led to Purgatory as desired. The Angel went to him to console him, but as soon as the man saw him he raged against him: "Angel-Seducer, you deceived me; you assured me that I would remain only one day in Purgatory and now it is already twenty years I am abandoned to the most atrocious torments."

The Angel, then, replied: "Undeceive yourself; only a few minutes have elapsed from your passing away, and your cadaver is not yet cold on your deathbed." The man retorted: "Then obtain that I return to earth in order to suffer there for one year, all that will be pleasing to God!"

The Lord approved his request and he returned to life for one year. He continually repeated: "Patience during torment is the golden key to Paradise. Let us therefore profit by offering up our sufferings."

Saint Anthony was born in Lisbon, Portugal, in 1195 to a gentleman and knight of King Alfonso. In 1210 he entered the Augustinian Monastery of Saint Vincent de Fora. In 1212 he transferred himself to the convent of the Holy Cross in Coimbra.

In 1220 he was ordained a priest. The following year, upon receiving the news of the five Franciscan brothers who were murdered in Morocco, he was left very upset. He decided to enter among the Franciscans and asked to depart on a mission. As soon as he arrived in Africa, however, he became ill and was constrained to reenter in Portugal. On his return voyage during the route at sea, he found himself in the middle of a tempest and the ship upon which he was embarked, in order to avoid capsizing went ashore in Sicily. Antonio, at that point, directed himself to Assisi to participate at the general Capitol, where he met Saint Francis. Brother Graziano, minister of the province of Romagna, brought Antonio with him, so that he could celebrate the Mass with the brothers at the hermitage of Montepaolo.

In that retreat, he lived the Franciscan Rule in a radical way. In 1222 on the occasion of a priestly ordination celebrated at Forlì, he gave a sermon out of obedience, which shocked the listeners. From that day, he initiated his activity of being a preacher, of theology and a minister of the Order. He preached in all of Northern Italy and Southern France.

In 1224 he became an instructor of theology in the schools of Bologna and of Montpellier. In 1226, affected by illness, he retired to Padua, in the convent of Saint Mary, Mother of the Lord, dedicating himself to the drafting of sermons. He died on the 13th of June 1231.