

June 13

ON SAINT ANTHONY OF PADUA

135.1 First Point

This saint left the world while still very young to enter the Order of Canons Regular. However, he often had visits from his relatives in the house where he lived; since he did not want to have these visits, in order to avoid them he withdrew to another monastery a long way off, where he led a much more secluded life.

You need to live in seclusion in order to learn the knowledge of salvation⁶⁴¹ which you have to teach others. This is the benefit that you should receive from that kind of life. In that way you must learn how to speak about God, and be able to speak about him effectively. Be convinced that it is in seclusion and in silence that you learn how to speak well. The more you enjoy seclusion and silence, the more you will be able to fulfill your ministry on behalf of your neighbor.

135.2 Second Point

This saint had such a great zeal for religion and for making God known to the infidels, and such a great desire for martyrdom, that when he saw five of Saint Francis' friars go off to preach the Gospel to the Moors, and heard later that they had been martyred, the desire to imitate them, not only in their preaching but also in their martyrdom, led him to plan to enter the Order of Saint Francis. No sooner had he finished his novitiate than he obtained permission to go to Africa to labor for the conversion of the infidels.

You are obliged in your work to teach the truths of faith to your disciples and to instruct them in their religion. In order to fulfill well this duty, you should consecrate yourself entirely and even, if necessary, give your life. Is this how you act? Do you have this generous disposition?

135.3 Third Point

When this saint was put to the work of preaching by the order of Saint Francis, it became apparent that God had placed his holy word in his mouth, for when he preached all his hearers were filled with admiration, and he brought about altogether surprising conversions.

He succeeded so well in this holy ministry because he had prepared himself for it by seclusion and prayer, because he had undertaken it only through obedience, and because he had always stayed in humble work until his superior had ordered him to preach.

It ought to be only in response to the order of God and in submission to your superior that you work for the salvation of souls. This will be the way to sanctify yourself in this work and to procure the sanctification of others.

Anthony of Padua (1195 - 1231) was born of noble parents in Lisbon, Portugal, and entered the Canons Regular of Saint Augustine in that city at the age of 15. De La Salle mentions his desire for separation from his relatives. During the eight years that Anthony spent in the more secluded monastery at Coimbra, which was a renowned center for biblical studies, he became a profound scholar. But the martyrdom of five Franciscans whom he had met at Coimbra on their way to Morocco made him lose interest in theology and gave him a great desire for martyrdom. With the permission of his provincial, he reluctantly withdrew from the Augustinians and joined the Franciscans. However, he was no sooner in Morocco than he fell sick and was forced to return. Circumstances again intervened when a storm drove his ship to Sicily, and from there he went to Italy, where at first he was assigned to menial tasks in a little hospice in Forli. Called from the kitchen to deliver an extemporaneous sermon because no one else was willing, he astonished everyone with his wisdom, power, and eloquence. Thereupon, he began ten years of extensive and vigorous preaching throughout Italy that culminated in exhaustion and death on June 13 at the age of 36. One biographer notes that it is ironic that his popularity today as a meek and sweet patron of trivial petitions disguises his life as a remarkable scholar, a powerful preacher, and a worker of extraordinary miracles.