

THE HAMMER OF HERETICS

Carissimi,

Monday, June 13th, is the memorial of the great Saint Anthony of Padua (who happens to be my Confirmation patron). Since he is also the patron of our mission in King George, special graces are offered to us from the inexhaustible treasury of the Church. The Mass that day will be offered as a high feast, or Solemnity.

St. Anthony was born in Lisbon in 1195. He was baptized Ferdinando and was most likely a descendent of the great commander of the First Crusade, Godfrey de Bouillon. His mother was descended from Friola I, the fourth king of Asturias. Thus he was born into a noble, powerful and God-fearing Catholic family.

His initial religious vocation was as a Canon Regular of St. Augustine. But when he was 25 he witnessed the return of the bodies of the first Franciscan martyrs – killed by the Mohammedans in Morocco – and he became inflamed with zeal to join this new Order and seek converts in the Islamic lands. When he joined the Franciscans he chose the name Anthony.

He soon found himself in Italy, seeking out the famous St. Francis of Assisi. Here it was discovered that he had a gift for preaching profoundly and fervently. St. Francis himself personally beseeched him to teach theology to his followers. It is said of him that, *“He possessed in an eminent degree all the good qualities that characterize an eloquent preacher: a loud and clear voice, a winning countenance, wonderful memory, and profound learning, to which were added from on high the spirit of prophecy and an extraordinary gift of miracles.”*

St Anthony lived at a time when dangerous heresies, some decrying marriage and procreation and espousing suicide, were rampant in northern Italy and Southern France (the Cathars and Albigensians among them). He was so determined against these threats, and so successful in converting the wayward, that he earned the glorious title of *Malleus hereticorum* (Hammer of the Heretics).

During his life he was known to have worked miracles, including bilocation. He is said to have had apparitions of the Infant Jesus and of St. Francis.

St Anthony was a great champion of the poor and downtrodden, and he often challenged the powerful and corrupt of the world. He especially preached against luxury, avarice and tyranny and was effectual in bringing about better social conditions in the Italy of his day.

He died at the age of 36 on June 13, 1231. Pope Gregory IX canonized him within a year and even honored him with the astonishing title, “Ark of the Covenant,” due his majestic knowledge of Sacred Theology. The fame of this great saint has impacted the Church for eight centuries. Such is the glory due to those who serve not the world, but God Almighty...



Saint Anthony, pray for us!

-Don Francesco

