



Saint Anthony: The Saint of the Whole World

Rev Thomas F Ward, Brother Hermenegild TOSF

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IF ever man, if ever saint received the Holy Spirit abundantly, it was unquestionably the saint whose life we now present for the edification of the faithful. It was by the Holy Spirit and His sevenfold gifts that St. Anthony accomplished those great wonders which we admire in his life. Supernatural light and piety and strength were the means which God furnished him, and by which he so marvellously fulfilled his mission. When the Saviour wished to save men, He commenced His ministry by instructing them. He preached in Judea and in Galilee, in fact He declared that His mission was precisely to preach to men. When He was about to ascend to heaven, He charged His apostles to continue the work He had begun, and insisted that they also should preach His word to men. Yet let us not suppose that preaching consists merely in the discourses which the apostle delivered: "No," said a great preacher, "the apostle is not only a man who knows, and who teaches by means of the word delivered; the apostle is a man who preaches Christianity with his whole being, and whose very presence is the appearance of another Christ." And such was St. Anthony of Padua, to whom devotion is so widespread to-day. This amiable saint was at once both monk and apostle. To the preaching of the Gospel he added the strict observance of the severest counsels and the constant practice of fasting, of penance, and of prayer. It was by these means that he captivated countless followers: the just were strengthened, the slothful fired with zeal, sinners were converted, and heretics recognized their errors. At the comparatively early age of thirty-six years his earthly mission ended. After his death, even as during his life, wonders were wrought through his intercession. And now, after seven centuries have passed away, the great wonderworker still spreads out his blessings on those who invoke him, with such profusion as is well calculated to encourage his devout servants to continue the offering of their homage. It is for this end that we devote these few pages, which will proclaim the virtues of this great friend of God, and the power he possesses in heaven. To render to the saints the honor which is love them, we should invoke and imitate them. We should strive to follow the good examples which they have given us while on earth; and to do this we should read and know their lives. Let us read especially the life of St. Anthony of Padua, and we shall be astonished at such exalted sanctity. We cannot fail to admire the power granted by God to this wonderworker. Devotion to St. Anthony of Padua crossed the ocean with our fathers, and with the Virgin Mother and St. Joseph he is invoked in almost every Catholic household, with a fervor and a piety which, we must admit, have received their fullest recompense. Who can deny the power of St. Anthony, especially in certain circumstances? When we read this little book, we shall learn, after the example the saint has given us, that there is everything to gain by serving God faithfully and lovingly, while there is everything to lose by abandoning Him. We shall learn also the great advantages which follow the invocation of the saints, and how much our sorrows shall be soothed, if we only know how to form friendships in heaven.

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