

THE RESTING PLACES OF OUR TWO GIANTS

Friar Bob Hutmacher, ofm

Each year the Franciscan world celebrates one of its favorites on June 13 – St. Anthony. He is, of course, famously known for helping people find things. You may know the little ditty: “Tony, Tony, turn around; something’s lost, it must be found.” But there is much, much more to the man and I’d like to share some of his wisdom and life.



Basilica of St. Anthony, Padua, Italy

Fernando Martins was born into a wealthy family in 1195 in Lisbon, Portugal. At fifteen he entered the Augustinian community outside of Lisbon. After his ordination Fernando became guest master of the large abbey outside Coimbra. Some of the *new* Franciscan friars came to stay and he was immediately attracted to their way of life. During their stay news came that five friars had been tortured and beheaded in Morocco; King Alfonso ransomed their bodies so as to bury them in Coimbra, then the capital of Portugal. He was so touched by their martyrdom that he obtained permission to join the Franciscan Order.

Anthony was his new name and he set out for Morocco but fell seriously ill there and tried to return to Portugal. The ship was blown off course to Sicily. From there Friar Anthony made his way to Tuscany and a friary in Forli.

It didn’t take long for him to rise to prominence in the Order. Everyone was impressed with his knowledge of Scripture gained while with the Augustinians. The friars wanted

Anthony to teach them theology but he wouldn’t do it without the permission of Francis. In late 1223 Francis wrote him this tiny message: *Brother Francis sends greetings to Brother Anthony. I am pleased that you teach sacred theology to the brothers providing that, as is contained in the Rule, you ‘do not extinguish the Spirit of prayer and devotion’ during study of this kind.* Francis entrusted Anthony with teaching theology to the friars to be ordained. He also taught at the universities in Montpellier and Toulouse in France and was well respected in the papal court; his preaching was called a “jewel case of the Bible.”

He was commissioned to produce a book of his sermons, one of which is *Sermons for Feast Days*. His sermons were constructed as more commentaries on the Mass prayers and the Divine Office, or on the Sunday Scriptures. Gregory IX called him ‘Ark of the Testament.’ Like Francis, Anthony was also known to have loved nature and wrote about birds’ habits and other creatures.



The Tomb of St. Anthony in Padua

Anthony became seriously ill with ergotism, a horrid infection caused by ingesting a certain poisonous fungus that infects grains. He passed away June 13, 1231 and was buried in a small church called Chapel of the Dark Madonna. Because of his fame, construction on a huge basilica began in 1232 and was finished in 1301. The Chapel of the Dark Madonna was incorporated into the basilica. His massive and elaborate resting place is honored by thousands of pilgrims, a major testament to not only his fame while alive, but to the great love people have had for Anthony of Padua for centuries.



This is our statue and relic of St. Anthony in St. Peter's. It's by far the most popular shrine in the church and I only know this after cleaning statues for 18 years and seeing how worn the marble is in certain places. A testimony to how he's loved here.

And while writing about Anthony I may as well tell you how "Tony, Tony turn around; something's lost it must be found" and other ditties about him finding things for people came into being. The story has it that a certain novice at the Bologna friary decided to leave the Order and on his way out, took Anthony's Book of Psalms with him. Books were treasures then so Anthony prayed it would be found because it contained notes for his teaching. The novice decided to return to the Order and also return the book to Anthony. There you have it – why he is invoked to help find things. But please balance that part of his legacy by reading some of his sermons or remember he was canonized just one year after his death and declared **Evangelical Doctor** by Pius XII in 1946. If you read this in time, join our Festive Eucharist on June 13 at 11:40 a.m. to celebrate St. Anthony!



The Basilica of St. Francis

There are many stories about the construction of the Basilica of Francis in Assisi. He died in 1226, canonized July 17, 1228 and the

cornerstone was laid the day after that ritual. The saint's body was transferred in 1230 under the first church, originally planned to be very simple. But under the guidance of general minister, Haymo of Faversham, the soaring Gothic Upper Basilica was constructed and finished in just 20 years. It was a truly astounding feat. Innocent IV, who canonized St. Clare, consecrated the papal altar in 1253, just prior to her death. As you see from the photo, this Upper Basilica is resplendent with three tiers of frescoes by Giotto and other artists. The friars still have the "recipes" for the stained glass windows.



The Upper Basilica of Francis

The Lower Basilica, with a much lower ceiling, is also completely covered with frescoes and geometric patterns. 14 chapels surround the nave. The ceiling is painted with crushed lapis lazuli and hundreds of tiny golden stars, each of which has a mirror in the middle. Myriad oil lamps once hung from the ceiling so that when pilgrims entered the lower church they entered into Paradise's celestial dome. That provided a heavenly experience before going to the lowest level that contains the tomb of our founder. Above the altar are allegories of our vows and Francis adorned in golden robes in the glory of heaven.



The Lower Basilica of Francis



The Tomb of St. Francis

I lived in Assisi a number of times in the 1990's doing research in medieval hymnody about Francis and Clare. I remember clearly journaling one frigid winter day. There was absolutely no one in the tomb and I was able to spend at least an hour alone with Francis. His remains were buried under the basilica so deeply for protection that they weren't rediscovered until 1818. The tomb was reconstructed to its present style from 1925-1932 with his remains in a stone vault just above the altar. 1932 was also the year that his closest friends were reburied near him: friars Leo, Maseo, Rufino and Angelo along with his dear friend and supporter, Lady Jacopa de' Settesoli.

I dearly love his tomb because it's softly lit and quiet unless a group is celebrating Mass. Believe me, it is a particular joy and gift to preside at Eucharist just below his remains. Some critics do not like the double church with its 13th century grandeur above the tomb because "it's not what Francis was." Regardless of that critique, the tomb truly is a reflection of Francis in its total, naked stone simplicity. It is a holy place.

Francis of Assisi and Anthony of Padua were and are two of the most popular saints for Catholic, other Christians and multiple ethnicities and religions from around the world. Assisiani have told me they receive anywhere from 6 to 10 million visitors a year! And Padua is always flooded with pilgrims and those who've come to love Anthony for many reasons. We friars sometimes joke that 'we must get Francis out of the bird bath' or 'read Anthony's sermons instead of just asking him to find your glasses.' What we

mean is that both these powerhouses are so much more than what popular piety has built up around them. And that's exactly why their final resting places are so revered. Thousands of people offered financial help to build both basilicas in Assisi and Padua because they love the example both men left the world: wonderful men of faith, learning, joy and a wondrous love for the crucified Christ.

Our St. Peter's was designed with four major shrines around the church: Sacred Heart, Pieta, Anthony and Francis. I won't tell you which one gets the most attention but we friars are grateful for all the donations you offer to God through all four of them. We remember Anthony after every Mass on every Tuesday of the year; this customary prayer began in 1871 when a famous fire was threatening our city and the old St. Peter's Church on Clark and Polk Streets. The pastor gathered people in the church on October 8 and prayed aloud that if God spared the parish buildings from the Great Fire, the parish would pray to Anthony every Tuesday of the year. The wind changed direction, the fire burned northward, jumped the Chicago River and spared St. Peter's Church. This custom continues here ever since. 145 years of devoted love for Anthony!

Once again we friars invite you to join us and celebrate the Feast of St. Anthony of Padua on June 13. Our solemn liturgy is at 11:40 and will include the Blessing of Bread - and everyone takes home a blessed loaf. We also want you to know how very, very grateful we are all year long for your support. The friars of the Province of the Sacred Heart remember each and every benefactor at every Morning Prayer and at all 41 Masses we celebrate each week. May God fill you with goodness, truth, beauty and his endless peace.

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