



Feast Day: January 17th

St. Anthony of Padua

St. Anthony of Padua is one of the Catholic Church's most popular saints. Saint Anthony of Padua, patron saint of lost and stolen articles, was a powerful Franciscan preacher and teacher. He's typically portrayed holding the child Jesus—or a lily—or a book—or all three—in his arms. Many people give alms to St. Anthony Bread in thanksgiving to God for blessings received through the prayers of St. Anthony.

St. Anthony of Padua's life is what every Christian's life is meant to be; a steady courage to face the ups and downs of life, the call to love and forgive, to be concerned for the needs of others, to deal with crisis great and small, and to have our feet solidly on the ground of total trusting love and dependence on God.

St Anthony is beloved throughout the world and is responsive to all people and all needs.

Miracles and Traditions of St Anthony

The reason for invoking St. Anthony's help in finding lost or stolen things is traced back to an incident in his own life. As the story goes, Anthony had a book of psalms that was very important to him. Besides the value of any book before the invention of printing, the psalter had the notes and comments he had made to use in teaching students in his Franciscan Order.

A novice who had already grown tired of living a religious life decided to depart the community. Besides going AWOL he also took Anthony's psalter! Upon realizing his psalter was missing, Anthony prayed it would be found or returned to him. And after his prayer the thieving novice was moved to return the psalter to Anthony and to return to the Order, which accepted him back. Over the years the story has been embellished a bit.

It has the novice stopped in his flight by a horrible devil, brandishing an ax and threatening to trample him underfoot if he did not immediately return the book. Obviously, a devil would hardly command anyone to do something good. But the core of the story would seem to be true. And the stolen book is said to be preserved in the Franciscan friary in Bologna.

In any event, shortly after his death people began praying through Anthony to find or recover lost and stolen articles. And the Responsory of St. Anthony composed by his contemporary, Julian of Spire, O.F.M., proclaims:

“The sea obeys and fetters break
And lifeless limbs thou dost restore
While treasures lost are found again
When young or old thine aid implore.”

St. Anthony Bread is a term used for offerings made in thanksgiving to God for blessings received through the prayers of St. Anthony. Sometimes the alms are given for the education of priests. In some places parents also make a gift for the poor after placing a newborn child under the protection of St. Anthony. It is a practice in some churches to bless small loaves of bread on the feast of St. Anthony and give them to those who want them.

Different legends or stories account for the donation of what is called St. Anthony Bread. By at least one account it goes back to 1263, when it is said a child drowned near the Basilica of St. Anthony which was still being built. His mother promised that if the child was restored to her, she would give the poor an amount of corn equal to the child's weight. Her prayer and promise were rewarded with the boy's return to life.

Another reason for the practice is traced back to Louise Bouffier, a shopkeeper in Toulon, France. A locksmith was prepared to break open her shop door after no key would open it. Bouffier asked the locksmith to try his keys one more time after she prayed and promised to give bread to the poor in honor of St. Anthony if the door would open without force. The door then opened. After others received favors through the intercession of St. Anthony, they joined Louise Bouffier in founding the charity of St. Anthony Bread.