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Year 11, No 6

Monthly Spiritual Message

June 2011-122

ST ANTHONY FOR THE SECULAR FRANCISCANS

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

When I visit the Basilica of St Anthony in Padua, I am always inspired by the faith of the countless pilgrims who come on the hour to the tomb. They come from all corners of the world to the great Franciscan Saint, "The Herald of the Good News", St Anthony. They ask his intercession for healing help and direction. At the Basilica of St Anthony, constantly the Saint draws the pilgrims to the sacraments of the Holy Eucharist and Penance, to experience the fullness of the Divine Mercy of Christ. St Anthony was such a great preacher of Christ's truth and mercy, (his tongue is incorrupt) as well as a defender of the Holy Catholic Faith.

After Saints Francis and Clare, he is one of our Franciscan Saints whom we ought to study, learn from their example and seek their intercession, to live the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ today. St Anthony loved the Gospels of Christ and all of the Sacred Scriptures. It was said that, if the Bible had been lost, St Anthony would have been able to reproduce the Word of God since he knew all of the Sacred Scriptures by heart. This was constantly demonstrated in his preaching. With the Word of God, he would teach truth, refute error, and draw the lost to the embrace of Christ the Good Shepherd. Let us, too, as Franciscans, remember to treasure meditative reading of the Bible so that the living Word of God can inflame our hearts and guide our tongues, as he did to St Anthony.

Yes, we implore his help when we lose our keys or can't find that bill, but St Anthony is so much more. This friar, who was a contemporary of Francis and met Our Seraphic Father, was indeed instructed by St Francis to teach theology to the clerical students of the Order. Affectionately, St Francis addressed Anthony as "My bishop."

When Pope Pius XII defined the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1950, he quoted this great theologian in the defense of this reality of Our Lady. Indeed, St Anthony was a dedicated defender of this privilege of Our Lady. May we learn to treasure always the gift of Mary as Our Mother and Queen. With St Anthony, may we always love Our Lady and trust in her motherly guidance

St Anthony was a great champion for the poor and was a great defender of those unjustly treated. He was a strong adversary of corruption in society and the Church, but always a faithful Son of the Church, not attacking doctrine, but exposing vice and immorality.

Unfortunately, today, even in the Franciscan world, we have voices that criticize the Pope and oppose the Magisterium.

As Franciscans, may we be reminded by St Anthony to be truly Catholic in our loyalty to Christ and His Church. In our minority, we are reminded by Francis not to be those who work against the unity of the Church. May we, like St Anthony, continue in our good works and concern for the poor and forgotten, and not fail to recognize the injustices which assail God's children.. The devotion of St Anthony's Bread reminds us to help those in need for the love of Christ.

Today, too many Catholics have forgotten the reality of the Real Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament and the saving mysteries of the Holy Mass. In too many Churches, we have forgotten we are in the Father's House of Prayer. The endless chatter and over casual attitude clouds our ability to participate truly in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the summit of our Faith, as the Second Vatican Council reminds us. The Holy Eucharist is the source of all grace.

St Anthony reminds us by his preaching to believe and deepen our devotion to Jesus, the Bread of Life, who offers Himself to us as we are called to join His offering to the Father in atonement for our sins and the sins of the world. Christ, our Paschal Lamb, calls us to his Heavenly Banquet to be strengthened during the week to live our faith in Him, through Him and for Him. Certainly St Anthony was a true Apostle of the Holy Eucharist, as was St Francis.

The Miracle of the Holy Eucharist is recorded as one of his many miracles. An unbelieving merchant's mule knelt in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The miracle illustrates St Anthony's defense and zeal for the Holy Eucharist. May we learn from him to defend and promote the Holy Eucharist especially through adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and by our reverent participation in Holy Mass.

So, St Anthony of Padua is not just a finder of our lost keys, but he calls us to renew and strengthen our Franciscan calling to imitate Christ and to live our Catholic Faith more fruitfully each day! May St Anthony pray for us, especially as we celebrate his Feast on June 13th, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Br Louis Schmid OFMConv
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**Regional Assistants are requested to distribute this Monthly Message
to all local Assistants of our Order in the Regional Fraternity.**