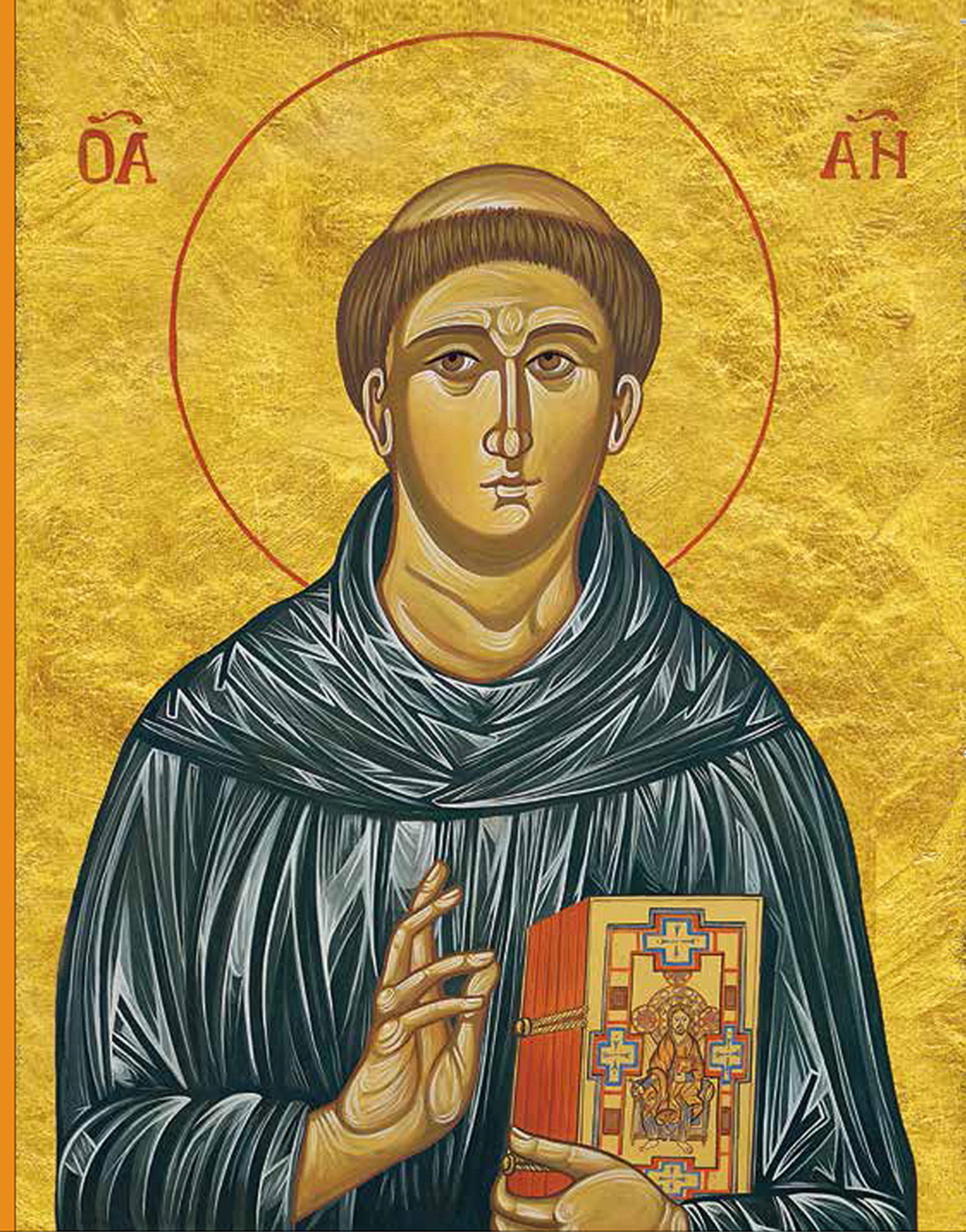


Guide to the
Permanent
Exhibition



“The Saint of the World”
St. Anthony’s Shrine Kochchikade Colombo 13

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“The Saint of the World”

St. Anthony's Shrine, Kochchikade, Colombo 13

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Exterior View of St. Anthony's Shrine, Kochchikade



ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA THE SAINT OF THE WORLD

St. Anthony, who won his eternal reward at the relatively young age of 36 years (1195 – 1231) nearly 800 years ago, is the saint who is most sought after in the world next to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Hence is called the “The Saint of the World” is one of the most popular saints in the Catholic world. St. Anthony had been a Portuguese, born in Lisbon the present capital city of Portugal, but was popularly known as “St. Anthony of Padua”. The tagging of this name with Padua, a city in the northern Italy is because he spent the latter days of his life associating himself strongly with that city.

At the end of the 15th century when the era of exploration began, the Portuguese came to be the first nation who invaded the eastern world. Portugal was one of the strongest Catholic domains and the task of disseminating Catholicism in the east was entrusted to them by the Holy See. They also introduced their famous saint to the eastern world.

The introduction of St. Anthony to the Sri Lankan local community was by the Portuguese and the Order of the Franciscan Missionaries who came to Sri Lanka in the 16th century. In the writings of that time, it is clearly stated that St. Anthony is named as a “Portuguese Saint” and it is a fitting example to prove the above fact.



THE BIRTH AND VOCATION OF ST. ANTHONY

St. Anthony was born in Lisbon, as the firstborn child of Martino and Maria on the 15th August 1195 A.D. He was baptized in the Cathedral of Lisbon, which was adjoining their house. He was named 'Fernando' which meant "peace combatant". The name was very fitting since the family of Fernando had a long and glorious military tradition. Fernando's father, Martino, was a High Knight of the Portuguese military. His only hope for his firstborn son was to make him follow in his footsteps. But it was his uncle, Don Fernando an Augustinian monk and Canon of the Cathedral of Lisbon, who became the role model for little Fernando. Young Fernando who attended the Catholic school at the Cathedral had a keen interest in prayer apart from studies.

Young Fernando was strongly attracted to the exemplary life style and religious practice of the Augustinian monks who lived near the city of Lisbon which made him devote his life to divinity at the age of fifteen and entered the Augustinian abbey. Two years later he moved to the Augustinian abbey of Coimbra, called the Holy Cross in hope of keeping away from his friends and acquaintances. Coimbra, the then capital of Portugal was an important point of reference for cultural and religious life; it also had the best environment for both vocation and cultural formation. Young Fernando spent eight years there and it reveals that in the year 1220 A.D. during summer he made his first religious commitment, as an Augustinian monk at the Church of the Holy Cross.

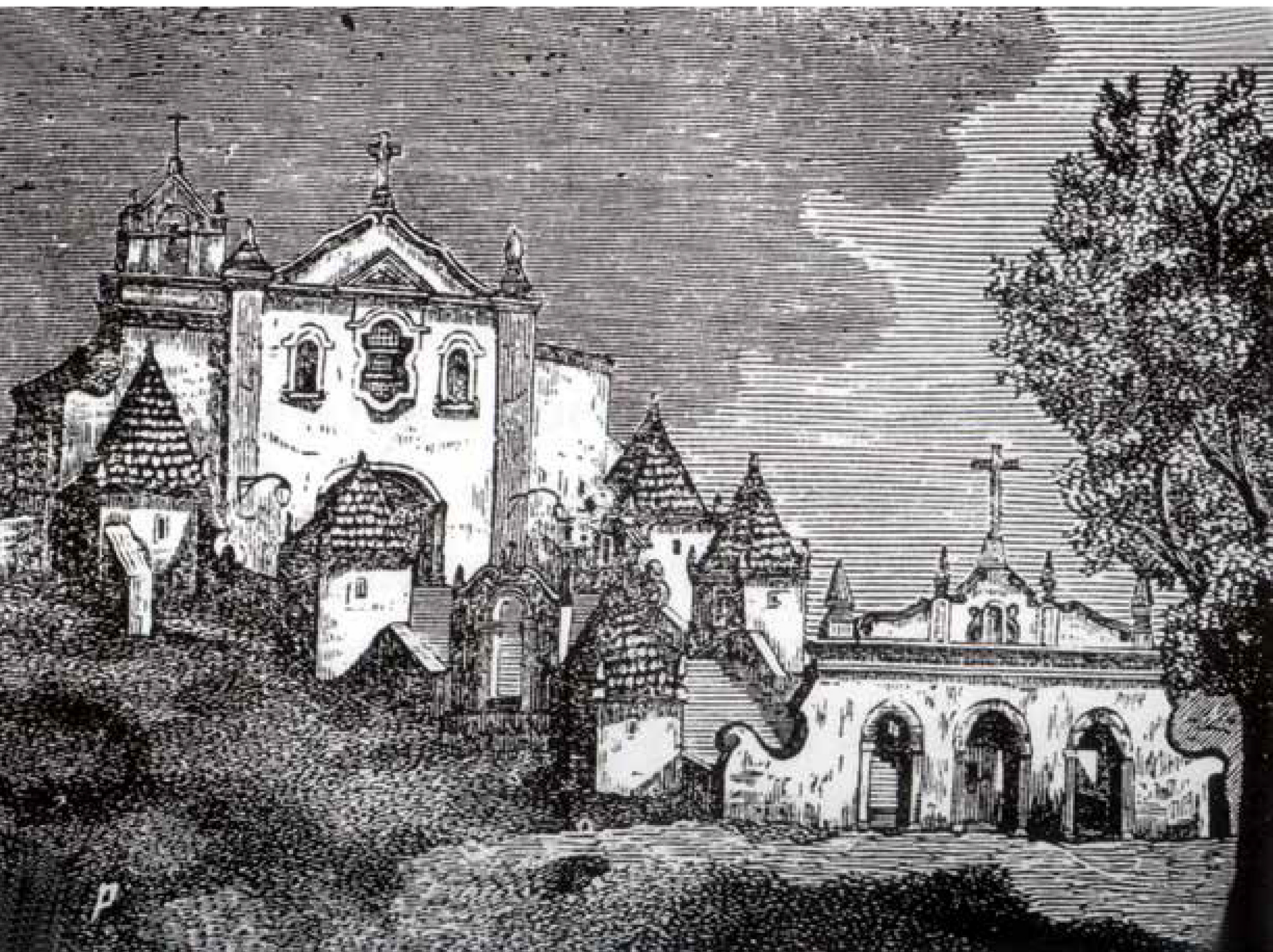
◀ Church of St. Anthony & Cathedral of Lisbon



Birth Place of Fernando



Portal of the Baptistry where Fernando was baptised



Franciscan monastery of Olivais

BECOMES A FRANCISCAN MONK

In the 13th century in the city of Assisi a new religious order emerged under the leadership of Francesco Bernardone (1181-1226). This order was based on the precepts of poverty which spearheaded a revolution in the church. These Franciscan monks engaged in missionary endeavors outside Europe in other continents as well.

A disastrous incident which occurred during this time made a sad impact on Father Fernando and made him turn in another direction. On 16th January 1220 five Franciscan missionaries who were serving in North Africa in Morocco were martyred. Their bodies were brought to the Church of the Holy Cross in Coimbra for the burial. Father Fernando participated in the ceremony, as he personally knew the five martyrs before they left for their mission. Father Fernando was devastated by this unfortunate incident and he decided to take their place.

In the same year he entered the Franciscan monastery of Olivais and received the Franciscan habit. The small chapel of the monastery of Olivais where he made his consecration as a monk was dedicated to Saint Anthony the Hermit (251 – 356) who is recognized as the founder of monastic life. Father Fernando changed his name to Anthony, after Saint Anthony the Hermit and was known as Brother Anthony thereafter.



Saint Anthony the Hermit



The Five Franciscan martyrs



Brother Anthony is driven by the storm

BEGINNING OF THE MISSIONARY ENDEAVOUR

Soon after joining the Franciscan Order he was permitted to go to Morocco. They reached Morocco after a tedious journey by sea, which made Brother Anthony seriously ill and returned to Portugal. The return journey was even worse with a violent storm and they were shipwrecked in Messina, in Sicily Island in Italy. They miraculously survived and stayed at a Franciscan monastery in Messina till he recovered from his illness and left to Assisi by land. In the meantime in Assisi the order of Franciscans was having their General Chapter from 30th May to 8th June in the year 1221 in the presence of founder of the Order. All the other brothers, who participated in the General Chapter, did not pay much attention to Anthony who came from Portugal as they did not know him. One compassionate Franciscan monk was moved by Brother Anthony and took him to his monastery at Montepaolo which was simple, tranquil and poor. This became the ideal abode for Anthony.

An incident which occurred on 12th October 1222 brought Brother Anthony to the lime light. Both Franciscans and Dominicans were celebrating a sacerdotal ordination together, at Forli. The custom was that after ordination, a priest would preach to the newly ordained. It was the Dominican's turn but no one had come prepared due to some reason. Finally, the Franciscan superior called Anthony to preach. Regardless of his young age and illnesses he preached with conviction in fluent and ornate Latin, with words and ideas that underscored a strong and touching message. His oratorical ability was extensively acknowledged and devotion was praised by all. After this incident his future ministry was directed towards preaching and evangelization.





Basilica of St. Anthony Padua

BROTHER ANTHONY OF PADUA

When Brother Anthony was in France he received the news that Francis of Assisi had passed into eternal life. In 1227 Anthony came to Assisi with the other Franciscans to elect a successor to Francis. Brother Giovanni was chosen and Brother Anthony was nominated "Provincial Minister" for Northern Italy. As provincial father of the Franciscans, Anthony often visited Padua. Although Padua was a small city in the north of Italy with a small population it was significant strategically, culturally, and religiously. At that time due to the numerous conflicts and misunderstandings between the rich and poor, the social and political life was very tense in Padua. The fighting between the cities, because of commercial matters, prestige and the desire for supremacy, further hampered the life of peace and tranquility of the people. But Anthony continued his evangelizing mission. These spiritual activities and his presence brought about a religious renewal among the people.



Brother Anthony arrives in Padua



In 1231 he gave sermons on a daily basis during the season of Lent. Word spread about Brother Anthony and the numbers attending his sermons increased rapidly, and steadily. It is said that during Anthony's sermons Padua virtually came to a standstill. The shops closed; work was left interrupted; schools emptied out and the city became deserted. Everyone united around Anthony. This is how Padua became the "surname" of Anthony and everyone came to know him in that way.

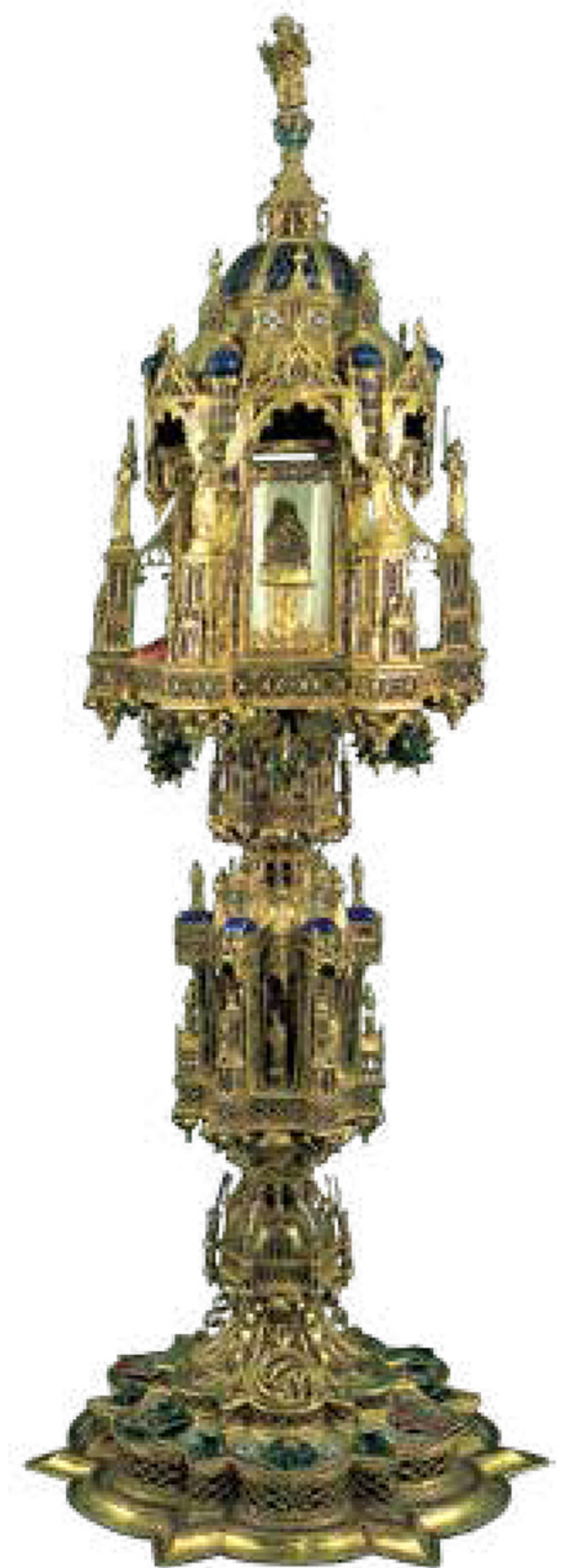


The passing of Brother Anthony

END OF A SHORT LIFE

The first half of the year 1231 during the season of Lent, continuous sermons, his many works and penance took their toll on Anthony's health. Anthony, who needed medical treatment, retreated for a brief period of time to the home of one of his followers, Count Tiso, in Camposampiero. But in the same year June 13, he was taken seriously ill. Knowing that his earthly life was drawing to a close he himself had requested to return to Padua. The journey back to Padua was long and tedious as they had to travel in a carriage. On the way his physical condition grew worse. They had to stop at Arcella, a Franciscan Monastery. On that very day by evening he left his earthly existence. Anthony was buried in Padua in the Church of Saint Mary "Mater Domini" on Tuesday, 17th June 1231.

On 30th May 1232, even before a year passed after his earthly life ended, the day of Pentecost, in the Cathedral of Spoleto in Central Italy, Pope Gregory IX proclaimed Brother Anthony as a Saint in the Catholic Church. In the history of the church no one had been raised to the altar in such a short time. It was another special event in his life. Working strenuously for twenty long years the People of Padua built a magnificent sanctuary and laid the body of saint in the new site on 8th April 1263 as they respected him, were devoted to him and loved him much. When they opened the coffin to shift his body to the new basilica they found that the tongue of the Saint was still intact. Hence the tongue of Saint Anthony was placed in a special reliquary in the Basilica.



Relic of Saint's tongue



Brother Anthony preaches to the fish

MIRACLE WORKER

At this point Anthony was very famous. He was loved and highly esteemed by everyone. The crowd would enthusiastically follow him everywhere were ready to imitate him in daily life. His words and sermons were very often supported by miracles that earned him the name of miracle worker. This part of his reputation was wide-spread when he was alive and even after his death it rendered him even more popular. When the Brother Anthony was canonized thirty-five miracles were attributed to his intercession, during his life on earth.



Brother Anthony reattaches a young man's severed foot



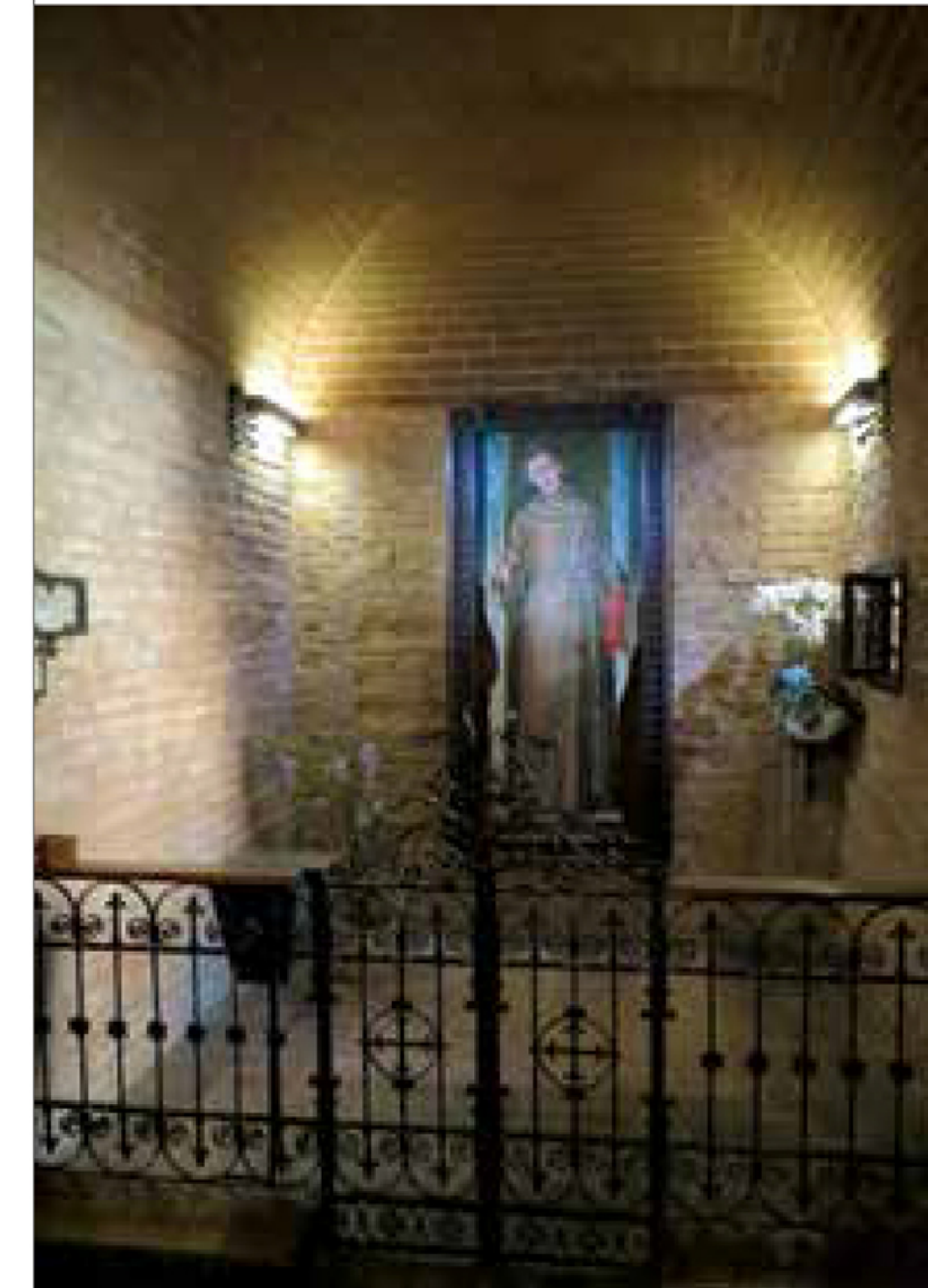
Brother Anthony makes a new born baby speak



ANTHONY AND THE INFANT JESUS

Many of the imagery, paintings and sculptures which depicted the episodes and circumstances of the life St. Anthony are based on his vision of Christ child that Anthony had in Camposampiero where he spend his final days at the castle of Count Tiso, one of his fellowmen.

One night Count Tiso was passing by Anthony's room when he was attracted by a powerful light. Inquisitively he burst into the room. There he saw Anthony in ecstasy embracing the Infant Jesus. Anthony begged Tiso not to tell anyone about what he had seen, and Tiso respected Anthony's wishes until after his death. His vision of the Baby Jesus is an event which, more than any other, characterizes the contemplative spirituality of St Anthony, and also expresses his attachment to the humanity of Christ.



Cell of Vision in Camposampiero



Brother Anthony preaching
from the walnut tree

PREACHING ON THE TREE

At Camposampiero where Anthony spent his final days, due to the weather condition at that time of the year, the ground was damp and it aggravated Anthony's illness. But since Anthony was eager to continue his preaching, the problem was solved when the friars noticed Anthony admire an immense walnut tree on the property. Finally he had a small tree house built in the walnut tree. Anthony passed the final hours of his life on the top of tree, in preaching to humble country people. Today there is a small and beautiful sanctuary built in the name of St. Anthony there as a remembrance of the mission and the legendary stories that was circulating about him.



Sanctuary at Camposampiero





SYMBOLS PECULIAR TO ST. ANTHONY

Tradition assigns some visual symbols to St. Anthony that invokes imagery of the saint's virtues and circumstances in his life. These symbols serve as remembrances of the saint's life and devotions and as symbols of spiritual ideals

The book : Traditionally books in the hands of saints show they were well cultured in the scriptures. Particularly the book is a symbol of Anthony's science, of his doctrine, his teaching and of his preaching, which was always inspired by the Holy Bible.

The white Lily : The white lily is a symbol of purity and chastity. As a symbol of chastity the lily is the attribute of several saints, among them in the case of St. Anthony it represents St. Anthony's purity and his battle against the demon since childhood.

The Franciscan Habit : This is a reminder of the poor and simple attire of the Franciscan order. His desire and passion for the missions, for martyrdom and sanctity. St. Anthony was moved by their simple lifestyle and when he joined them in 1220 he received this habit.

The Bread : Symbol of St. Anthony's charity to the poor. There exists the centuries-old practice of distributing "St. Anthony's Bread", recalling his concern for the people who are abandoned and forgotten.





A Painting in St. Anthony's Cathedral, Kandy

DEVOTION TO ST. ANTHONY DURING THE DUTCH PERIOD

It is revealed by the writings, that the devotion to St. Anthony did not diminish in spite of the fact that the Dutch had taken over the administration after they had defeated the Portuguese. Even though the Dutch promulgated a rule to banned Catholicism, the devotion to St. Anthony was not getting mitigated among the Catholics. During the time of the massacres by the Dutch, the Catholics fled the Dutch controlled areas searching for refuge under the patronage of King Rajasinghe II (1635 – 1687) of the Kandyan Kingdom. The only religious icon that was in possession of the people who came and settled down in Wahakotte was a small statue of St. Anthony. It was their practice to gather around this small statue and pray during this time of oppression and persecutions. According to the legends, once this statue was safeguarded by hiding it inside a pot of boiling rice. This statue can be seen even today at St. Anthony's Church, Wahakotte.



Statue of St. Anthony Wahakotte

THE PROCESSION WHICH ENABLED MIRACLES

The Kandyan king Wimaladharmasuriya II (1707-1739) who was pleased with Father Joseph Vaz who involved himself in missionary activities in the Kingdom, gave him freedom to engage himself in missionary activities even outside the Kingdom. Father Joseph Vaz who made use of his presence of mind, organized the feast of St. Anthony's Church, Kandy on a grand scale and the speciality of that was that the procession was organized by him without being afraid of any opponents. It is recorded that time, that this feast was celebrated without any obstruction and with festivity because of the intercession of St. Anthony. It is also said that through the people of the Kandyan Kingdom, the devotion to St. Anthony was propagated even to the Royal Family. It is also said that King Sri Weera Narendrasinghe (1706 – 1739) had been a great devotee of St. Anthony. It is further stated that when he lost something from the treasury, he sought the intercession of St. Anthony.



Father Joseph Vaz



MIRACLE OF “FATHER ANTHONY” IN COLOMBO

In the areas controlled by the Dutch the Catholics had to practice their religion in secret. Therefore, from time to time, the Oratorian Fathers, serving either in Puttalam or in areas other than Dutch controlled areas, came down to Colombo secretly, for the spiritual benefit of the people, as the numbers of Catholics kept increasing Father Jacome Gonsalvez, the Superior of the Oratorian fathers of Ceylon realized the need for a priest permanently residing in Colombo. A zealous priest called Anthony from Cochin, India, volunteered and left for Colombo. Father Anthony arrived at Malibanna Street and stayed in the house of a fish vendor. He sold fish during the day and administered priestly duties in a nearby house by night. The Father performed his duties thus for about a year until, the Dutch raided the house on a tip off. Father Anthony escaped, and left for Mutwal which was predominantly a Catholic area, taking his box of requisites for Mass.

During this time, sea erosion had narrowed the beach to an extent. The fishermen were anxious for a solution when they met the Father who was on his way to escape. As a desperate last resort they invited the priest to offer his prayers to prevent sea erosion. They assured the priest that should he succeed, they would give him protection from Dutch soldiers. The soldiers were amused when the fishermen informed them about their proposition to the Father. Thinking that it was a good opportunity to arrest the Father they gave an assurance that if the “Miracle” did occur they would grant him freedom. Then the priest having planted the crucifix in the sand, knelt and started praying. While he was praying, the waves began to recede and created a retaining sand bank which formed a dam. The amazed fishermen flocked around the priest while the Dutch soldiers had to retreat.



Jacome Gonsalvez

Father Jacome Gonsalvez



ST. ANTHONY'S CHURCH AND THE DAWN OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The Dutch Governor Willem Maurits Bruyninck's (1739-1742) appointment was significant as it occurred soon after the "Miracle of Father Anthony". His liberal attitude towards the Catholics made him to give the plot of land where the "Miracles" took place to Father Anthony in order to exercise his ministry. It is significant that this was the first time since year 1656 freedom for the Catholics to perform religious activities within the city of Colombo was granted. Father Anthony built a small chapel in this plot of land and to show his gratitude and dedicated same to his patron saint St. Anthony.

The Protestant ministers of the town were not at all in favour of this act of justice by Bruyninck and they derisively called the small chapel "Kochchiyage Kadaya"- the shop of Cochin man. According to many of the historical writings, this was the inception of the name of Kochchikade. Father Anthony continued to serve the Catholics of Colombo from this church until he went to his Eternal Reward. His mortal remains were reposed in this modest church. Later, the plot of land was officially handed over to the church by the Dutch East India Company on the 20th of January 1790, by deed no. 31 which contains the VOC symbol.



Miraculous statue of St. Anthony

SOME HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

The miraculous statue of St. Anthony that is presently reposed in the church is one that had been brought to Sri Lanka from Goa in the year 1822. The work of building a new church was inaugurated in 1834 and the consecratory Mass of the new church was celebrated by Msgr. Caetano Antonio the Vicar Apostolic of Sri Lanka.

It was Msgr. Christopher Bonjean, the first Archbishop of Colombo, who pioneered in receiving all privileges from the English invaders and was considered as the “Second Apostle of Sri Lanka”. When the Archbishop Bonjean went on to his eternal rest on the 3rd of August 1892 his mortal remains were reposed in St. Anthony’s Church, Kochchikade. This added much significance to this church.

Further the refurbishment work of the old church was begun in the year 1939. The expanded and completed church as seen today was blessed by the Most Rev. Dr. Jean-Mary Masson, the then Archbishop of Colombo.

Even though a resident priest was appointed to serve in the church, in the year 1987, it continued to be administered by the Parish Priest of St. Lucia’s Cathedral, Kotahena. But, on the 15th of August 1990, St. Anthony’s Church, Kochchikade was made an independent Shrine by an official declaration of the church.



Msgr. Christopher Bonjean



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