



THE CORD

A Newsletter From St. Anthony's Guild

Dear Friend of St. Anthony,

Fall is upon us now and The Franciscan Friars are ready to celebrate the Great Novena of St. Francis beginning on September 25th. On October 4th, we celebrate the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, one of the most popular saints for Christians as well as non-Christians. He is a saint for all!

St. Francis has won the love and the admiration of so many generations by living the Gospel and presenting poverty, chastity and obedience with the purity and strength of a radical, loving and personal witness. His "universal brotherhood" is expressed in his love for his "brothers" - men and women, rich and poor, sick and healthy, faithful and sinners, believers and unbelievers, for animals and all nature - and reveals to us a soul in which God is undivided, a soul nourished by the truths of the Franciscan faith and abandoned completely to Christ. I will be praying for all my St. Anthony's Guild members during this special time and wish you all a joyous feast day. Peace and Blessings for a Happy Feast of St. Francis.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Fr. David Convertino, OFM

Executive Director of St. Anthony's Guild

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Facts About The Feast of St. Francis of Assisi

Although the Feast of St. Francis is celebrated worldwide, October 4th is an especially important day in Assisi, Italy. The holiday is meant to commemorate St. Francis' transition to the afterlife. He died in Portiuncula, Italy on October 4th, 1226. So how can you celebrate the Feast and its significance? Here are some things to know about St. Francis and his Feast day:

- Pope Gregory IX made St. Francis a Saint in 1228, two years after his death.
- St. Francis is well known for his generosity, particularly towards the poor or the sick. However, he is widely remembered for his love of animals.
- Symbols associated with St. Francis include animals (birds, wolves and deer in particular), a winged crucifix with 5 rays, a glowing lamp and a bag of gold and rich raiment.
- Beginning on October 3rd, the town of Assisi lights oil lamps using consecrated oil in remembrance of the saint.
- Services or special religious events are organized so children and families can bring their pets to have them blessed. This is probably the most widely observed tradition to commemorate the feast day.
- Children and families can also participate in outdoor activities or take nature walks, as St. Francis was a major proponent of nature.
- Although St. Francis led a pious life with a strict diet, it is rumored that he did indulge in honey almond cake.

Reflections of St. Anthony

By Fr. David Convertino, OFM



Fr. David Convertino, left, and Br. Basil Valente, right, pray at the tomb of St. Anthony in Padua. (Photo courtesy of Br. Octavio Duran)

Since becoming the director of St. Anthony's Guild, I have read and heard countless stories about the intercessory power of St. Anthony of Padua. These stories from our members range from parking spots being found, to precious heirloom jewelry being recovered, all the way to cures of diseases both common and rare. In all of these stories, whether or not you are a believer, there is the undeniable and powerful faith of people in this great Franciscan saint. He can obviously do it all for thousands of people. And then I went to Padua, Italy.

In Padua, this Friar saint comes to life in a way I never expected. I had to acknowledge that the “Little Poverello” lost the “largest crowd game” when put up against the “Great Miracle Worker.” Aside from competition in prayer power for requests granted, and who is better at getting a parking space in Manhattan, the man, the Franciscan and the saint that I have come to know is far more than simply a “favor granter.”

When I have visited “his” Franciscan places like the city of Padua, the town of Camposampiero, where his vision of the Madonna and Child took place, and the town of his death, Arcello, I met one of the astounding preachers of the Church whose empathy for the people he served is clearly seen in the legends of the miracles performed.

One can get locked into the true or false scenario of his miracles, but then that is to miss what is behind these miracle stories — the love and compassion of this man for the people of God. He reached out to marginalized women, parents who had suffered the loss of a child, nonbelievers who wanted to believe, worked tirelessly for the poor, and literally nearly died for the sake of people who had traveled so far to hear him preach.

Anthony of Padua may assist in finding parking spaces, help in the return of lost items and even help sell homes, but the richness, virtue and strength of his life and message is that this Friar preacher moved hearts, minds and lives to turn to God and his Incarnate Word.

That’s the man, Friar and saint I have come to know through his Padua, his writings, his miracles, and especially through the friars who are proud to share this brother of ours with the world.

Happenings Around St. Anthony’s Guild

In honor of the Feast of St. Anthony this past June, The Franciscan Friars of Holy Name Province celebrated the true spirit of St. Anthony many different ways in New York City. We took our Statue of St. Anthony from the National Shrine and filled it with many candles for the feast day. In our church, mass goers lined up to venerate the two relics of St. Anthony – one of a piece of the bone from his elbow and the other from his tongue. We showcased a giant photo of Sister Lucia of Fatima venerating the relic of St. Anthony before she died. Fr. Tom, OFM, entirely coordinated “Operation St. Anthony’s Bread.” It was remarkable to watch as we gave out 72,000 little loaves of St. Anthony’s Bread in front of our church on West 32nd Street. It certainly was a joyous and wonderful feast for all!



In Transitus

Please remember our recently deceased Friars in your prayers. Fr. Alexander Di Lella, OFM, Fr. Emeric Szlezak OFM, and Fr. Reginald Reddy, OFM. Please continue to pray for them as they have done for all of you, each and every day.



Alexander A. Di Lella, OFM, 89, a professed Franciscan Friar for 68 years and a priest for 63 years, died on March 23 at St. Catherine of Siena Nursing Home. Alexander is survived by a brother Mario Di Lella, OFM, of St. Anthony Friary in St. Petersburg, Florida.



Emeric Szlezak, OFM, a professed Franciscan Friar for 79 years and a priest for 74, died on March 16 in St. Petersburg, Florida, where he had lived since 2005. Emeric was 101 years old and the longest-living friar in the history of Holy Name Province.



Reginald Reddy, OFM, 84, a professed Franciscan Friar for 63 years and a priest for 58 years, died May 28 at Teresian House in Albany, New York. He was a longtime physics professor at nearby Siena College in Loudonville, New York. Reginald is survived by his brothers Robert of Edmond, Oklahoma and John (Marie) Reddy of Hauppauge, New York. He was predeceased by his brother David, OFM; Richard, and Paul Reddy.



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