

Prayer of the Month • June 2017

Prayer for the Help of the Holy Spirit

O God, send forth your Holy Spirit into my heart that I may perceive, into my mind that I may remember, and into my soul that I may meditate. Inspire me to speak with piety, holiness, tenderness and mercy. Teach, guide and direct my thoughts and senses from beginning to end. May your grace ever help and correct me, and may I be strengthened now with wisdom from on high, for the sake of your infinite mercy. Amen.

Saint Anthony of Padua (1195–1231)



In this prayer of thoughtfulness and commitment St Anthony goes through the various aspects of a person: heart, mind, and spirit. It may seem a bit formal, but as the prayer leads cumulatively to the areas of perceiving, remembering, and meditating, it strikes home. The Holy Spirit is a pervasive presence in the Christian, not there for the moment, but accompanying us and shaping us. The prayer asks humbly for help and correction, and not just for strength. It must be the prayer of an experienced and practical person.

St Anthony of Padua was born in Lisbon to a wealthy family in about 1195, and named Fernando Martins de Bulhões. He was educated at the local cathedral school. After leaving school he entered the Augustinian Abbey of St Vincent on the outskirts of Lisbon, against his family's wishes. There he studied the Scriptures and Latin classics. In 1219 he came into contact with five Franciscans, who were on their way to Morocco to preach to the Muslims there. Anthony was attracted by their simple lifestyle. The next year he learnt that these Franciscans had been martyred in Morocco. Reflecting on their courage and dedication, the desire grew in him to join this order, so he obtained permission to leave his order and join the Franciscans. Travelling to Italy, he arrived at Assisi in poor health, and, out of compassion was sent to the rural hospice of San Paolo near Forlì, Romagna, Italy, where he seems to have been put to work in the kitchen. Being called on to preach on one occasion, at an ordination, his sermon made a deep impression and he was commissioned by the minister provincial to preach all over Lombardy, and so he was able to exercise his great gift of preaching. Anthony became ill with dropsy and, in 1231 went for respite to Camposampiero. He died on his way back to Padua on 13 June 1231 at the convent of Poor Clares at Arcella. He was 36. His feast day is 13 June.

Colin Lunt