

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Jun 13th 2013

Saint Anthony of Padua was one of the early followers of St. Francis. He is renowned for his preaching and teaching and is a Doctor of the Church, the Evangelical Doctor. Through Anthony, Francis was able to see that theological education is not contradictory to the simple life. He entrusted the training of those seeking holy orders to Anthony. Anthony is also known as the Hammer of Heretics and Professor of Miracles because of his evangelical preaching and the miracles attributed to him.

St. Anthony preached Jesus Christ. He preached freedom. He also preached transformation. These are often seen as contradictory. Yet, the apostle Paul says that it is like trying to see with your eyes covered. One's eyes may not be blinded but one's mind, one's heart, is. In Christ, the covering is removed and we experience what no one before Jesus had: by gazing upon Jesus, the image of God, we see the face of God. This is possible because of the grace of God who has poured his Spirit into our lives. The Spirit points us to Jesus and transforms us into the image of Jesus. Like Paul, Anthony did not preach Anthony; he preached Jesus Christ as Lord. When you do this, the light shines in the darkness and reveals the glory of God.

The glory of the Lord that Paul says we see in Jesus dwells in our land. This was the hope of the psalmist. And what is the result of this light shining in the darkness? Peace. Salvation. In a world that knows peace, apparent opposites are united. As a husband, there have been times when I wrestled with how to respond to my wife. Will it be kindness or truth? As a father, I frequently struggled with how to bring about justice without disturbing the peace. However, when the Lord is present, "kindness and truth shall meet, justice and peace shall kiss." The Lord, with outstretched arms on the cross, unites east and west. It is the paradox of the cross. St. Anthony preached the love of Jesus Christ and came to be known as the Hammer. He pointed out errors, in all humility. And they loved him for it.

Although Anthony was a man of love and peace, his love was not squishy. Jesus said that the righteousness of his disciples had to surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees, folks who were known for their righteousness. Jesus' words in the gospel lesson emphasize the importance of humility, responsiveness to one's brothers and sisters we may have hurt or offended, and the need to own up to our sins and faults, sooner rather than later. The longer something drags on the worse it gets. If you have something against someone or believe that someone has something against you, stop everything and get the matter settled. That is tough but it leads to peace.

St. Anthony was a humble man but he was filled with the Holy Spirit. Before the friars knew much about him, the day came when he was called upon to preach. It was the occasion of an ordination attended by Dominicans and Franciscans. The Dominicans thought the Franciscans were going to supply the preacher and vice versa. No one was prepared. The Franciscan leader thought, "Anthony

appears to be able to read so I will make him preach. Just say whatever the Holy Spirit lays on your heart, he told him.” Anthony did not want to do it but, under obedience, he preached. And that is when it all began. Kindness and truth met. Justice and peace kissed.

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