

Chronology of the Life of St. Anthony of Padua

Joaquín Beltrán, O.F.M.

Cronologia de la vida de San Antonio de Padua

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Translated by Anthony Will, O.F.M. Cap

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It is very difficult, if not impossible, to determine the exact dates of the doings and events in the life of anyone, and it is more difficult if the person lived many centuries ago. In the case of St. Anthony, as in many others like his, we know with certainty about events, activities, journeys, times spent in various places, topographical data, etc, for which, however, we do not have the corresponding concrete and certain chronological data. Nor can we determine precisely the time or the dates when some of the things occurred nor the length of his stay in a city or place, nor the exact beginning and end of a specific activity. That, however, does not mean that historical sources lack all precise information, even though they do not give us the complete certainty we would like to have. In many cases we have to be satisfied with dates that are virtually certain, or approximate, or more or less probable. In the life of St. Anthony the dates which must be considered historically sure and indisputable, and which can be taken as a framework for others, are the following:

- 1220: Anthony enters the religious order founded by Francis of Assisi.
- 1221: After his failed mission to Morocco, where he spent the winter gravely ill, and after a brief stay in Sicily, Anthony participates in the general chapter in Assisi.
- 1226: Anthony is in Limoges.
- 1229: Anthony is in Padua and in the March of Treviso.
- 1230: Anthony is present at the general chapter in Assisi. From there he goes to the Roman curia.
- 1231: Anthony preaches the Lenten course in Padua. He remains for a time in the hermitage Camposampiero. In the evening of June 13, he dies in Arcella, on the outskirts of Padua.

Within the framework of the above dates and taking into account what has been averted to above, an analysis of the historical sources will establish the following chronology:

- 1195: While unable to determine the day or the month, we know that in this year Anthony was born in Lisbon, Portugal, near the cathedral where he was baptized. We do not know for sure the names of his parents or their status in society, although according to some sources they were of the upper class and quite young when he was born, and that they named him Fernando at his baptism.
- 1201-1210: During these years, approximately, Fernando Martin, as he was known at this time, attended the cathedral school.
- 1210: At the age of 15 he underwent a severe crisis in his personal life. He determined to leave the world and to enter the monastery, rather the canonry of St. Vincent, established on the outskirts of Lisbon. A fervent community of Canons Regular of St. Augustine lived at this house, and there he took the religious habit and became a canon regular of St. Augustine.
- 1210-1212: Fernando remained in San Vicente in Lisbon a couple of years. He continued his study of the sacred sciences and deepened his understanding of the rule of St. Augustine. In order to avoid the

distractions and the disturbances to his interior peace caused by the inopportune visits of his friends from Lisbon, he asked his superiors to be transferred.

- 1212-1220: His superiors acceded to his desire to leave Lisbon and sent him to Santa Cruz in Coimbra, where he remained from the end of 1212 to the summer of 1220. Santa Cruz de Coimbra belonged to the Canons Regular of St. Augustine. At this time it was the most famous center of religious culture in the kingdom of Portugal. The years he spent at Santa Cruz were most important in the intellectual formation of Anthony. He reaped the benefits of having great teachers and a well stocked library. On the other hand, however, the level of discipline and spiritual life of the community in Coimbra did not reach the heights of that of San Vicente.
- 1220: On January 16th of 1220 the Franciscan protomartyrs, Bernard and his four companions were martyred in Morocco. Months before they had passed through Coimbra on their way to the land of the Muslims. The queen of Portugal, Doña Urraca and her sister-in-law Sancha had received them graciously and respectfully. The mortal remains of the martyrs were brought to Coimbra in two silver coffins by the king's son Don Pedro. They were buried in the church of Santa Cruz, where they are still venerated. Miracles that occurred there have led to an increase of devotion on the part of the people and have promoted the memory of the martyrs.
- 1220: Presbiteral ordination in Coimbra. There is no historical document that expressly mentions the place or the date of Anthony's ordination to the priesthood. A study of the sources seems to give us sufficient reason to deduce with plenty of certitude that Anthony was already a priest when he embraced the form of life founded by St. Francis of Assisi, and so he must have been ordained a priest as a canon at Santa Cruz in Coimbra, probably in February or March of 1220, at 25 years of age.
- 1220 In the summer of 1220 Canon Fernando Martin became a member of the Franciscan family. What awakened the Franciscan vocation in Fernando was the news about the martyrs in Morocco, the subsequent presence of their mortal remains in the church of Santa Cruz in Coimbra and the miracles that happened there. The

martyrdom took place on January 16, 1220. It would have taken Don Pedro some time to transport the precious relics to Coimbra. That and other historical events like the death of the queen, Doiia Urraca on the 3rd of November, 1220, permit us to situate the Franciscan vocation of St. Anthony in the summer of 1220.

1220 One day between September and October of this year., the friars from the place called San Anton de Olivais came to the abbey of the Canons of St. Augustine to beg alms, as was their custom. Fernando told them about his desire to join them and take on their religious habit if they would send him to the land of the Muslims, so that he could merit to share in the crown of the holy martyrs. After obtaining the necessary permissions, namely, the consent of the prior and the community of Santa Cruz, Fernando Martin of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine changed over to the Friars Minor of St. Francis. He went to live with the friars at the place called Ode Olivaiis” and changed his name to Anthony. It must have been a short stay. He made a very brief and accelerated novitiate, which is easily explained because he already had a religious formation and the experience of living in community. Besides, his whole reason for transferring to another religious community was for the purpose of having the opportunity to go immediately among the Saracens and to suffer martyrdom for Christ. Moreover, Pope Honorius III prescribed a complete year long novitiate for the Friars Minor in a bull dated September 22, 1220. That document must have arrived in Portugal after Anthony had already left for Morocco.

1220-1221: From the final days of autumn of 1220 to March 1221, Anthony was a missionary in Morocco. Admitted to the Order of St. Francis he immediately got permission to go to the land of the non-believers. We do not know his itinerary, nor the cities of Morocco which he may have visited. In accord with Franciscan custom he would have had to take a companion with him, but we do not know who accompanied him. In summary, what we know is that he was in Morocco, that he was gravely ill there throughout the entire winter, from November 1220 to February 1221. That obliged him to return to his homeland without having won martyrdom. God's plans did no coincide at all with those of Anthony.

- 1221: Around March or April he arrived in Sicily. He remained there a short time. In order to recover his broken health Anthony had set sail from Morocco for his homeland, but violent, contrary winds took the ship to Sicily. There he disembarked and reached Messina. The friars there took him in and informed him that very soon the Order would be celebrating a general chapter in Assisi at which all the members of the Order could attend, including the novices.
- 1221: From the 30th of May to the 8th of June, Anthony was at the general chapter in Assisi. Although there is no specific source that indicates it, there is little doubt that this was the chapter known as the chapter of mats, celebrated in Assisi in 1221. St. Francis presided. According to Jordan of Giano (*Chronicles* n.16) it was the last general chapter open to all the friars. It lasted 9 days and more than 3000 attended. The chapter was informed of the martyrdom of the five friars in Morocco. It approved the rule non bullata. After the closing of the chapter each one went back to his province or to the mission to which he was assigned. Having been recently admitted to the Order in a distant country, Anthony was unknown and passed unnoticed at the chapter. He remained immersed in reflection on what he had seen and heard there. Since he had no particular appointment, Friar Gratian, the minister provincial of Romagna took him into that province with the permission of friar Elias, who was the minister general at this time.
- 1221-1222: From June of 1221 to September of 1222, Anthony was at the hermitage of Monte Paolo near Forli. As it happened, after the general chapter, Anthony went with Gratian, the provincial and a group of friars to Romagna, his new province. He was assigned to the hermitage of Monte Paolo, which did not have the services of a priest. He spent some fifteen months at the hermitage, growing in his Franciscan vocation, thinking about his missionary experience, immersed in contemplation and in the ascetical life. Then something, apparently fortuitous, happened, which would change the direction of his life.
- 1222: On September 24 Anthony was among a great number of friars who came to Forli either to receive sacred orders or to join in the celebration, and also to participate in the provincial chapter to be held on the 29th, the feast of St. Michael. Before the ordinands

went to the cathedral the famous event took place in the residence of the Friars Minor. Someone should deliver a spiritual exhortation to those to be ordained. None of the priests present, not even any of the Dominicans, had come prepared, and they refused to improvise a sermon for the occasion. In such a situation the Franciscan superior of that community ordered Anthony to say a few edifying words. Without pretensions, Anthony spoke, and to the surprise and delight of everyone there, publicly manifested his biblical and theological erudition, and his profound spirituality.

- 1222: Toward the end of September, friar Gratian, who as minister presided at the provincial chapter on the feast of St. Michael heard about what had happened a few days earlier. He verified what he had heard and then in keeping with the directives of the Rule non bullata, he conferred on friar Anthony the office of preacher. It authorized Anthony to preach throughout the whole territory of the province.
- 1222: In October of 1222 Anthony began his mission as an itinerant preacher throughout Romagna. He dedicated all his time to the work of evangelization. He traveled through the towns. He went wherever he was invited to exercise the ministry of the Word. He preached to his fellow Franciscans, to groups of students, to confraternities. He pronounced discourses in synods, in chapters of canons, in monastic gatherings, and in the pontifical curia. To his moral and penitential preaching must be added his peace-making activities, the teaching of sacred scripture to his brothers, and his challenging of heretics.
- 1223: Missionary sojourn in Rimini. This is the only place evangelized by Anthony which is explicitly mentioned in any of the historical sources. We know it was a city overrun by heretics, whom Anthony confronted armed with his evangelical weaponry that is, the heroic and consistent living of the gospel by himself and his religious brothers, public debates, exhortations to the crowds and individual counseling. His preaching was very effective not only among Catholics but also among the Cathares. Worthy of special mention is the conversion of Bononillo, who was a veteran leader of the Cathares. Later sources say that at Rimini the miracle of his

preaching to the fish took place as well as that of the donkey kneeling in adoration of the Eucharist which Anthony was holding.

1223-1224: Historical sources, not however, the “*Assidua*,” point out that Anthony was the Order’s first “lector” or teacher of theology. Around the end of 1223 or early in 1224, he began teaching in Bologna, the capital of Romagna. There he taught the sacred sciences for approximately a year. In determining the dates one has to take into account the letter or note which St. Francis sent him, in which is quoted the bullata Rule, which was approved by pope Honorius III on November 29, 1223. On the other hand, at the end of 1224 or the beginning of 1225, Anthony was already in France. There are no doubts about the substantial authenticity of the short letter which St. Francis sent to St. Anthony. The Poverello calls Anthony “my bishop” and says that it would please him if he would teach theology to the brothers as long as such study would not extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotion. Sources emphasize that Anthony dedicated himself to teaching theology not at his own initiative. Rather he acceded to the insistent begging of his confreres and the need for a better formation as preachers, and after having the approbation of St. Francis.

1224-1227: From the Fall of 1224 to the end of 1227, St. Anthony was in the south of France carrying on a variety of apostolic labors. Belabored by the activity of the heretical Albigenses and plagued with the crusades and their repercussions, this region was of special concern to the church, and pope Honorius III asked the teachers of theology in Paris and of other places to go where the Albigenses were. The Cistercians, the Dominicans, and the Franciscans were there already, and the highest leadership of the Orders Friars Minor sent Anthony to reinforce those efforts.

1225: Around 1225 Anthony, the “lector” and teacher of theology and preacher is teaching and preaching in Montpellier, the citadel of catholic orthodoxy, and the place where the Dominicans and Franciscans were prepared for preaching to the Albigensens of the region. Some say that a miracle of bi-location took place here while Anthony was preaching. There may have been some other miracle too.

1224-1226: On a day some time between September of 1224 and May of 1225, while Anthony was preaching at the provincial chapter being celebrated in Arles (In Provence an old province of France) the stigmatized St. Francis appeared to him. There are no doubts about it happening because the primitive Franciscan biographical sources attest to it see 1 Cel 48; 3 Cel 3; LM 4, 10. It is however, very difficult to ascertain the exact date on which it occurred. An analysis of the data at our disposal only allows us to indicate the time frame as given above when it took place.

1225: It is more than probable that in 1225 St. Anthony was preaching in Toulouse, France, a stronghold of the Albigenses, and that as “lector” and teacher of theology he gave classes to his Franciscan brothers. One of the historical sources says that here the famous miracle of the mule getting on its knees before the Eucharist took place.

1226: It can be taken as certain that in 1226 Anthony was named Custos for the region of Limoges. In those days the office of custos stood as an intermediary between the minister provincial and the local minister or guardian. It is possible and quite probable that Anthony was named custos by John of Florence, who was the minister provincial of Provence, and would have presided at the chapter held in Arles during which St. Francis appeared to Anthony while he was preaching (cfr. 1 Cel 48). Anthony took charge of a “place” that housed the Friars Minor who had come to the city and its surroundings a few years before. He established another “place” or convent in Brive. And, of course, he never gave up teaching and preaching.

(Some later historical sources refer to apostolic activities, trips, sojourns, miracles, etc., of St. Anthony while he was in the south of France. For example, his preaching in Saint Julien and foretelling an extraordinary event; his stay in the Benedictine abbey of Solignac because of illness; his preaching at the synod of Bourges at which he denounced the misconduct of the archbishop who converted from his errant ways; his being guardian of the friars in Le Puy where he reportedly performed various miracles and worked other wonders.)

- 1227: Toward the end of 1227 Anthony crossed Provence on foot and returned to Italy. We cannot determine the date of his return, nor what motivated his going back to Italy, nor whether he took up residence in any place, or if he continued the life of an itinerant missionary. Some authors maintain that Anthony went back to Italy to participate as *custos* of Limoges in the general chapter of Pentecost which was celebrated in Assisi May 30, 1227. This was an important chapter because it was the first one held after St. Francis had died, and because it elected as minister general John Parente, who had been provincial minister of Spain when Anthony entered the Order of Friars Minor.
- 1227: From historical sources it can be deduced with certainty that Anthony was elected minister provincial in the north of Italy. This conclusion, however, is shrouded by many questions that are difficult to answer. We do not know the territorial limits of the circumscription of which he was the minister. Was it Milan? Romagna? After he resigned, perhaps in the general chapter of 1230, northern Italy was divided into various provinces. Still more difficult to determine, even approximately, is the date of his election. It certainly was after his stay in the south of France. Until 1239 provincials were elected by the minister general and not by the chapter capitulars. So Anthony must have been elected either by friar Elias who was general until the chapter of Pentecost in 1227 or by his successor, John Parente. There was no established length of time for the duration of the office of provincial, so the majority of authors estimate that Anthony was in office for three years, while some reduce it to one year. All sources praise Anthony as a servant and minister to his brothers. They underscore his exemplariness, his forbearance and graciousness, his ability to move the hearts of the lukewarm and negligent, his defense and protection of the good name of his brothers, his geniality in community festivities, etc. We are sure that Anthony left the office of provincial in May of 1230 at the time of the general chapter which was celebrated on the occasion of transferring the mortal remains of St. Francis to the basilica which had been built in his honor.
- 1228-1230: As minister provincial in the north of Italy, Anthony was obliged by the Rule to visit, encourage, and correct the friars under his care. There can be no doubt that he dedicated himself fully to

carrying out this mission. It is also easy to conclude that he would visit the places, towns and cities where the friars resided, and especially that he would often have gone to Milan where the friars were established in 1227 and because the city was a very active center of heretics.

1226: The story about St. Anthony in Vercelli is entangled in problems which are not just those of chronology. In trying to establish the time when Anthony was in Vercelli, authors vacillate between dates in the years 1222 to 1230. But the opinion that puts him in Vercelli around 1228 and that his stay lasted about a year seems more plausible. Without doubt Anthony did preach in Vercelli. His sermons left lasting impressions even among the clergy of the cathedral. Also beyond doubt is the friendship between Anthony and Thomas Gallus, a famous theologian and commentator on the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius. Thomas Gallus was a Canon Regular of St. Augustine and Abbot of their monastery of St. Andrew in Vercelli. Anthony stayed at this monastery for a time. For both Anthony and Thomas their mutual relationship must have been fruitful. On the other hand, it does not seem probable that Anthony and the Franciscan Adam Marsh met at this monastery, despite the fact that both maintained contact and cultural exchanges with abbot Thomas Gallus. It is possible that Anthony may have preached, given conferences, and some classes to the community of the monastery of St. Andrew while he resided there; but it does not seem historically admissible that Anthony served as a master of theology, in the strict sense, in the canon's monastery or in the house of the Friars Minors in Vercelli.

1229-1230: From June of 1229 to June of 1230, the church promoted a grand peace mission in the March of Treviso which was suffering from a cruel war between factions of the nobility. At the time Anthony was minister provincial and he participated in this mission of peace. He was able to harmonize the care of the brethren with his evangelizing and peacemaking journeys. He sought the collaboration of brothers especially prepared for the task of evangelizing and peacemaking. He must have had to visit Padua repeatedly, and probably took up residence there at least temporarily. Moreover, the definitive redaction of his Sunday

sermons and his profound love of the people of Padua would have moved him to do so.

122-1230: It seems quite probable that Anthony gave in to the insistent requests of the friars, and prepared and edited his Sunday Sermons for publication during the winters of 1229 and 1230, a time when visits to the Friars and his itinerant preaching diminished, in Padua and in particular, in the friary dedicated to Mary the Mother of the Lord.

1229-1231: Undoubtedly during the long periods that he spent in Padua in these years, Anthony dedicated himself wholeheartedly to preaching and hearing confessions, as well as teaching theology to the friars in the school of the Friars Minor, which he had founded in Padua. Besides, he gave talks and conferences on moral and biblical themes outside his friary and at the university of the City, where he was held in high esteem.

1230: On Saturday, May 26, 1230, the mortal remains of St. Francis were solemnly transferred from the church of St. George to the new basilica dedicated in honor of the Poverello. On this occasion all the leaders of the Order, including Anthony, met in a general chapter. At this chapter Anthony relinquished the office of provincial in order to dedicate himself more fully to preaching and to teaching.

1230: From June to September 1230, Anthony was with Pope Gregory IX. The general chapter of this year sent a select group of friars, Anthony among them, to explain to the pope some of the Order's urgent problems. For example, what was the juridic value of the Testament of St. Francis and how should some of the passages of the Rule be interpreted, given the rapid development of the Order. Their stay at the pontifical curia in Rome (Ananio) must have lasted a few months in order for them to have had enough time to weigh well the values under consideration and to come to the best solutions possible. Moreover, Anthony continued exercising the ministry of the Word, preaching and giving spiritual conferences. The pope in his bull of canonization recalls his personal dealings with Anthony, his virtue and knowledge. The pope calls Anthony "Ark of the Testament" because of his profound understanding of the bible. Without a doubt, Anthony must have collaborated in the

composition of the bull "Quo elongati" in which pope Gregory IX answered the questions which the Order had addressed to him.

- 1230: In the Fall of 1230, after completing the mission to the papal curia which the Order had given him, Anthony returned to Padua where, freed from the responsibility of ministering to his brothers, he was able to dedicate himself fully to itinerant preaching and the preparation of his written sermons.
- 1230-1231: In response to the request of Cardinal Reynold of Segni, who would become pope Alexander IV, Anthony dedicated the winter of 1230-31 to editing the collection of his Festive Sermons. These were sermons for the feasts of the liturgical year. However, as Lent approached, Anthony interrupted this labor to give himself to preaching. Once Lent ended, Anthony took up again the redaction of his festive sermons at Camposampiero. This work remains abruptly interrupted forever with the sermon for the commemoration of St. Paul on June 30.
- 1231: From February 5 to March 23, 1231, Anthony preached the Lenten course in Padua. He gave a daily sermon, introduced catechical instructions and scheduled hours for the hearing of confessions. Such things were unheard of up to that time. This admirable Lenten mission exhausted the strength and undermined the health of the saint but produced very abundant evangelical fruits.
- 1231: On March 17, 1231, which was Monday of Holy Week, Anthony, while finishing up preaching the grand Lent of this year, went to speak to the Mayor of Padua and his Council. He asked them to change the commune's statutes which required that a debtor who wasn't paying his debts should remain in prison until his relatives or friends would pay his debt. For the poor this could become a chain binding them perpetually. The prestige of Anthony and the reasonableness of his arguments, moved the authorities to change the statutes.
- 1231: In the latter half of May, 1231, after finishing the exhausting Lent of this year and after all the pastoral work and the liturgical celebrations, which went on through Pentecost and its octave, Anthony retired to the hermitage Camposampiero near Padua. It

could have been the 19th of May when he did that. He needed to retire and rest, to care for his broken health. At the same time he went on working on his Sermons for liturgical feasts, and, above all, he sought to deepen his prayer and spiritual life in preparation for the coming of Sister Death, whom he felt was near.

- 1231: Friday, June 13: At the hermitage of Camposampiero Anthony had fashioned for himself a small cell-like structure of boards and mats in a walnut tree. On the 13th he came down to eat with the brothers. While at table, he suddenly collapsed. He did not lose consciousness but knowing that he was dying, he asked to be taken to Saint Mary church in Padua, so he could be with the community in the hour of death and would be buried there. They transported him in a cart. In order to avoid the crowds of Padua, they did not take the road through the center of the city but bypassed it and went on to the convent of the Poor Clares at Arcella. There the Franciscan friars who ministered to the Poor Clares had an unpretentious hospice. In this small friary Anthony's health got worse. He celebrated the sacrament of penance, sang the liturgical hymn "*O gloriosa Domina*" in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, was strengthened by an apparition of Christ, was anointed with the oil of the sick, sang the penitential psalms with the friars, and after a half hour of sleepiness, expired. The news of his death ran like wild fire through the whole city; pandemonium reigned there. Some writers say that Anthony appeared to his friend Abbot Thomas Gallus.
- 1231: June 13-17: Anthony's funeral was preceded by a series of grave confrontations and even outbreaks of violence. The entire society of Padua got involved. Different sectors of the population disputed with one another. The nuns opposed the friars. The mayor was at odds with the bishop. Some wanted his body buried where he had died, in Arcella, in the outskirts of Padua; others wanted his burial to be in the Friars' convent of Saint Mary in the city of Padua. Finally, the friars prevailed, and on Tuesday the 17th of June, the mortal remains of Anthony were transferred from Arcella to the church of Saint Mary. The funeral procession traversed the whole city. After the solemn requiem Mass presided over by the bishop, the body of Saint Anthony was securely buried in a vault in the interior of the church of the Friars Minor.

- 1231-1232: The process of St. Anthony's canonization was one of the quickest in history. It lasted less than eleven months, from the beginning of July 1231 to May 28, 1232. Miracles began to multiply already from the day of his burial, June 17th. The devotion of the people as well as that of the university crowd grew and extended itself very quickly far and wide. The number of pilgrimages increased. The whole city was anxious for the canonization process to begin. So in the early part of June, 1231, they appointed a commission with the task of presenting to the pope the necessary petition. Gregory IX immediately started the diocesan process and soon after the apostolic process. After all those requirements were satisfied, on May 28, 1232, the pope decided to proceed with the canonization.
- 1232: May 30: Pope Gregory IX canonized St. Anthony in the cathedral of Spoleto, where the papal curia was residing at the time.
- 1263: On April 8, 1263, St. Bonaventure presided at the solemn recognition and transfer of the mortal remains of St. Anthony from the small church of Saint Mary to the new basilica built in his honor. At this time the tongue of St. Anthony was found to be fresh and incorrupt.
- 1946: In his apostolic letter entitled *Exulta, Lusitania felix* and dated January 16, 1946, the feast day of the franciscan protomartyrs whose remains had been brought to Santa Cruz of Coimbra in 1220, Pope Pius XII declared St. Anthony doctor of the church, with the title "Evangelic Doctor."