

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
July 3-4, 2010 – Cycle C

“Going Against Traffic”

So the Lord sent them on their way. Seventy two, He sent. The harvest is abundant. So be on your way. I’m sending you like lambs among wolves. [Luke 10: 1-13].

So once upon a time, in our time, George and Mable decided they were going to be Catholic missionaries. They picked up everything including their son, John. They moved to the “no priest” land of upper Mississippi. John was attending a small college about twenty-five miles away. He used the same interstate to go to school that his parents used to go to their little Catholic mission. One day their son John decided he should call his parents and give them a warning. He knew his parents would be on the same interstate. He called them, and told them “please be careful of a certain stretch of highway because a car was driving the wrong way,

against the traffic.” His parents called him back. “Thanks for the call,” they said. “But it’s not just one car,” they said. They’re all going the wrong way, except for us.”

Sometimes when the Lord says, “go, get on the road and help me,” we may be faced with all kinds of opposite traffic. It may be our mistake that we go against the traffic. Or it may be that the traffic in that area will always go against us.

St. Anthony of Padua was born in Lisbon, Portugal in 1185 and died in 1231. He was well educated at the “cathedral school.” He joined the Augustinian order of canons but was disappointed with the direction of the order. It seemed he and they were at cross purposes. He joined the Franciscans, took the habit, and then sailed to Morocco where he wished to minister to the local people. But the “traffic” was against him. He fell ill and was forced to go back to Europe, this time to Assisi. When he was called upon to preach, the friars discovered his great

abilities. St. Francis of Assisi, himself, assigned Anthony to teach at Bologna and again, to Montpellier, Limoges, and then became the Provincial Superior of Bologna in 1227. He spent the short balance of his life, four years, at Padua where he preached and taught. He was canonized one year after his death in 1232 and was later declared “doctor of the church” (1946).

It seemed that what Anthony wanted, that is, to go to Morocco and be a missionary, or to preach in the Alps of northern Italy to regain the heretics there, [it seemed] his wishes never worked out. He was always running counter to traffic. However, when he was sent by his superiors to do ministry, everything worked out fine. It seemed that God was speaking through them. Because of his obedient, simple life, Anthony became a living saint.

As a saint, Anthony is invoked to return lost items. I recall a real incident where a book of

psalms, which Anthony was using in the classroom, was stolen by a student. Anthony's prayers alarmed the student. The student saw an apparition. It was a warning. The student returned the book. What was lost was found.

Anthony is known for his concern for the poor, although he rarely ministered to large numbers of poor people; but he prayed for them. People would give alms for the poor which were known as, "St. Anthony's Bread." Although his contact with mothers was limited, he is known to have protected pregnant mothers by his prayers, and is often depicted with the Holy Child Jesus in his arms as an indication of his concern unborn and for newborn children. Also, the Holy Child Jesus that Anthony holds was understood to be a reward from Jesus for Anthony's child-like innocence. He is also known as patron of travelers, although he rarely traveled far from his places of living. There is one dramatic moment in his life as recorded in the Franciscan

Chronicles, chapt. 24, verse #21, that once, when carrying the blessed sacrament in procession, near his little church, a resentful heretic and townsman yelled profanities against the sacrament and proceeded to verbally abuse Anthony. All the yelling caused a nearby mule to unfetter itself. The mule headed toward the sacrament to the surprise of everyone. The mule suddenly knelt before the sacrament and would not move until all the yelling was over. The heretic was overcome by the sheer sacredness of the scene. Anthony processed on to where he was supposed to go, in the local church, to preach and teach.

Our scripture: The prophet Isaiah assures us that the Lord will give joy and comfort to all His servants. Servants are those who go, and do the will of the Lord. [Isaiah 66: 10-14c].

Paul's letter to the Galatians remind us that true servants of the Lord never boast of their own accomplishments. They boast of the power of the

“cross,” the power of dying to selfishness and sin and relying on the singular power of Jesus, to bring transforming, holy change to a fallen world. [Galatians 6: 14-18].

So we pray: *Lord Jesus, You call, we follow. Sometimes we confuse our purpose and Your purpose. Sometimes we go against “traffic” and wonder why? Lord Jesus, gently guide us to Your purpose, to preach Your way. You gave Anthony of Padua power in his prayer, power in his preaching, and power in his example. He founded no missions, built no churches, and made no great journeys. He taught and evangelized simply, and in simple places, in the small friaries where he lived. Might we not have the grace to do the same? A favor we ask in Jesus’ name who lives forever and ever. Amen.*

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