

## Reflection Monday Week 11 St Anthony of Padua 2022

**St Antony of Padua (1195? - 1231)** firstly joined the Augustinians, but was so impressed by the martyrdom of five Franciscans spreading the faith in Morocco he became a Franciscan, so that he could preach the gospel in Africa too. Illness obliged him to leave Morocco, and a storm drove his ship to Sicily where he took part in the General Chapter of the Franciscans in 1221, and met Saint Francis of Assisi himself. His preaching career took him to northern Italy and southern France, then a stronghold of the Albigensian heresy. Later he returned to Italy, to Padua, where he was an outstanding preacher and the first Franciscan theologian. His sermons are full of gentleness, but he reproved the wicked with fearless severity – especially backsliding clergy and the oppressors of the weak. His shrine is a centre of pilgrimage. He is the patron saint of the lost and found.

As a follower and friend of Jesus, Anthony followed in his footsteps as a herald of good news, healing the sick, setting people free from all that harmed them, filling them with the love and goodness of God.

The Albigensian heresy was prominent in southern France in the 12th century. Albigensian belief was dualistic: it saw the universe as a struggle between good and evil - the physical, tangible world was inherently corrupt, evil, the creation of Satan - the spiritual universe was the realm of the good God, the destiny for souls striving to escape the material world. The more closely tied to the world through food, possessions, family, the more one was trapped and inhibited by its corruption. It believed the Christian church was evil and renounced it. Despite its own extremism, it attracted large numbers of followers, including some highly placed nobles. Pope Innocent III organised a crusade against this heresy in 1209.

St Anthony of Padua, pray for us.