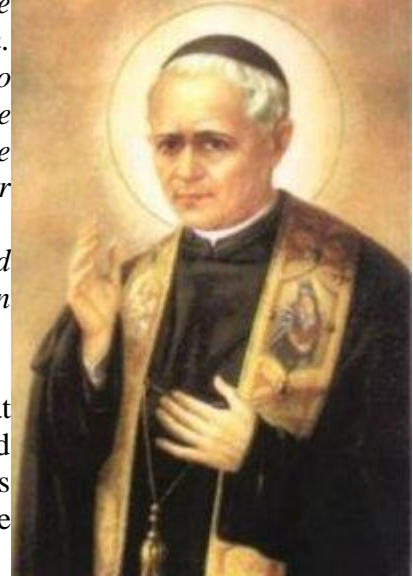


Saint Anthony Mary Pucci

January 12

Anthony Pucci was born in 1819 at Poggiolo, in the diocese of Pistoia, Italy. He entered the Servite Order at the age of eighteen. After his ordination to the priesthood he was sent to Viareggio where he was soon made pastor, an office he held for forty-five years, until his death. As prior provincial of the Tuscan Province he preferred to be regarded as a brother in the service of others rather than as a superior.

He gave himself totally to the service of God and parishioners, especially the needy. He died on January 12, 1892. In 1962 Pope John XXIII added his name to the list of saints.



Anthony Mary Pucci was born of fine Christian parents at Poggiolo, in the diocese of Pistoia, Italy, in 1819; he was the second of nine children. After a youth marked by prayer and study, his devotion to Mary, the Mother of God, caused him to seek entrance in the Order of Servants of Mary at the age of eighteen.

He made his novitiate at Florence and studied philosophy and theology at Monte Senario for six years, where he also made his solemn profession. In 1844, a year after his ordination to the priesthood, Anthony was sent to Viareggio as assistant pastor. In 1847 he was named pastor and for forty-five years, until his death, he fulfilled this responsibility with great love, giving an example of a pure and fruitful life, singularly dedicated to God and his flock. Notwithstanding pastoral duties he continued his studies and in 1850 received the title of Master in Theology.

For many years Father Anthony was prior of the community in Viareggio and also prior provincial of the Tuscan Province. This was a period of hostility between Church and civil authorities due to laws passed against religious orders and congregations. In these offices, mindful of the words of Saint Augustine, he preferred to be loved rather than feared by his brothers, and was happy to serve with love rather than exercise power.

Anthony was characterized by humility of spirit, reserve in speaking, abiding contact with God and love of poverty. He dedicated himself completely to his priestly ministry in order to lead all to Christ; he knew his parishioners individually, he showed them fatherly love, offering them the word of God and supporting them with his advice and direction. His charity to the needy knew no limits: he even went so far as to give a poor man the shirt off his back and because of this he was called father of the poor.

He was a faithful minister of the sacrament of penance, dedicating several hours a day to this work. Of greatest importance to him was reconciling sinners to God, comforting the afflicted, forgiving those who had offended him, uniting those separated by hatred and violence, bringing peace to families, and assisting the sick and dying. His love for others was particularly visible during the cholera epidemic of 1854-1856, when day and night, almost without rest, he worked with the sick. God gave him many gifts, including discernment of spirits and the gift of healing. He was seen at times in ecstasy or raised from the ground in prayer.

Father Anthony founded a congregation of Servite sisters in his parish for the education of youth, and he directed them with particular concern. He was a pioneer in establishing parish associations for young children, teenagers, men, and women in order to intensify the Christian life

of his community. He promoted the St. Vincent de Paul Society, recently introduced into Italy from France, and the work for the Propagation of the Faith. He founded the first permanent seaside home for the care of children. In this work of the apostolate he was supported and animated by his great love for the Eucharist and Our Lady of Sorrows to whom he solemnly consecrated his parish.

He was stricken with pneumonia on a winter's day after he gave his coat to a poor man on the street. A few days later, January 12, 1892, having received the sacraments, he died a holy death. The entire city, including even those hostile to the Church, wept at the death of their beloved pastor.

At the end of the first session of the Second Vatican Council Pope John XXIII, on December 9, 1962, added his name to the list of saints. The body of Saint Anthony Pucci is venerated in the Basilica of St. Andrew in Viareggio.

Prayer

Father in heaven, you made Saint Anthony exemplary as Servant of Mary and pastor of your people. May our devotion to Mary help us be generous servants of your people, building your kingdom on earth. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ.

For the Eucharistic and LH see Liturgical books