

These three families soon became known throughout Milan because of their lifestyle, their penitential practices, their way of dressing and their preaching which was at times provocative. Some of their initiatives later became customary in Milan, such as the ringing of bells at 3 p.m. on Fridays to commemorate the death of the Lord on the cross. They also actively promoted the solemn exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament by turn in various churches (the so-called Forty Hours). Not everyone in Milan was pleased with the zeal of this new spiritual family. Its members were threatened. They were accused of Pelagianism and of being followers of controversial Fra Battista (d. January 1, 1534). They were also suspected of embracing the heresies of the Beguines and the poor men of Lyons. Milanese civil and Church authorities intervened. Two trials ensued. The first one, against the Sons of St Paul, was held on October 5, 1534. It shelved the whole matter and issued no verdict. The second one, against the Sons of St Paul and the Angelics of St Paul, began in June 1536 and was concluded on August 21, 1537 with full acquittal...

It was after this bruising experience that the Sons of St Paul, who had begun common life in the summer of 1534 but without the rule of poverty, now embraced it without hesitation. Similarly, in 1537, in the course of the second trial, Anthony promptly accepted a request from the bishop of Vicenza, Cardinal Nicola Ridolfi and sent a group of his priests, sisters, and married couples to reform the monasteries of that city.

In May 1539 Anthony was back in Guastalla. The reason for his return is controverted. In any event, he was already in poor health and his exertions in Guastalla and the hot and humid climate of the lower Po valley aggravated his condition. The last week of June he felt so ill that he requested to be taken home to his mother in Cremona. Surrounded by his family and closest friends, he spoke his last words and, comforted by the Church's sacraments, died, as he had predicted, on the octave of the feasts of Saints Peter and Paul, July 5, 1539. A pious tradition holds that before expiring, Anthony was granted a vision of Saint Paul.

After a Cremona funeral, his body was taken to Milan and buried in St Paul's Convent of the Angelics. His saintliness was instantly recognized, and he was venerated as a Blessed until 1634, five years short of a century, which would have automatically given him the title of Saint. Instead, when Urban VIII issued new canonization rules in 1634, Anthony lost the popular title of Blessed. In 1802 his cause was reintroduced. By 1888 three miracles were about to be approved for his official beatification. An alert Barnabite cardinal, Giuseppe Granniello, close to Pope Leo XIII, obtained that Anthony be beatified as a result of the previous 95 years of popular devotion (1539-1634). The three miracles approved on February 14, 1897 finally led to his canonization on May 27, 1897.

*(excerpted from: www.catholic-church.org)

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Saint Anthony Mary Zaccaria

Feast Day: July 5



QUOTE:

"I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingly power: proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching. For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires and insatiable curiosity, will accumulate teachers and will stop listening to the truth and will be diverted to myths" (2 Timothy 4:1-2).

Saint Anthony Mary Zaccaria

*Anthony Mary Zaccaria was born in 1502, in Cremona, a city of Lombardy, fifty miles southeast of Milan. His patrician family probably originated in Genoa. His father, Lazzaro, died when Anthony was two years old. His mother, Antonia Pescaroli, a widow at eighteen, devoted herself completely to the education of her son. Little is known of Anthony's childhood. His biographers have handed down a significant episode. One day, on his way home from school the boy gave his cape to a destitute man. It is not clear whether he studied the humanities in Cremona or in Pavia. What is certain is that in 1520 (incidentally, the year of *Exsurge Domine*, the papal bull that condemned Luther), he went to Padua to study philosophy and medicine. Before leaving for Padua, he irrevocably bequeathed his whole inheritance to his mother.

After graduation he returned to Cremona, but never practiced medicine. A historically shadowy Dominican friar, Fra Marcello, became his spiritual director. The twenty-two year old university graduate deliberately opted for an uncompromising and active Christian lifestyle. Contiguous to the Zaccaria residence, there, was a small church, Saint Vitalis. Here, Anthony, still a layman, began to gather on Sunday's, first, children to teach them catechism; then, adults for Scripture reading and meditation. Later on, his spiritual director steered him toward the priesthood. Under Dominican guidance, Anthony's theological studies were thoroughly based on the Bible and Church Fathers and Doctors, particularly Saint Thomas Aquinas. In January 1529 he was ordained to the priesthood. Surrounded by a few close relatives and friends and without the customary solemnity, he celebrated his first Mass in the church of Saint Vitalis. According to a charming tradition, angels were seen around the altar.

His priesthood enabled him to refine and enhance his previous work in Saint Vitalis. His audience evolved into a structured Oratory, possibly styled "Amicizia." To this group Anthony preached his *Sermons*. One of his spiritual disciples was Valeria degli Alieri, a distant relative and a member of Anthony's Oratory. Under his guidance she gathered a group of young women in her house and Anthony became their spiritual director. After his death, they obtained the authorization to become a convent of Angelic Sisters. In addition to his work of spiritual direction and formation, Anthony engaged in active apostolate among the poor and the sick, particularly during the plague of 1528. This exertion earned him the name "father of the city" from his townsmen.

Meanwhile, Anthony chose a new spiritual director from the Dominican monastery of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, Fra Battista Carioni da Crenna (1460-1534), a disciple of Sebastiano Maggi and a confrere of Gerolamo Savonarola. A few years earlier, Fra Battista persuaded Cajetan Thiene to leave Vicenza and go to Rome to engage in the work of reform. At this time the Dominican friar was the confessor of Ludovica Torelli (1500-1569), Countess of Guastalla. Quite probably, it was at his urging that Ludovica chose Anthony as her chaplain. Accordingly, at the direction of Fra Battista, Anthony took up residence in Ludovica's castle.

In 1531, Ludovica, Anthony, and Fra Battista went to Milan where they joined the Oratory of Eternal Wisdom. Here Anthony met two Milanese noblemen, Giacomo Antonio Morigia (1497-1546) and Bartolommeo Ferrari (1499-1544). Toward the end of 1532, he brought to maturity their common project of transforming that waning oratory into a new and original religious community, consisting of three families: priests, sisters, and lay people. The priests' family, Sons of Saint Paul, was quickly approved by Clement VII on February 18, 1533 with the brief *Vota per quae*. It was highly unusual to have a new religious family approved before it started functioning. On July 24, 1535, with the bull *Dudum felicitis recordationis*, Paul III accorded them a second approval and their religious name of Clerics Regular. After they took over the church of Saint Barnabas in Milan in 1545, they were given the popular name of Barnabites.

In Milan, Countess Torelli began gathering in her house young women inclined to the spiritual life. Anthony became their confessor and spiritual director. In this role he steered them toward becoming the female family of his foundation. On January 15, 1535 Paul III with a bull, *Debitum pastoralis*, authorized them to organize as a religious congregation under the Rule of Saint Augustine. The new religious were briefly guided by some Dominican Sisters and adopted their habit. They chose the name Angelica to which Anthony added "of Saint Paul." In October 1535 they settled in their first convent named after Saint Paul, located in Milan. The formal name of Angelica of St. Paul was approved by Paul III on August 6, 1545. At this time, the Angelics were not cloistered because they shared in the apostolate of the Barnabites. The third family of Anthony's foundation consisted of lay people and was styled Marrieds of Saint Paul. They shared the same spirituality of Barnabites and Angelics.