

Art and reflections for the feasts of St Barnabas, on 11th June and St Anthony of Padua 13th June – prepared by Dr Sophia Errey

Acts 4

36 Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), 37 sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

This is the first, but by no means the last, mention of Barnabas in the New Testament In **Ch 11** of Acts the Jerusalem church sends him to Antioch

23 When he came and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast devotion; 24 for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were brought to the Lord. 25 Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for an entire year they met with the church and taught a great many people, and it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called "Christians."

Later in Acts we read of Barnabas and Paul undertaking missionary journeys together (c. 47-50 AD) and travelling to Jerusalem when the dispute arose over circumcision.

In **Acts 13** the governor of Cyprus, Sergius Paulus, is converted after the sorcerer Elymas, who had opposed the apostle's teaching, was struck blind. This incident is represented in a painting by Raphael, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, one of a set prepared in 1516 as the basis for woven tapestries to hang in the Sistine Chapel (See below) However, the two separated because Barnabas wanted his cousin, or nephew, John Mark, to accompany them, but Paul disagreed, considering that John Mark's leaving in the middle of another trip ruled him out. Barnabas then went back to Cyprus, Paul to Syria.

Acts 14 recounts dramatic events at Lystra. After Paul healed a man crippled from birth

11 When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" 12 Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. 13 The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates; he and the crowds wanted to offer sacrifice. 14 When the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting, 15 "Friends, why are you doing this? We are mortals just like you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these worthless things to the living God

This event is also pictured in Raphael's series. (Below) Barnabas here appears behind Paul, although the fact that the crowd identified him as Zeus, the chief god, suggests that he was seen as the leader. Similarly in "The Blinding of Elymas" Barnabas is literally overshadowed by Paul – but this positioning also accords well with his character as it appears in Acts – a strong, yet humble, self-giving evangelist, a true encourager.



Raphael - The Blinding of Elymas (The Conversion of the Proconsul) c 1515-16
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Raphael – The Sacrifice at Lystra. C 1515-16
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London

St Anthony of Padua

St Anthony (1195-13 June 1231) was actually born in Portugal. He joined the Augustinian order at 15 and by 19 was priested. He came in contact with a small group of Franciscans near his own monastery. This young order (it had only been established for 11 years) attracted him by its simplicity and desire to spread the Gospel. After five Franciscans were martyred in Morocco Anthony joined the Order and himself set out for Morocco, but fell seriously ill. The ship returning him to Portugal was driven off course and he landed in Sicily and then moved north to Tuscany. In 1222 confusion arose as to who should preach at an ordination service and Anthony was called upon to speak. His deep knowledge and powerful speech then became apparent, leading Francis of Assisi, who had been somewhat suspicious of theological learning previously, to entrust Anthony with the training of all of the friars seeking ordination.



Friedrich Pacher – St Anthony of Padua and St Francis of Assisi. 1477

He went on to exercise a powerful ministry not only in Italy, but also in the south of France through his inspired eloquence and deep Bible centered teaching, combined with great love and devotion to the poor and sick. Such was his reputation that after his death at 35 he was canonized less than a year later.

Although, like Francis, he wanted to be buried in a small humble church, also like Francis a huge basilica in Padua bears his name.



A large number of legends have gathered around Anthony and are popularly represented in art. One is of him preaching to fish, which swarmed up to the shore to hear him after he had been rejected by a dissident group in Rimini – which explains the fish he grasps in the painting above.

Zurbaran's painting (1627-30) shows him with three typical attributes – a vision of the Christ Child; a white lily, representing purity, and a book.



While the book clearly references his learning, it is also connected with the story which has led to his being called the "saint of lost things".

"Good St Anthony, look around
Something is lost and must be found".

A young novice stole a Psalter from Anthony. Of course, books were extremely valuable items. Anthony prayed for the book to be found, and the novice returned it.



St Anthony Reading, early 17th century, by Marco Antonio Bassetti