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LIFE OF VENERABLE
FATHER ANTONY MARGIL

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LIFE OF VENERABLE
FR. ANTONY MARGIL

Taken from the process
for his Beatification and Canonization

BY

REV. FATHER UBALDUS DA RIETI, O. F. M.



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PREFACE

THE principal motives of the immortal Christopher Columbus in the discovery of America, were, without a doubt, the propagation of Christianity, the recovery of holy places which were in the power of the enemies of the cross, and the civilization of the American Indians. This renowned hero, aided in this work by a simple and pious religious, Rev. Fr. John Perez, O. F. M., and trusting in the all powerful providence of God, sailed from Cadiz, Spain, on August 3rd., and after a long, tedious and dangerous voyage, landed in this wonderful country on October 12, 1492.

The first thought of the kings of noble Spain was to introduce Christianity and civilization among the natives. Hundreds of zealous priests volunteered to undertake this charitable work. Of these, the followers of the Patriarch of Assisi were the first to offer their services, followed by the Dominicans, Augustinians, Jesuits, and others. Soon Christ-

ianity began to flourish in America, and a great number of churches, schools, hospitals and asylums were erected. The Vicar of Jesus Christ instituted many episcopal sees in order to firmly establish Christianity in this new continent.

Millions of the Indians were led to embrace the religion of Jesus Christ by the zeal of the missionaries, many of whom, especially in North America, gave their lives for their faith. These were Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits and other priests. Many others became renowned for their great sanctity, as for instance, St. Turibius, Bishop of Lima, St. Francis Solano, O. F. M., apostle of Tucuman and Peru, St. Peter Claver, S. J., apostle of Central America and Nigros, St. Philip of Jesus, O. F. M., martyr of Japan, and many others.

Venerable Antony Margil is not the least among these zealous apostles. Indeed, without exaggeration, this great servant of God may be compared in fervor to St. Francis Xavier, the apostle of the Indies, in extraordinary gifts and graces to St. Antony of Padua, in indefatigable labor to St. Francis Solano, in desire to die for the faith of Jesus Christ to St. Philip of Jesus, and in zeal to St. Turibius, Bishop of Lima.

This brief biography of Venerable Antony Margil has been extracted from the process for his beatification and canonization. My purpose in publishing this work is to show the public as well as our dispersed brethren that, undoubtedly, the first to introduce true christian civilization among the natives of America were priests, both secular and regular, who at the present time are not less zealous than their predecessors.

I trust that this production will be welcomed by the public, not indeed for the style or language but merely for the interesting facts which it contains.

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LIFE OF VENERABLE
ANTONY MARGIL

CHAPTER FIRST

HIS BIRTH, — CHILDHOOD, — EARLY YOUTH AND PIOUS
DISPOSITION.

THAT zeal for the glory of God and salvation of souls, which caused the Apostles to meet every danger courageously, to endure and rejoice in the midst of almost incredible hardships and sufferings was not extinguished with them: for heirs of their zeal and spirit have appeared and animated every succeeding age. There is no kingdom or province but could designate one generous follower of the Gospel, who, notwithstanding many obstacles, announced to the Gentiles for the first time the religion of Jesus Crucified, thus renewing the example of the Apostles.

In the beginning of the 17th. century, North America possessed one of these Apostles who, for forty three years, devoted all his strength and energy to this noble work. Passing through Mexico and part of Louisiana, he spread the light of faith everywhere. The infidels of Costa-Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Mexico, Texas, and many people of the north received through him not only the divine gift of faith, but became civilized also and began a new life. The faithful themselves were confirmed and strengthened in their faith. Such great achievements united to the constant exercise of every virtue constitute the life of Venerable Fr. Antony Margil.

This great servant of God was born at Valencia, Spain, August 18, 1657, of poor but pious parents. His father's name was John Margil and his mother's Speranza Ros. Baptized the day following his birth, Antony was thus immediately offered to God. Having chosen him to be the powerful instrument of His grace for the conversion and salvation of many, Our Lord manifested His divine will through Fr. Melchior Lepex, a priest of holy life, who, on meeting Speranza holding the child in her arms, earnestly recommended her to rear and educate her son in the fear and

love of God, as the child would one day be his companion in the conversion of Infidels ; and the course of events verified this prediction. Encouraged by the words of Fr. Melchior, these pious parents did all in their power to give their child a truly Christian education, and supply him, despite their poverty, with all the means necessary to attain the end for which God had destined him. Their efforts were rewarded, for little Antony responded faithfully to their expectations, by applying himself to his exercises with great diligence, by being obedient and submissive to his parents and teachers, amiable with every one, humble, charitable and self-controlled, thus representing in himself a perfect model of a true servant of God.

His lowly position and poverty often exposed him to the ridicule of his companions, but he bore their taunts patiently, and often even prevented his teachers from punishing them, saying : “ I deserve to be treated contemptuously being the son of a poor man. ” Of his schoolmates, he loved the poorest, and frequently distributed among them, the scanty food given him by his fond mother, before going to school, thus depriving himself for others.

Though excelling in every virtue, he was most remarkable for his love of prayer, and passed most of his time in church, especially where the Blessed Sacrament was exposed. During vacation, such was his assiduity in this holy practice that he would have remained in church the whole night, had not the sexton obliged him to leave. When admonished by his mother for this, he replied : “ Dear mother, I have spent the greatest part of this day in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, and it seemed to me but a moment. ” Fervent prayer and the practice of all Christian virtues preserved his baptismal innocence and obtained for him the grace of never offending God, so that, in making his last confession, he could fearlessly say to his confessor, that he had nothing to apprehend concerning his early youth.

CHAPTER II

ANTONY EMBRACES THE RELIGIOUS LIFE. — HIS NOVI-
TIATE, AND THE VIRTUES PRACTICED BY HIM. —
RAISED TO THE DIGNITY OF THE PRIESTHOOD. —
DEPARTURE FOR AMERICA.

A SOUL, intent only on God, thoroughly detached from the transitory pleasures of this world, cannot remain long in their midst; thus, when Antony had attained the age of sixteen, he was filled with an ardent desire to free himself from every bond of flesh and blood, and devote his life to the service of God. Having obtained the necessary permission from his parents, he presented himself to the Friars Minor of the Convent of Corona in Valenza, humbly requesting the favor of admittance.

The Fathers, unable to resist his petition, which they perceived was both humble and sincere, received him. The young religious applied himself with the utmost diligence to the practice of every virtue, to the edification of all, so that, having completed the year of

his novitiate on the 13th. of April, 1674, he was allowed to make the vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience. After his profession, Antony's fervor in the love of God and the practice of virtue increased daily, rendering his progress towards perfection indeed admirable. Having pronounced his final vows, he was sent successively to the Convents of Dania and Corona where he devoted himself earnestly to the study of Philosophy and Theology. In proportion to his progress in the acquisition of both human and divine knowledge, his ardor in the practice of virtue increased ; and being convinced that all sanctity is based upon humility and charity, he cultivated and practiced these virtues in a special manner, considering himself the least among the brethren, and preferring to do the meanest work of the convent. His love for these holy virtues and his desire to practice them in their perfection, induced him to be the first to offer his services in the kitchen and garden. He once requested his superiors to allow him to be with the novices, in order to assist them and participate in their penitential works and mortifications, thus becoming an example to the most fervent among them.

The spirit of prayer, manifested during

Antony's early youth, had now ripened into a deep piety, and his love of suffering was truly remarkable. Having obtained the necessary permission, he would go every night to the garden of the convent where the Stations of the Cross were erected, and there, bearing a heavy cross, he performed the pious exercise of the Via Crucis ; after which he would scourge his body with an iron chain, thus subjecting his flesh to the spirit. He also induced the novices to practice this devotion, saying that a religious of St. Francis ought to be fervently devout to the sufferings of Jesus if he wished to become a true follower of the Patriarch of Assisi. To an ardent piety Antony united an observance of poverty so exact that he often deprived himself of the most necessary things. He studiously avoided every shadow of singularity or affectation, taking part joyfully and with affability in the recreation of the young students of the convent, wishing thereby to show himself no different from his brother Friars. We must not be surprised therefore, that his conduct, founded on humility and solid piety, rendered Antony dear to his brethren, and caused him to be looked upon as a saint.

Having finished his theological course, and

attained the canonical age of 24 years, he was ordained a Priest, by virtue of holy obedience, because like his holy Father Francis, he considered himself unworthy of such a great dignity. However, he submitted to the will of his superiors, saying : " Obedience is better than sacrifice. " He said his first Mass with great devotion and faith. His superiors, well aware of his virtues and pious life, granted him faculties for preaching and hearing confessions, and he at once began his public career with great zeal and extraordinary fervor. He often preached to great crowds in the public square of the city, his impressive words arousing sinners to tears and repentance, causing them to renounce their vices and begin life anew. Sometimes he spent whole nights in the confessional, where his spiritual counsels were so efficacious and touching that an immense number of his penitents were converted to a better life. He was then sent to the Convent of Onda, later to that of St. Antony of Diana, but did not remain long, for Divine Providence had destined him for a greater and nobler mission. Hearing that missionaries were greatly needed in North America, Antony availed himself of this opportunity to satisfy his ardent

disire of laboring with all his might for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Venerable Fr. Antony Linax, at that time superior of the American mission, invited him to be his companion on the expedition, for the purpose of announcing the Gospel to the Pagans. He immediately consented, humbly requesting to be one of the missionaries. Afterwards, Fr. Linax often said that he had brought to America a second St. Antony of Padua.

Before leaving Spain, Antony, with the permission of his superiors, paid a farewell visit to his beloved mother. The purpose of his visit caused her the most intense suffering. She wept bitterly at the thought that her son was to leave her to go to a distant country, and entreated him to consider her advanced age, and wait a few years, saying : “ My son, you know the great sacrifice I made when I consented to your becoming a religious. Now you are going to abandon me, thus making the separation more painful. Why do you undertake a voyage so dangerous and distant? Can you not serve God as well in Spain as in America? Are there not sinners here to be converted? Remember, dear child, you are my son, I beseech you, do not hasten the end of my days by leaving me. Do

not deny me the consolation of expiring in your arms. ”

The firmness and courage of the servant of God did not waver at the entreaties of his mother; he endeavored to overcome her opposition by reminding her that from the moment she consented that he should enter religion, he belonged entirely to God whose honor and glory it was his duty to promote amongst the Pagans. “Spain,” he said, “is well provided with zealous priests and religious missionaries, but not so America, where millions of souls are lost, for want of priests to dispel the darkness of unbelief.” He added that he was called by his Divine Master to spread there the knowledge and worship of the true God. “Fear not to be left without assistance, dear mother,” he continued “God will take care of you, and this sacrifice will procure for you a great reward in heaven. Though far away, I shall never forget you in my prayers, and in spirit shall be always near you. Accept this holy habit of St. Francis, which, with the permission of my superiors, I leave to you. When death approaches, clothe yourself with it.” Having then received her blessing, Antony kissed her hand, and departed.

The promise which the servant of God

made to his mother was fulfilled. While he was in America, she was stricken with an illness which brought her to the point of death. By God's permission her son appeared to her, assuring her of her recovery which immediately followed. To certify that the vision was not the work of her imagination, and her sudden recovery due to natural causes, God authenticated the fact by another vision. Many friends were gathered in the house, when suddenly two unknown Franciscans appeared, saluted and congratulated the mother on her recovery, obtained by her son, and immediately disappeared. The end of this true Christian mother soon approached. Antony, though separated from her by an immense distance, by a prodigy of Divine Providence, assisted and consoled her in the hour of death, in the presence of many persons, thus faithfully keeping his promise.

Having taken farewell of his dear mother, Antony with his companions left for Cadiz. Here he was delayed several days, awaiting an opportunity to sail for America. He did not remain idle, however, but assisted by his companions, gave a mission to the people, with such marked success that many renounced their evil ways to live a better life,

CHAPTER III

ARRIVAL AT VERA-CRUZ. — RESULTS OF MISSIONS
IN THE CITY OF MEXICO, YUCATAN AND GUATE-
MALA. — JOURNEY TO TALAMANCA.

THE missionaries sailed from Cadiz, and arrived at Vera-Cruz on the 6th. of June, 1683, after a fatiguing and dangerous voyage of ninety-three days. This city, having been almost destroyed by the French troops, afforded a vast field of labor for our religious. They immediately began their works of mercy and charity, burying the dead, whose remains were lying in the streets, comforting the afflicted, caring for the wounded, and administering to them the last rites of our holy religion: Soon, however, Fr. Antony was obliged to leave Vera-Cruz.

Accompanied by another friar, he set out for the city of Mexico, carrying with him only a staff and his breviary. This first journey which may be regarded as a model of all he made, was rather a continual mission; for whenever he was detained in some village,

town, or city, instead of resting, he employed all his time during the day in hearing confessions, and the evenings he devoted to preaching. Great crowds assembled to hear his sermons, after which he recited the rosary. The following morning he would celebrate the holy sacrifice of the Mass, with great fervor, and distribute holy communion to the faithful.

After having travelled more than three hundred miles, Antony arrived at the city of St. John del Rio, where he employed all his time in giving missions. While there, he received an order from his superior to continue his journey as far as Gueretaro, there, with other religious, to take possession of the Convent of the Holy Cross. This command to go from one place to another gave Antony an excellent opportunity of exercising his apostolic zeal. Immediately upon his arrival he devoted his energies to the task of evangelizing the inhabitants, and the success of his earnest endeavors was manifested most remarkably. He then decided to return to St. John del Rio. To accomplish this, he travelled the distance of more than one hundred miles on foot. He was not permitted to remain long, however, but was sent to Vera-

Cruz, thence to Yucatan, in company with other religious, to establish a Convent of Recollects. Nor was Antony allowed to stay any time in this place, for another order of his superior obliged him to depart at once, and return to Vera-Cruz. Seeing that nothing was prepared for the voyage he employed himself, until the time of embarkation, in giving missions to the inhabitants of the small island of St. John of Ulva. Even at sea he continued to exercise his apostolic zeal among the passengers, sailors and soldiers, who were eager to hear the word of God. He arrived in Campeche on the 19th. of April, 1684, and began at once the work of preaching, hearing confessions, reclaiming sinners to God, and baptizing Pagans. After a brief stay, he continued his journey to Merida where he remained a few weeks for the purpose of giving missions, and then returned to Campeche, where the Commissary General was awaiting him to commence the new foundation. But God had other work for Antony. Campeche being well supplied with religious, the superior, perhaps by divine inspiration, considered it well to send two fathers elsewhere. In order to be impartial he determined to cast lots, and Fr. Antony

Margil and Fr. Melchior Lepex were the happy ones. The servant of God, full of joy, sailed immediately with his companion to evangelize the vast province to which he had been assigned. His success here was wonderful, due to his great humility, his singular meekness and charity, and his untiring zeal.

The high esteem in which Antony was held by the people, the love they bore him, and the great value they set on his existence as necessary for their spiritual welfare, are evident in the following memorable circumstance. During his stay in Chiapa, the servant of God, owing to his arduous labors, was attacked by an illness which threatened to prove fatal. As there was no Franciscan Convent in the place, he was invited to the house of a pious family, where he received the best possible attention, but all was of no avail and recovery seemed impossible. Greatly afflicted at the condition of the missionary father, the pious mother of the family, guided by faith, took her two little girls, whom she tenderly loved, to the church, and after recommending herself to God said : “O Lord, I offer Thee a holocaust for the recovery of Thy servant. Behold, I present Thee two victims, pure and innocent, choose

one of them, but spare the life of Fr. Antony." God, pleased with such an oblation, accepted it. The missionary recovered immediately, to the great joy of all, but the ransom was exacted, for one of the children died, and went to receive the reward for the sacrifice of charity offered to God by the pious mother.

The servant of God, having thus recovered his health through the prayers of the faithful, did not hesitate to devote his energies to the spiritual advancement of both Christians and Pagans, by destroying the kingdom of vice and error in the towns and cities through which he passed. After a year spent along the shores of Guatemala, Antony repaired to the city of the same name on the 21st. of September, 1685, accompanied by his saintly companion, Fr. Melchior Lepex. Here a new field of labor was awaiting them.

A serious disturbance had arisen among the new recruits; the soldiers were determined to advance to the shores of Escuintle to prevent foreigners from entering. As there was no means of restoring order save by gentle persuasion and humility, Venerable Antony and his companion were chosen for this purpose. Through their interposition the soldiers

became submissive and calm was restored. They then returned to Guatemala where they opened a mission which met with the usual success. At the end of the mission, a contagious disease broke out which spread rapidly among the inhabitants depriving them of speech and reason. Many among them died, some who had been but recently baptized and received into the Church.

These occupations, however, could not divert the man of God from his purpose to convert the Infidels for whose welfare he had abandoned parents and country. Talamanca seemed to him to merit his particular care, and, with his companion, Antony left Guatemala, and set out for that wild country. Passing through the provinces of Nicaragua and Costa-Rica, he converted many Infidels to the true faith, and increased the fervor of those who were already Catholic. The change he effected among Christians was so marvelous that his superiors and the bishops expressed their surprise and admiration, and testified to the virtues, holiness and zeal of the servant of God.

CHAPTER IV

MISSIONS IN TALAMANCA. — SUCCESS IN OTHER PARTS
OF THE PROVINCE OF COSTA-RICA.

THE journey from Guatemala to Talamanca, a distance of about twelve hundred miles, over rough and mountainous roads, was rendered more difficult by the extreme poverty of Fr. Antony and his companion, who carried nothing but a crucifix, a breviary and a staff, and suffered greatly for want of nourishment and from the ferocity of the uncivilized people. These difficulties, sufficient to discourage the most resolute man, were surmounted by the ardent charity of the servants of God, who exposed themselves to even greater hardship by entering among the fierce barbarians. As soon as the purpose of the coming of the missionaries was discovered, every obstacle was put in the way to prevent the accomplishment of their object. The indignities, insults, treachery and cruelty they had to encounter not only placed them in painful situations, but exposed their lives

to danger. But God in Whom they had placed all their confidence, comforted them, kept them firm and resolute, and delivered them from the secret plots of the natives, frequently even by prodigies. On one occasion Antony was taken prisoner, and cast into a pile of burning wood. Though the fire was maintained for several hours, the flames did not injure him, though they blackened the image of the crucifix he held in his hand. This prodigy only served to increase the fury of the barbarians. Continual wonders, however, added to Antony's imperturbable patience in enduring every outrage for love of God; his goodness, and amiability in dealing with those by whom he was ill-treated, his interest for their spiritual and temporal needs, finally rendered them submissive, and disposed them to receive the word of God, through Whose divine mercy they ultimately became fervent Christians.

The missionaries next decided to go among the Terrabi, a people as ferocious as the Talamans. Knowing the enmity which existed between the two tribes, they deemed it prudent to go first among the Boruchi, where they were received with great kindness, converting and baptizing many. They then went

among the Tecabi, who proved very tractable, and readily submitted to their teaching. Having confirmed the new believers in their faith and built a church for them, Fr. Antony sent ambassadors to the Terrabi, to request from the chiefs of the people, permission to enter their territory. Of eight chiefs, seven readily consented, but to assure themselves of the intentions of the missionaries, they went to see Fr. Antony. One, however, absolutely refused to consent to the request of the missionaries, declaring before his idols that he would slay them should they venture into the country, even though the others favored their entrance, and gathering a number of armed men he prepared to execute his threats. Fr. Antony, far from being deterred by this information, hastened to the house of the chief immediately upon his arrival among the Terrabi. So unexpected a visit surprised the barbarian, who, in company with his warriors, cast their weapons at the feet of the missionaries, and received them with demonstrations of affection and honor. Another obstacle presented itself in the person of a woman, who, exercising the high dignity of priestess, was held in great esteem by all. For a time she opposed the teaching of the mis-

sionaries, but afterwards was converted to the true religion, and embraced Christianity; persevering in it until death. Her followers, imitating her example, renounced idolatry, and became fervent Christians. Collecting their false gods, they burnt them, thus proving the sincerity of their conversion to the religion of Jesus Christ. Later, they built two churches in the country of the Terrabi where divine service was held daily and the sacraments administered. Having by the grace of God received the true faith through the efforts of the missionaries, they became reconciled with the Talamans, to whom Fr. Antony made another visit for this purpose.

Many of the Terrabi however clung to idolatry, and persecuted the missionaries. The ardent charity which the servant of God entertained for these unhappy slaves of the devil, impelled him to employ all his energy, zeal and love to secure their conversion. To obtain this grace for them, he frequently scourged his body, and fasted on bread and water. His great kindness finally softened the hearts of the barbarians and induced them to listen to the exhortations of Fr. Antony and his saintly companion, who now left Talamanca, having erected thirty churches

there, and converted and civilized the greater number of the inhabitants. These people afterwards formed eleven towns, well provided with asylums, churches, schools, priests and teachers.

It is impossible to describe in detail the difficulties and toils endured by the holy fathers during their labors for the conversion of the Talamans, the insults and abuses they suffered, the dangers they encountered, the privations they sustained for lack of proper nourishment, while in the midst of the barbarians, whose only food consisted of wild herbs and roots.

After their departure the Bishop of Nicaragua sent other missionaries of the Seraphic Order, to strengthen the newly converted in the faith; though they found the inhabitants quiet and submissive, and leading a more social and Christian life, yet their privations were so great and painful, that the missionaries were obliged to return to their convent after a few months; this circumstance enables one to form some idea of the arduous labors and privations which Fr. Antony and his companion had undergone in planting the seed of faith in Jesus Christ,

CHAPTER V

VENERABLE FR. ANTONY IS ORDERED TO RETURN TO GUATEMALA. — PASSES THROUGH VERAPACE, WHERE HE APPEASES DISSENSIONS. — CONVERTS AND CIVILIZES THE OHOLI, AND ENTERS THE TERRITORY OF THE LACANDONI.

THE fame of the servant of God spread throughout North and Central America; his name was on the lips of every one, and was blessed by all. The bishops of the surrounding provinces greatly desired to have the Apostolic man in their dioceses to give missions to the faithful as well as to the pagans. Only one, however, obtained this privilege. The Bishop of Panama, whose diocese adjoined Talamanca, requested the missionaries to take charge of the Indians not yet civilized, and also of the Christians, who for want of priests were losing their faith. The missionaries, whose sole intent was the propagation of the faith, willingly accepted, and without delay, went among the Infidels to exercise their Apostolic ministry. While thus

engaged they received an order from the Commissary General to return immediately to Gueretaro, a difficult journey of over two thousand miles through a wild and unknown country. Though the command was imposed without any reason, the fathers, truly obedient to authority, recognized the voice of God in that of their superior, and abandoning everything hastened to obey notwithstanding the grief of the inhabitants at their sudden departure.

Meanwhile the Governor of the province, learning the decision of the Commissary General and being aware of the great loss the diocese of Panama would thus sustain, used all his influence to induce the superior to revoke the order. In this he succeeded, but too late, for Fr. Antony and his companion, ignorant of this change, hastened their departure and reached the city of Guatemala in the month of December, 1691. Hearing that the command had been revoked, they at once expressed their desire to return to Panama, despite the sufferings endured during their long and tedious journey. However, the Bishop of Guatemala, who received them kindly, most earnestly requested them to go to the province of Verapace where idolatry,

either openly or secretly, was practiced by the Indians, half converted to Christianity. They willingly undertook the task, and by their instructions and example, converted the Indians, completely abolished idolatry and erected many churches. Fr. Melchior was then recalled to Guatemala to there establish a house of the Order, but the project being postponed, the two companions returned to Verapace to secure the conversion of the Oholi. They searched the mountains for the Indians, who dwelt there like wild beasts. Privations and the severity of the climate were not the greatest evils which the servants of God encountered during this enterprise. Their preaching, opposed to the manner of living of the Indians, who were addicted to every kind of superstition, made them objects of hatred, but despite opposition they persisted in their holy purpose. After repeated efforts to silence them, the barbarians resolved to put them to death. Accordingly, having fastened the missionaries to a tree, they made them the target for their arrows. Great was the joy of the missionaries to see that the hour had arrived to suffer martyrdom for Jesus Crucified. Comforted and strengthened by the grace of God, they showed such con-

tancy and fortitude, that the Indians, astonished at the sight of such extraordinary courage, not only liberated them, but overcoming their rage and pride, suddenly changed, becoming respectful and meek; they listened attentively to the religious instructions, which proved so fruitful, that the greater number of them were converted. Six towns were established among them, and an equal number of churches erected wherein the divine mysteries were celebrated.

The two Apostolic missionaries, eager to spread the true faith, then decided to go among the Lacandoni, a ferocious and warlike people, whose very name inspired terror in the hearts of the surrounding inhabitants. Following the advice of the Dominican Fathers, to whose care the parishes of Verapace were committed, the missionaries went to Coban, capital of the province, to secure guides for the journey. Several Indians, already Christians, offered their services, but on the way, reflecting on the danger to which they were exposing themselves, knowing by sad experience the great cruelty of the Lacandoni, they lost courage and misled the missionaries. At length, the provisions became exhausted, the deceitful Indians availed themselves of

this opportunity to abandon the fathers, and offered to go to the nearest town to procure food. Unacquainted with their surroundings, and relying solely on Divine Providence, the missionaries reached a river near which they passed forty days, living on herbs and roots. At the expiration of this time they were discovered by an Indian, sent in search of them by the Dominican Fathers, and having a boat laden with provisions. Thus encouraged, Fr. Antony returned to Coban to obtain new guides, and having provided his companion with provisions he directed the boat towards the city. On the way he met a chief, who received him kindly and to whom he explained the motive of his journey. Courageous and generous deeds usually excite in the hearts of others a desire to do likewise, and the chief admiring the fortitude of the missionary, who was not discouraged by disaster and deceit, offered to be his guide, and, accompanied by eight companions, escorted him up the river, where Fr. Melchior was awaiting his arrival. Continuing their journey, they landed in the territory of the Lacandoni on the 10th. of February, 1694.

On the unexpected arrival of unknown persons, the barbarians, fearing they were ene-

mies, fled at once, but soon returned, and treated them with great cruelty, and perhaps would have killed them, had not one of the tribe, who exercised authority, interfered. Having learned through an interpreter, that they were ministers of the Gospel, who had come to reconcile them with God, to restore peace between them and the King and Indians of Coban, with whom they had fierce and cruel wars, he explained the motive to the others, and temporarily appeased their rage. In a few days, however, they treacherously seized the missionaries, stripped them of their habits, bound them to a tree, and commanded them under pain of death, to worship their idols. The servants of God, desiring the crown of martyrdom, were ready to shed their blood rather than pay homage to the false gods. They showed their persecutors the crucifix, telling them of the Son of God who came down from heaven, and was born of a Virgin, to redeem mankind from the slavery of sin and tyranny of hell, Who led a most holy life and, after thirty-three years, passed in the midst of persecutions, was finally crucified for the salvation of man, that was, therefore, the only true God, deserving our admiration and love, and that all other gods were false.

Their earnest endeavors failed however to move the hearts of the savage people. For three days, the holy men waited to receive the palm of martyrdom. During this time, a woman, moved to compassion by their sufferings, supplied them with food. From time to time, the barbarians came to them, some feigning to kill them, others endeavoring to discover from the beating of the heart whether they were losing courage. Not finding them at all apprehensive, but always cheerful, patient and meek, they believed the missionaries concealed something extraordinary in their hearts. At length they released them, upon condition, however, that they would leave the place at once, under pain of death.

Notwithstanding this command, the Apostolic men, so eager to inculcate the true faith, used every possible means to accomplish their end. Seeing their efforts were of no avail, and after having endured every species of hardship and cruelty, they left the place, deeply grieved at the obstinacy of the inhabitants. Like their Divine Saviour who wept over the unhappy city of Jerusalem, they warned the people that in a short time, God would punish them by a catastrophe. The prediction was soon verified, for their houses were des-

troyed by fire. Seized by great fear, the barbarians hastened to recall the missionaries, but the latter unable to rely on their assurances refused to return, but promised to visit them later, and then with great kindness, gave them their blessing, and bade them farewell.

CHAPTER VI

VENERABLE ANTONY RETURNS TO THE LAND OF THE
OHOLI. — ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO CONVERT THE
LACANDONI.

THE two religious, upon their arrival in Guatemala, where they were joined by four others, besought the Royal President for a place, to enable them to live according to their rule, as they had not yet obtained the requisite permission from the court of Spain to establish a Franciscan Convent there. Their petition was favorably received and they were granted a house with a chapel attached, where they could observe the rule of their order and fulfil the duties of their ministry. Fr. Antony, however, remained but a short time. One of his companions having asked to go among the Oholi then newly converted to Christianity, in order to learn their language, the Servant of God accompanied him that he might cultivate the seed recently sown in the vineyard of the Lord. This visit proved advantageous to the Oholi, both spiritually

and materially. Learning that a road was to be built from Campeche to Guatemala, thence to the boundaries of the Oholi, for commercial purposes, the holy missionary, realizing the benefits to religion which would accrue from the facility of access, did all in his power to hasten its execution ; in company with two hundred Oholi, whom he induced to engage in the work, he labored earnestly for the accomplishment of the undertaking.

Meanwhile the Royal President, desiring to conquer other people of the province of Verapace, especially the inhabitants of Peten, and knowing from experience that the apostolic zeal of the Servant of God would contribute more towards the successful issue of the enterprise than the power of arms, requested him to be his companion on the journey he was about to undertake. Fr. Antony immediately departed from the Oholi to obey the orders of the Royal President. His presence caused great joy among the soldiers, by whom he was loved and revered : his humility, patience, fortitude, ardent charity, and the continual practice of every virtue endeared him to all. He always went barefoot as if he were one of the lowest soldiers, thus uniting corporal as well as spiritual mortification

with his earnest endeavors to convert the savages. Despite the rough roads and the mud of the marshes, he was always in advance of his mounted companions. When any of the company were sick, he was ready to assist them, at any hour of the day or night, regardless of the nature of the disease. During the journey one of the soldiers was attacked by an illness which proved fatal. The man of God remained with him, carefully administering to his temporal needs. Recovery being impossible, he gave him the consolations of our holy religion, and recommended his soul to God. After death Antony tenderly buried the remains.

A number of Indians of Olientepeque had been chosen to transport the provisions for the soldiers, but not having sufficiently provided for their own needs, they were reduced to the verge of starvation. Fr. Antony, greatly afflicted at the sight of their misfortune, and fearing they would die if not provided for, generously determined to expose himself to every danger in order to procure food. With this purpose in view, he set forth without waiting for a guide. In consequence of his zealous haste he suffered greatly, for having crossed a river, he lost the road, and was forc-

ed to wander about for several days. Finally he met a band of barbarians, who, on account of his strange language and habit, cruelly insulted and scourged him; but Providence, always watchful, came to the aid of His faithful servant. On being presented to the head of the people, he was received not only with great kindness by him, but was given an abundance of cakes, indian corn, dates and other fruits. Joyfully giving thanks to God Antony returned to his poor Indians with the food he had obtained.

Deeds of this nature increased the esteem and love which all entertained for the apostolic man, as well as the devotion and attention with which his instructions and exhortations were received. To strengthen such sentiments in the minds of the people, God permitted His servant to do many wonderful things. During the journey one of the asses, laden with provisions, fell into a pit. The soldiers united their strength to raise the animal, but the depth of the pit and the weight with which the beast was laden, rendered their efforts useless. Seeing their difficulty, Fr. Antony turned towards the animal, and said : "Come out, be obedient, come out." Immediately the beast got out, on to the

road, without having sustained the least injury.

Another incident, even more remarkable, is cited in the process for his beatification and canonization, by a witness of high repute, and worthy of faith, who heard it from his own father, who was present at the time of the occurrence... The soldiers, exhausted after much useless searching for water, and despairing of relief, had recourse to their saintly father. Encouraged by him to have confidence in God, they advanced a few steps, and to their astonishment found an abundant supply, with which they restored their exhausted strength. All considered the event supernatural, for never before had water been seen there, nor was any found afterwards. A month later, the father of the witness visited the place, but could find no trace of the water. Greatly surprised and edified, he afterwards related the event to everyone to the glory of the servant of God.

After three months of travel, on April 19th. 1695, the missionary and soldiers saw, from the top of the mountains, the country inhabited by the Lacandoni. Happy at their success, they gave thanks to Almighty God for having safely directed them to the land of

the idolaters. Then with the same eagerness with which one suffering from thirst runs to a fountain of water, the Apostolic man hastened to the first settlement of the Lacandoni. He endeavored to conciliate them by gifts, taught them how to build huts, informed himself of their necessities, deprived himself of nourishment in order to aid them, and when this was unsuccessful, he had recourse to the soldiers, who, through the respect and veneration they entertained for him, assisted him. After a while he happily succeeded in gaining the hearts of the barbarians. He then began to catechise them, and preach the true faith. He subdued their ferocity, and rendered them submissive to his teaching, obedient and attentive to his least command. Great crowds came to him asking to be baptized. His ardent charity, often accompanied by miracles, made his preaching more efficacious. There was no hour of the day or night in which the servant of God was not ready to assist them in their needs, to listen to and comfort those who had recourse to him. There was no sick person, even the most lowly, upon whom he did not bestow the most tender care. A great number were healed by the imposition of his hands or the

reading of the Gospel of St. John. Of the many miracles performed, one particularly is worthy of mention. Among the newly converted, the servant of God introduced the following pious practice : In meeting a friend, or on entering his house, instead of any greeting of courtesy, to say : — *Ave Maria* — (Hail Mary), — to be answered by the words : — *Sine peccato originali concepta* — (conceived without original sin.) — This salutation, reminding them of the most beautiful title of the Queen of heaven and earth, was so pleasing to the Blessed Virgin Mary, that she gave a manifest sign in the following fact : — One day Antony met a woman carrying a very young child. Approaching her in the presence of a great many persons, he said to the child : — “ *Ave, Maria,* ” and immediately, the infant, as if it had suddenly received a knowledge of the mysteries, answered : — “ *Sine peccato originali concepta .* ” Thus, in a marvelous manner, the child attested the singular privilege of the Mother of God, as well as the sanctity of the Venerable Fr. Antony Margil.

Our Lord distinguished the name of his faithful servant by continually blessing his works. Religion and purity soon flourished

where idolatry and abominations of every description had prevailed. The Lacandoni responded so faithfully to the teachings and exhortations of the missionary, that a few months later, a Dominican father visiting a settlement of the province of St. Antony Suchitepec, found them well instructed in evangelical morals and the dogmas of our holy religion, to which fact he testified in the process for the beatification of Fr. Antony. Two churches were built among the Lacandoni : one under the invocation of our Lady of Sorrows, and the other in honor of St. Raymond. In one of them, every night our venerable Father assembled the people to recite the Rosary and other prayers ; every morning he celebrated the holy sacrifice of the Mass, heard confessions, delivered sermons and moral instructions in order to confirm and strengthen them in the faith. He instructed some of the young men in the Gregorian chant, that mysteries of our holy religion might be celebrated with greater solemnity. He erected the Stations of the Cross outside the church to encourage the natives to a greater devotion to the sufferings of Our Lord. Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and other solemnities were always celebrated

with great pomp. The feast of Corpus Christi was honored by a public procession, and on this occasion the chanting of hymns, accompanied by instruments, called janes, rendered the spectacle both beautiful and impressive.

CHAPTER VII

ANTONY ELECTED SUPERIOR ÁT GUERETARO. — MIS-
SIONS IN VALLADOLID AND MEXICO.

HAVING formed four districts in Peten, Fr. Antony was recalled to Gueretaro to take charge of the Seraphic College of the Holy Cross. This caused deep grief and consternation among the newly converted, who regarded Fr. Antony as a friend and a father, and felt themselves deprived of every consolation and comfort by his departure. As they could not induce him to remain with them, they expressed their determination to abandon their native country and follow him ; but the missionary opposed this resolution, endeavoring, with his usual kindness, to console them, saying : “ My dear friends, I am obliged to comply with the command of my superior ; though I cannot remain with you, I promise never to forget you in my prayers, and will remember you in the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Be faithful to the promises you made at holy baptism. Love God with all your

hearts, and be devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary. — Goodbye, and remember me in your prayers. ” — After having blessed them, he, with his companion, departed. On the way he met the Commissary General of his Order, who was also going to Gueretaro. This circumstance, however, did not prevent him from performing his usual works of hearing confessions and preaching with a fervor which astonished the Commissary, who now began to realize the extent of the zeal of the man of God, which caused him to labor incessantly. Still more surprising was the great facility with which he passed from one place to another. Notwithstanding his occupations, which he usually remained behind to finish, whilst his companions set out on horseback, he always arrived before them, even though walking barefooted and on the same road. Amazed, the Commissary General one day said to him : — “ Please, father, tell me which way you came so speedily ; there are no other roads, and I did not see you. ” Concealing the gift granted him by God, he simply replied : “ Very Rev. Father, I was enabled to do it because the Lord helped me. ”

Antony arrived in Gueretaro on the 22d. of April, 1697. The Community, overjoyed at

having so holy a superior, came out in procession to welcome him. Having saluted his brethren, the good father assembled them in the church, and addressed to them an eloquent discourse. Deeply impressed with his words they gave heartfelt thanks to God for the favor of having him among them.

Upon entering the convent he immediately changed his torn habit and sandals, made in the Indian fashion, for new ones, thus avoiding the least shadow of singularity, but he refused the inner garments which he never wore even to the end of his life. Realizing how necessary the good example of a superior is to the community, Antony was most exact from the moment he assumed the responsibility of his office, in observing the rule and regulations of his order ; never dispensing himself from any public act, nor expecting anything from others but what he himself practised. Though to the duties incumbent upon a superior he united the labors of a missionary, he never neglected the recitation of the divine office at midnight, followed by the Stations, which pious exercise he performed in the garden, bearing a heavy cross, as was his custom in his earlier days ; after this he scourged his body so severely that his blood

bedewed the ground. He then remained in prayer until the hour of Prime, so wholly absorbed in God that sometimes neither calling nor shaking were sufficient to arouse him.

He exacted a strict observance of the rule, but at the same time knew how to modify his firmness with discretion and kindness ; compassionating the weakness of his brethren, and adapting himself to circumstances, he aided them in their necessities, thus making himself all to all in order to render the path of perfection easy and pleasant. Every Sunday he preached in the streets and public square of the city of Gueretaro, with such effect that many sinners were converted. His confessional was always crowded, and in order to satisfy his penitents, he would say the last Mass, thus, amidst ceaseless labor, fasting the whole morning.

In the vicinity of Gueretaro, there was at that time a famous summer resort, called Patizzata, situated on the banks of a river and surrounded by stately trees. Its delightful location and bathing facilities caused it to be much frequented. These advantages, however, were abused by libertines, who, availing themselves of the seclusion of the place and of a house of pleasure, abandoned them-

selves to the most abominable disorders. The holy missionary wept bitterly over the outrages committed against his beloved Master, and the loss of so many souls doomed to perdition. In his sermons he often inveighed against those reprobates. Realizing, however, that the destruction of the place was necessary to remove so great an evil, he, at the conclusion of one of his sermons, turned towards the crucifix he held in his hand and with firm confidence, zeal, and faith, said :— “ O Lord, destroy that house wherein Thou art so grievously offended, and those trees which serve as a shelter for sinners. ” His prayer was heard and answered, for, the following night, notwithstanding the clear sky and no rainfall, the river overflowed its banks and uprooted the palisades, which, being driven with great force against the house, destroyed it, leaving only the ruins to mark its former site and remind all of the punishment of God. The trees withered by degrees, and on the spot where the house had formerly stood, a pit was formed so deep, that it could not be filled after many years, despite the rubbish which was thrown in for that purpose. The scene of so much vice being thus miraculously removed,

all were penetrated by a salutary dread, at the ever present proof of the terrible punishment that had befallen the place.

Meanwhile the servant of God continued his charitable practices in the city, with his usual fervor ; comforting the afflicted, aiding the needy, and assisting the dying, earnestly endeavoring to dispose them to be reconciled to God's will.

His zeal extended also to country places. In the beginning of Lent, he visited the surrounding estates, and instructed the Indians in the maxims of faith. His missions in the City of Mexico and Valladolid met with such success that many lukewarm and indifferent Christians began to observe the law of God more faithfully and to frequent the sacraments, while many others renounced the world and embraced the religious life. Antony's labors produced such abundant fruit that the bishop publicly gave thanks to God for having sent them an Apostle through whose efforts so many had been converted. He also congratulated the people, and highly commended the servant of God on his apostolic zeal. Being requested by the Canons of the Cathedral to deliver a conference, he spoke so clearly on the needs

of every one of them that each judged his own faults were pointed out, and afterwards said that another St. Antony of Padua had come to preach to them.

CHAPTER VIII

FR. ANTONY APPEASES DISSENSIONS IN GUATEMALA. —
ERECTS A NEW COLLEGE, OF WHICH HE IS ELECTED
SUPERIOR. — NOTABLE OCCURRENCES DURING HIS
ADMINISTRATION.

THE city of Guatemala being in a state of revolt, which public authority was powerless to put down or restrain, it was but natural to have recourse to the servant of God, who was loved, respected, even venerated by every one, and in him full confidence was placed. Having completed his term of office as superior in the month of April, 1701, he remained in Gueretaro as vicar until the new superior-elect had arrived. Meanwhile he received letters from the Royal President of Guatemala, beseeching him to come there as soon as possible to exercise the office of mediator ; bidding farewell to his beloved people, he started on his journey, and reached his destination at the end of May, having traveled 1,100 miles. Upon his arrival he found the city greatly disturbed by dissensions in which

the aristocratic families and members of the royal court were involved. The result of these quarrels would have been indeed disastrous, but because of the love and esteem with which Antony was received by all, he, like a messenger of peace, soon restored tranquillity, and the spirit of hatred was superseded by that of union and concord, to the great joy and edification of all.

Having happily succeeded in pacifying the citizens, he now turned his attention towards building the new college, having previously obtained permission from the court of Spain to execute this long cherished design. With the help of many benefactors, a small church and convent thatched with straw were first built. The saintly missionary labored earnestly to complete the building, carrying material upon his shoulders, as if he were a common laborer, thus encouraging others to do the same. Despite his fatigue, he spent the remainder of his time in the holy exercises of prayer, preaching, and hearing confessions.

It was most edifying to see the laborers, like monks of the early centuries, uniting prayer with their work, and substituting the recitation of the rosary for the idle conversations so frequent among men of their

kind. But the astonishing things which they witnessed were sufficient to increase their piety, and excite them to fervor. The following are a few of the many remarkable events which occurred during the construction of the college :

Seeing some children playing in a mortar ditch, Antony hastened to the place, and commanded them to come out. The children obeyed and immediately the earth which was piled up at the edge of the ditch fell in, thus filling it but without causing any injury.

While conveying a heavy rock one of the men slipped, and the rock would have crushed him if Fr. Antony had not appeared, and placing his hand under the rock, liberated the man. This circumstance seemed truly miraculous for two reasons : first, because, at the time, the holy missionary was far away, and his appearance, though most opportune, was quite unexpected, second, because those who were present could not render any assistance.

On another occasion they had no lime, having neglected to inform those who were to furnish it, and were therefore unable to continue the work. The following day, how-

ever, the draymen arrived with a supply of lime. Being asked how they came without receiving notice, they replied that two days previous, Fr. Antony had been there to hurry them. From this it was evident that he had been in two different places at the same time, for on the day mentioned he did not leave the place where they were building the college.

By the labors of the faithful, the alms of benefactors, and above all, the aid of miracles, the convent was completed on the 13th of June the same year. The fathers took possession of it, or rather, Venerable Antony confided it to the care of the Queen of Heaven by depositing the keys of the college at her feet, thus making her perpetual superioress of the community, and at the same time giving a public demonstration of the humble submission with which he and his brethren desired to obey her commands. Under her powerful protection he entered the new convent, where, though not yet superior, his exact observance of the rule acted as a stimulus to all.

Another event now occurred which greatly impressed the citizens of Guatemala. One day while preaching to a large audience in

the church of Saint Lucy, he suddenly crossed his hands and, as if unconscious, remained perfectly silent ; after a time, he continued his sermon. His hearers, surprised at the circumstance, inquired the motive of his silence ; they afterwards learned that at that time he had been in a house to deliver from death a woman who was on the point of being killed by her husband.

Seeing the graces and favors bestowed by God upon Fr. Antony, his brethren availed themselves of his stay in Guatemala, to elect him superior, and in the month of September 1702, raised him to that office. Though elected against his will, Antony endeavored to respond to the opinion which the community had formed of his virtue. "He exercised the duties of his office with the greatest fidelity (these are the words of a religious of his community) in order thus to lead the community to aspire to religious perfection. He was first for everything, seldom omitting to be present in the choir and for the community prayers, unless lawfully prevented by urgent occupations."

The following is related by another witness... "The servant of God often visited

convents of nuns, especially those of the Order of Saint Clare, encouraging them to religious perfection by his spiritual advice and conferences, and aiding them in their temporal as well as spiritual necessities. He frequented hospitals, comforting the sick by his holy conversations ; he consoled the prisoners and instructed them in Christian doctrine. With great charity he assisted those condemned to death, disposing them to die repentant, and after the execution would preach to those assembled. This charity for his neighbor was unequalled. He practised it on every occasion, even at the risk of his life. One night he was called to a death-bed ; though he was very ill and the night stormy, yet his generosity of heart induced him to assist the dying person. He made no distinction between rich and poor, learned and ignorant, master and slave, it was sufficient for him to know that they were creatures, created and redeemed by the same Lord.

God often rewarded the great and fervent charity of his faithful servant by miracles. One night while reciting matins in the choir with the community, he suddenly stopped, and with horror-stricken counte-

nance exclaimed twice : — “ How dreadful, how dreadful, that soul is going to be lost ! ” Hastily rising, accompanied by a religious, he ran rapidly towards a gate of the city, where they found a man who had attempted to commit suicide by hanging himself. The servant of God quickly untied the cord, thus saving him from temporal as well as eternal death. He then explained to him the gravity of his crime, advising him to confess it and do penance ; the man was converted and died a good Christian.

Another time he interrupted the divine office to prevent a crime which two outlaws were about to commit under cover of the night. On one occasion, while hearing confessions, he left the church to stop Don Lewis Antony Mugnoz, who was going to take revenge for an injury received from his adversary.

One night he went to a gambling den, where he found several men engaged in playing cards. He took part in the game, and though ignorant of the rules, began and played with great skill. Taking advantage of winning he imposed penances on the gamblers, giving some the Rosary to recite, others the Litany of the Saints, Peni-

tential Psalms, and so on, until the gamblers who had not come to pray, retired from the house, leaving the servant of God alone with a man who had resolved to kill one of his companions. He then disclosed to the wretch the atrocity of his intention, exhorting him to repentance, and induced him to confess his sins.

But these and similar benefits, bestowed upon so many souls in an extraordinary manner, are of slight importance compared with those more remarkable ones which Antony effected for entire populations. He was so highly esteemed, that whenever he began to speak, the people, seemingly forgetful of other business, crowded around him, and though his sermons lasted for hours, they never wearied his hearers.

Near the Convent of Our Lady of Mercy, stood a theatre where a large audience had assembled one evening to witness a comedy. Whilst they were engrossed with the spectacle, the servant of God appeared in their midst, and taking a crucifix from the hands of his companion began to preach with great zeal to the people on the grievousness of sin, considered as an offence against God. An act of this kind, done with-

out the consent of the spectators and which disturbed their proposed diversion, would have called forth derision upon any person who did not enjoy the prestige and credit of Fr. Antony. But far from being insulted, he was listened to attentively for over two hours. At the conclusion of his sermon all the people made the profession of faith, then followed him processionally to the church, reciting the Rosary. After having listened to another sermon, they departed.

In the same manner he abolished the disorders occasioned by the celebrations on Christmas Eve. Beginning to preach on the eve of our Lord's Nativity, his sermon lasted for several hours, and attracted great crowds. His zealous words inflamed the hearts of his auditors and excited them to repentance. On one of these occasions an unfortunate man refused to hear the word of God, and went to a gambling house where he was overtaken by a sudden death. Fr. Antony, who was preaching in the church, knew, by divine inspiration, what had occurred, and disclosed to his congregation the terrible punishment which had befallen the miserable man who had refused to avail himself of the means of salvation which were

offered him. This sad event induced the people of Guatemala to continue the pious exercises established there by the servant of God.

As the field of labor at Guatemala seemed to Fr. Antony too restricted for his zeal, he extended his apostolic labors to the province of St. Antony Suchitepec and to some parts of the diocese of Nicaragua, frequently giving missions to the Infidels. His efforts merited the success which attended him everywhere. He abolished many infamous sects, destroyed idols, converted the most obstinate idolators, and even many of their priests, some of whom he sent to his college in Guatemala for instruction, and to avoid the danger of relapse.

In the town of Zatatepec lived an old man, who secretly exercised the ministry of pagan pontiff, dexterously concealing, under the cloak of hypocrisy, his impiety from the public. When the servant of God arrived in the town, this man hoping to deceive him also, went with the rest of the people to meet the missionary, bearing a heavy cross, and was apparently the most penitent of all. But the saintly father, reading the man's soul, knew his infamous dissimulation, and

casting upon him a look of severity, drove him back. Thence going to the church, Antony spent some time in prayer. After this, asking for a pick, he ordered the Indian to accompany him to the cemetery, and commanded him to dig the ground in a certain place, where they discovered two idols, adorned with amulets, which manifested to every one the perfidy and hypocrisy of the idolator. The appearance of these two idols justified the servant of God for his severity towards the old man. The Venerable Father then commanded those objects to be burned, and the Indian who had hidned them there, conquered by the grace of God, was the first to apply the torch.

It is impossible to enumerate the sinners reclaimed and Infidels brought to the true fold by the zeal and apostolic labors of Antony; suffice it to say, that in the kingdom of Guatemala alone, he converted over 80,000 Infidels.

CHAPTER IX

VENERABLE ANTONY GOES TO TALAMANCA. — RECEIVES AN ORDER TO FOUND A COLLEGE IN ZACATECAS. — HIS HEROIC ACTS OF VIRTUE DURING THE JOURNEY. — APPOINTED SUPERIOR OF THE NEW COLLEGE. — SUCCESS OF HIS MISSIONS. — DEPARTURE FOR NAZARETH.

HIS term of superiority having expired in the month of August, 1705, the servant of God was appointed Commissary of the missions of Costa-Rica ; this obliged him to assume another office of great responsibility, that of establishing convents and colleges for missionaries in those parts and the spiritual direction of the people.

Earnestly desiring to continue his labors among the Infidels, Antony, upon receiving the order, hastened his departure, and in a short time arrived at his destination. He was overjoyed at the prospect of making known the name of Jesus Christ among Infidels and barbarians who had never heard His Holy Name. Trusting implicitly in the Divine Goodness he hoped to gain many victories

over the common enemy, but his designs were not yet to be realized, for he received another order from his Commissary to found a college in Zacatecas, a place about two thousand miles distant. For the servant of God to receive such a command meant to execute it without delay.

In the course of the journey he met the Bishop of Nicaragua, and while discoursing with him concerning the affairs of his missions, he perceived, coming towards him, a parish priest by whom he had been grossly insulted. Without a word, he left the bishop and approached the priest and knelt and kissed his feet. This priest, a few months before, seeing the servant of God preaching in his church, though the Father had faculties from the bishop for so doing, became enraged and regardless of the respect due to the holy place, reprimanded Antony severely in the presence of the congregation and commanded him to leave the pulpit at once. Without hesitation, the holy missionary obeyed, discontinued his sermon, left the pulpit and, approaching the priest, thanked him for having humbled him, and at the same time enlightened his ignorance.

Pratising every virtue and performing the

ordinary occupations of his apostolate, Antony arrived at the city of Guatemala. After a few hours rest, he proceeded to Zacatecas, about twelve hundred miles distant. He stopped at several places on the way, where, instead of taking a much needed repose, he employed all his time in preaching and hearing confessions. Antony arrived at Zacatecas on the 10th. of January, 1707. Here he found conditions most unfavorable for commencing the new college, the land being barren and its inhabitants very poor, but he was far from being discouraged. Trusting in that All-Powerfull Providence which never fails to aid those who place their hope in God, Antony went to see D. Ignatius Bernardez, who owned an abandoned silver mine near the place where he intended to build the new college. Full of confidence and without the least hesitation, he asked the man to defray the expenses of erecting the new college. Greatly surprised, Bernardez replied that circumstances would not permit him to attempt an undertaking of that kind, but the servant of God advised him to make another attempt to work the long abandoned mine, saying that it would yield an abundance of ore, and

would continue to be rich for a long time. The pious Christian, believing the words of Fr. Antony, sent several men the following day to work the mine, and to their astonishment they discovered an abundance of silver of the finest quality. Thus Bernardez was enabled to defray the expenses of the building of the college and also the church and convent annexed, under the title of our Lady of Guadalupe, where the fathers, full of gratitude to God and their kind benefactor, took up their abode.

What we read in the process for his beatification and canonization concerning Antony's conduct towards himself and others, is but a repetition of what we have learned from the testimony of the witnesses regarding his life in the colleges of Gueretaro and Guatemala.

Always zealous for the salvation of souls, he was noted among the fathers, as the first to work and be last to rest. He was indefatigable in hearing confessions, sometimes devoting entire nights to it. Without distinction, he heard the confessions of all who had recourse to him for their spiritual consolation.

The holy missionary often went to the

city of Zacatecas, (the college being about three miles distant,) to preach and administer the Sacraments of penance and the Holy Eucharist. In order to impress more vividly upon the minds of the people who continually visited the convent, the remembrance of the passion and death of Our Holy Redeemer, he caused fourteen crosses to be erected at equal distances on the way to the college, thus continually recalling the sufferings of our Lord. Antony did not restrict his solicitude to his brethren and the city of Zacatecas, but extended his labors to many other places. At the request of the Bishop of Guadalajara, he gave a mission in that city, as also in Gudianá, and many other places in the same diocese, converting many Infidels to the Christian religion and everywhere gaining souls for heaven.

Being obliged to go to Gueretaro on some important business which compelled him to remain there for several days, Antony refused, while in the convent there, to accept the dispensations commonly allowed to visitors, and with a diligence more exact than that of any other religious, observed all the pious practices of the community, even taking an active part in a mission then going

on, displaying such fervor, that it seemed to all that he had come just for that purpose.

At that time the province of St. Francis was involved in serious complications, grave dissensions having arisen among the religious, and complaints being made to the Commissary General from all parts ; it was necessary to hold a Chapter to discuss the controversies, and take action to remedy the evil by assigning to the offices such friars as were competent to maintain peace and harmony among the religious. The Commissary General, though invested with authority necessary to exact submission and respect from every one, seeing that the religious were so irritated, would not trust himself for the successful issue of the enterprise, and deemed it wise to confide the presidency of the Chapter to the prudence and rectitude of Fr. Antony, because of the influence he exerted over the minds of the religious, by whom he was loved and venerated. Having received an order from the Commissary General to go to St. Luis Potosi, the servant of God obeyed without delay, and after having given a mission to the citizens and a retreat to the friars, opened the Chapter. After each friar had

made known his grievance, the secretary, fearing that the numerous complaints made against each other by the religious had disturbed and scandalized the Venerable Father, asked him if he was displeased. To this inquiry, Fr. Antony, far from entertaining the least resentment, replied with great calmness: — “ *Pax multa diligentibus legem tuam, et non est illis scandalum...* great peace have they who love thy law, etc ” — That he possessed this abundance of peace in his heart was evident, for he diffused it so effectively among the others, that forgetting their petty differences, they manifested throughout the Chapter a spirit of zeal for the glory of God and the spiritual progress of their Province. Thus the election of the new superiors gave satisfaction to all.

For a long time the Court of Spain had earnestly desired the conversion of the inhabitants of the mountains of Nayaret, and had written many pressing letters to this effect to the Royal Audience or court of Guadalajara. No one was better qualified to execute this noble project than Antony who, to the holiness of his life, and a most ardent zeal for the salvation of souls, united a knowledge of the ways of the barbarians among

whom he had made innumerable conquests. To him then, was entrusted this arduous task, which he cheerfully accepted, seeing therein an occasion to propagate the Kingdom of God, and perhaps obtain the crown of martyrdom, which until now, he had sought in vain. Accompanied by another friar and several Indians, who voluntarily went with him to act as interpreters, Antony courageously undertook the journey. God, however, Who in His divine decrees had reserved for a later period, the conversion of the idolators, and Who has denied the grace of martyrdom to so many saints who ardently desired to suffer death for his sake, did not permit the good wishes of his faithful servant to be realized.

When the holy missionary had penetrated a little way into the mountains inhabited by the Infidels, a band of them saw him coming from a distance, and rushing towards him began to discharge their arrows at him. Rejoicing at such an opportunity, he placed his arms in the form of a cross and awaited death. But God, Who had destined him for greater things, infused such a fear into the hearts of the savages, that they were powerless to wound the holy man, while one of them

who was attempting to kill him, was suddenly stricken, and lost the use of his hands and arms.

The saintly father being thus miraculously saved, considered himself under greater obligation to procure the conversion of these people to God. He endeavored by charitable means, as he had previously done, to gain the good will of the Infidels. One day seeing the chief of the barbarians, he ran to embrace him, and explained through the interpreters, the purpose of his arrival; but his efforts were of no avail. The savages insulted him and threatened him with death if he did not depart instantly. Notwithstanding their fierce opposition and threats, Antony remained firm in his determination to convert them to the faith of Christ. The same night he sent one of his interpreters to interview the chief to try to prevail upon him to receive the missionaries and persuade the Infidels to let the latter go among them. The chief, perhaps touched by the prodigy of the day before, did not oppose the servant of God and his companion, still he assured him that it was impossible to carry out his design until the Infidels had been subdued through fear of

the Spanish soldiers. If, he added, Antony could procure the aid of the soldiers, he and his companions would help them, and then the infidels would readily submit to the missionaries ; but at present, he said, they must desist from the undertaking. These reasons induced the Venerable Father to change his project, and return to Guadalajara, to acquaint the Royal Council with the failure of his mission. Eager for the conversion of the infidels he was not disheartened by this unsuccessful attempt, but returned to Zacatecas, where he remained a short time. Thence he went to Mexico to interview the Viceroy regarding the best means to adopt for subduing the barbarians. To employ soldiers for this purpose was a matter requiring grave deliberation. Therefore the Viceroy desired the servant of God to be present at every consultation in order to express his opinion concerning a matter of such importance.

Antony's sojourn in Mexico obtained for the citizens a rich harvest of celestial blessings, for there was no pulpit, public square, or street, in which he did not preach, no religious community to which he did not extend his loving solicitude. Before bidding

farewell to the city of Mexico, he had the consolation of seeing many sinners abandon the path of vice, and live according to the law of God.

Six months having been passed in discussing the affairs of Nayaret, without a decision having been arrived at, the servant of God returned to his monastery at Zacatecas in the month of June, 1712. Though leading a laborious life, his work as compared with the hardships sustained during his various apostolic enterprises, might be considered a true rest, from which the Venerable Father derived great advantage, strengthening spirit by prayer and contemplation. As the calm of the night was most suited to this, he would go to the church before matins, and after having recited the divine office in common, he would retire to a corner where he remained until morning in close communion with God, his heart filled with transports of love. How sweet were the consolations which Antony's soul received at that time from his dearly beloved Lord might be judged from the expression of his eyes fixed on heaven, his face at times flushed, then extraordinarily pale.

On one occasion, a religious, crossing the

choir to ring the bell, had the privilege of seeing the servant of God raised bodily to the ceiling of the church. These celestial delights, however, in proportion as they inflamed Antony's heart with love for God, increased the ardor of his charity for his neighbor ; the citizens of Zacatecas frequently experienced the happy effects of his greatness of heart.

In November, 1713, the first Conventual Chapter was held in the college of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Guadalupe, and a new superior being elected, Fr. Antony was again at liberty to continue his labors among the Infidels.

CHAPTER X

JOURNEY TO TEXAS. — MISSIONS IN ADAES. — ESTABLISHMENT OF SEVERAL CHURCHES AND CONVENTS.

ANTONY'S ardent desire to carry the light of the Gospel to countries buried in the darkness of idolatry, which had been restrained to some extent for five years, owing to the cares imposed upon him by the founding of colleges, churches and convents, was now reanimated, since by the new election he was freed from such cares.

The deplorable condition of the inhabitants of Texas, who were not only ignorant of the true faith, but almost brutish, leading a wild and miserable life, so affected Antony's tender heart, that he resolved to employ all his energy, labors, and, if necessary, his very life, for their welfare. Moreover, he was encouraged in this purpose, by receiving an apostolic faculty to give missions wherever he deemed proper, and with those companions who seemed to him best qualified for the accomplishment of this work, without

being subject to any superior. This permission, though enabling Antony to follow the impulse of his zeal, in no wise diminished his humble submission to those in authority over him. He did not presume to leave his college without having first obtained permission from his superior, and, he took with him only those companions who were assigned to him.

The prospect of a journey of twelve hundred miles over barren plains, steep mountains, and places wholly deserted, did not discourage our Venerable Father ; for “charity beareth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things,” and renders the greatest work light. Animated by this charity, he set forth with his companion, without provisions or guides, carrying the priestly vestments, which he afterwards yielded at the earnest entreaties of an Indian, who persisted in following him wherever he went.

An obstacle, however, arose, on account of which Antony feared his apostolic undertaking would either prove wholly unsuccessful, or at least fail to effect permanent good. This was the necessity of establishing a military post at the entrance to the provinces, to afford escorts to the missionaries, as well as to keep the barbarians in subjection, to guard the sacred edifi-

ces which he intended to erect and to render prompt assistance, in case of necessity, so that the faithful might not be oppressed by the fury and cruelty of the Infidels.

A great sum of money was needed to accomplish this work, and as the Royal Treasury was almost exhausted, on account of wars, Antony could not hope for assistance from Spain. Our Venerable Father, however, relying, as usual, upon the powerful providence of God, was not disheartened and asked aid from the garrison in the province of Parral.

On account of his reputation and his great kindness to the soldiers, each member of the garrison voluntarily offered him, out of his pay, twenty-five dollars a year during life, and with this money he was enabled to build the fort, which was afterwards given the name of St. John the Baptist of Rio Grande. Thus was the way to Texas opened.

Meanwhile the faithful supplied Antony with provisions of every kind, the soil being very rich and well cultivated, for Saltillo and Masapil, as well as the provinces of Monterey and Bocca de Leone had been long inhabited. Despite the severity of the climate, the fervent missionary freely dispensed the food of the Divine Word of God, prolonging his ser-

mons sometimes to two or three hours. During the day he heard the confessions of the women, beginning at sunrise ; the hours of the night were devoted to the men ; he thus gave himself up unceasingly to this exercise of zealous charity, reserving but the time necessary for the celebration of the holy sacrifice of the Mass and the recitation of the canonical hours. Only in virtue of obedience could he be induced to take any food. His rest was very short, scarcely lasting two hours. The one meal a day which Antony allowed himself was most frugal, and taken in great haste ; it frequently consisted of a piece of brown bread and a cup of water, and he often passed entire days without touching food.

When he was free from other occupations, Antony employed his time in fervent prayer and meditation, in visiting the sick, aiding the needy, asking alms for their relief, consoling and encouraging the afflicted, in manual labor, and in teaching the Indians to till the ground. These earnest endeavors of the servant of God were not in vain. Innumerable sinners, freed from the slavery of vice, entered upon a new life, the lukewarm and indifferent were roused to fervor, the good were filled with the desire to become better, scan-

dals were banished from among them, the sacraments were frequented and the churches well attended.

Of the many notable deeds Antony performed, two deserve special mention on account of the great advantages derived from them. One was, the establishing, near the lead mine in the provinces of Bocca de Leone, of a Third Order of Penance and of a Hospice, where the miners, influenced by his words, frequently went to pray. The other of which the province of Monterey was the scene is an example of Antony's admirable fortitude and heroic confidence in God. About six thousand Indians, Chichimechi, rebelled against the authorities, and as there was no means of subduing them, either by force, on account of the scarcity of Spanish soldiers, or by treaties, considering the extreme cruelty of the barbarians, the authorities had recourse to Fr. Antony as the only one capable of influencing the savages. He accepted the charge, and with firm confidence in God fearlessly went among the barbarians to induce them to submit to control and obedience. As St. Francis Xavier, in the kingdom of Travancore, succeeded by his words in repulsing the soldiers of Badagy, who had determined to des-

troy the kingdom, so now, our Venerable Father, by his words alone obliged a horde of barbarians to retreat from a position that was so favorable, that a regular regiment of soldiers could have effected nothing against them.

Two years had elapsed since Antony's departure from Zacatecas, when he finally arrived in Texas. Here the difficulties increased, owing to the high mountains, the crumbling rocks, the marshes, and the rivers so frequently met with and at times very difficult to cross. Besides, the uncultivated soil yielded only a few herbs and roots, and the missionaries were obliged to eat of the flesh of ravens and other birds which they procured here and there. These difficulties were however increased by the savage character of the inhabitants, against which the earnest efforts of the Missionary seemed to be of no avail. But the zeal which had enabled Antony to surmount so many obstacles in his other missions, now aided him to triumph in this one. Trusting in God, our Venerable Father endeavored to gain the affection of the Indians by kindness. On every occasion, for every need, he was at hand. It was not necessary for the natives to seek him, because he anti-

icipated their needs, and provided them with flour, meat, and clothing. He ploughed and sowed their gardens, procuring fruits, vegetables and other products. He relieved their fatigue by doing their work. If any one desired to eat wild fruits, Antony exerted himself to procure for him this refreshment. The destitute found in him a tender father. The hungry were sure to receive food from him, for he often deprived himself of nourishment to give them. As on the discovery of a rich continent, merchants, eager to procure the gold, send their vessels laden with merchandise, so this servant of God, eager to secure a rich harvest of souls, had provided himself with every available means to obtain this end, liberally giving his services to those who had recourse to him. To all this he added an agreeable manner, united with a wonderful patience in instructing such rude intellects. With great kindness Antony induced the inhabitants of the mountains to hear him, and if he knew of any one in danger of death, neither the inclemency of the weather, the length of the journey, precipices, marshes, nor torrents could restrain him from flying, as it were, to procure the eternal salvation of that soul at the last moment. It is easy to imagine

the effect produced upon the minds of the Indians by the tender solicitude and continual sermons of such a man who, entirely forgetful of self, seemed to have gone there for the sole purpose of alleviating their suffering and endeavoring to procure for them every advantage, material and spiritual.

We read in the process for Antony's beatification that whenever he preached, the people left everything, so eager were they to hear his sermons from which they derived so much benefit and consolation. Though not attested by an eye witness, sufficient proof of his success is afforded by the many missions and churches founded in those parts by this apostolic man. Besides the fort and the mission house of St. John the Baptist, Antony built those of St. Antonio de Vegar, of St. Joseph de Vejar, of Baja of the Holy Ghost, of the Immaculate Conception, and of St. Francis of Assisi. In this manner he labored assiduously for the conversion of the Indians and the welfare of the Catholics. With his crucifix in his hand, he frequently assembled, by means of a little bell, the soldiers living in the fort, working men, merchants, laborers, rich and poor, and then standing on some elevated place, spoke to them of the truths of our holy

religion, of the rewards or punishments of the future life, with such zeal and energy that the most obstinate hearts were moved. Many approached the sacraments after having neglected them for years ; others forsook the occasion of their sins. Some performed public penances for the scandals they had given ; many were united in marriage who had been living together illegally ; the usurer made restitution for ill-gotten money, and the rich became charitable to the poor.

But as men of the world seek for honors, riches and pleasures, and having obtained them, follow in pursuit of still greater ones, so likewise the desire of apostolic men for the salvation of souls increases proportionately to the number of their conversions.

Thus it was with our Venerable Father, who, inflamed with the desire to propagate religion, and having converted thousands to Christianity, did not cease his efforts until he had planted the standard of the cross in Adaes two hundred miles beyond Texas. Even then he would have advanced further, had not the command of his superior obliged him to return.

His labors among these uncivilized people of Texas had been abundantly rewarded ; with

equal success Antony labored among other Infidels and barbarians, especially those of Adaes, where the missions of Nachodoches, Ais and Adaes, founded by him, remain as splendid monuments of his zeal. So many estimable works of zeal and charity greatly impressed the minds of the Indians, and caused the name of Venerable Fr. Antony Margil to be universally loved and praised. Veneration for the missionary father was increased by a prodigy, which was effected through his prayers, and which has ever remained as a testimony of his having visited those parts, and of his great merits before God.

During the journey from Nachodoches to Nachas, the companions of our missionary, exhausted and faint with thirst, and with no hope of finding water, had recourse to their father. Moved to compassion, and trusting in the providence of God, Who, to quench the thirst of his chosen people in the desert, had commanded Moses to strike the rock from which fresh water instantly gushed forth, with firm confidence and joyful countenance Antony thus addressed his companions :
“ Fear not ; do not be dismayed ; trust in God, for in a short time you shall have water. ”
Then striking a rock with his staff, fresh and

clear water instantly gushed forth, and continues to flow to this day. The place was afterwards called the small eye of Fr. Antony Margil, in memory of the new Moses who caused the water to flow.

CHAPTER XI

VENERABLE ANTONY IS RE-ELECTED SUPERIOR OF THE COLLEGE OF ZACATECAS. — HE SETTLES DISPUTES IN GUADALAJARA. — MISSIONS IN DIFFERENT PLACES.

THE fathers at Zacatecas had remained long without their beloved founder; naturally they desired to recall him, and place themselves under his direction. Having, therefore, unanimously elected him superior in February, 1722, they sent him the news while he was in Adaes. What examples of obedience, truly heroic, he gave on such occasions by his readiness to leave all, and without hesitation undertake long and difficult journeys!

On the way, near the mission of St. Joseph de Vejar, he saw an Indian woman, who fled at his approach, as the Indians usually did at the sight of a Spaniard. The servant of God, who would have given his very life to gain a soul for heaven, went in pursuit, and having overtaken her, with great kindness spoke to

her in such a manner that she could understand him, and followed him on the journey. As she was only half-clad, according to the custom of the barbarians, the missionary father took his mantle, arranged it to the best of his ability in the form of a dress and gave it to her to cover herself properly. He then took her as far as the next mission house, where he left her to the care of the religious, who, after having instructed her in the Catholic doctrine, baptized her. She [persevered in the Catholic faith during her life-time, giving much praise-worthy example, and rendered great services to the missionaries until her death.

A short distance from Zacatecas, Antony took lodging in the house of a gentleman of harsh and stubborn disposition, who detested his wife, from whom he had been separated for quite a long time. Neither the good offices of his friends, nor the authority of the civil and ecclesiastical courts could induce him to be reunited to her. The venerable father having heard of this, endeavored to persuade the man to permit his wife to come for a few moments. He obtained his consent, though with great difficulty, and induced him to kiss and embrace her. Thus he effected a reunion

between husband and wife which was both happy and lasting, for they lived united in peace and love until death. After the event the husband was most affectionate and solicitous, often praising the grace and beauty of his beloved wife, though, according to some witnesses, she was very homely.

Antony having at length reached his convent in June of the same year, 1722, took possession of his office immediately upon his arrival according to the custom of his Order. During his term as superior, he manifested the same spirit he had displayed, eight years previous, both with regard to his personal conduct and the regulation of the community, as well as in the spiritual welfare of the adjoining city.

Having established many churches and houses among the Infidels, especially in Texas and Adaes, the servant of God with special care dispatched such missionaries as he considered best suited to cultivate the vineyard of the Lord, and to extend the boundaries of the missions.

He left the college for a short time to go to Mexico to consult the Viceroy, and to obtain permission, if possible, to return to Nayarit; but the Viceroy deeming it advisable to

postpone the expedition until he had received a definite answer from Spain, our venerable father returned to Zacatecas, where an important affair now demanded his attention. The inhabitants of Zacatecas were becoming demoralized by the evils resulting from the vile representations exhibited in the theatres, and owing to the wealth of the surrounding silver mines, the disorders were daily increasing. By his good example and continual preaching, the servant of God happily succeeded in abolishing these abuses, thereby causing the financial ruin of the comedians, who determined to take revenge for the losses sustained by removing their cause. Accordingly, one evening, when Antony, with his companion, was returning from the city to his college, they lay in ambush, awaiting his approach to execute their diabolical intentions; but, he, knowing, by divine inspiration, of their evil designs, said to his companion: — “ Brother, it is necessary to go around the other way.” Thus he escaped the danger, leaving his assassins waiting for him.

An auditor of the Royal Court, by name, D. Emanuel Tristan de Ribadeneyra, who was sent to Zacatecas on a special mission, had so exasperated the inhabitants by his

imprudence, that they were on the verge of a popular insurrection. Our Venerable Father, being informed of this, without delay hastened to the city, and by his presence and diplomacy, calmed every seditious movement, and restored peace among the citizens.

On another occasion great scandal had been given to the public by quarrels between the Counts of St. Matthew and Laguna. Though many respectable persons interposed, none succeeded in pacifying them. The apostolic man, however, having invited them separately to go to a certain place for an interview, spoke to each of them with such efficacy that they became reconciled.

Having induced the wealthy to aid the indigent by frequent donations, Antony also endeavored to provide for those who were obliged to beg from door to door, by ordering food to be distributed every day at the door of the convent, and this holy practice has continued to the present day.

Thus he devoted himself to the constant exercise of works of piety and charity until the time for the election of the new superior. The Chapter was held in February, 1725, but as the superior elected was far away, our Venerable Father was obliged to continue in

office, under the title of President, until the month of August. His office of Prefect of the missions for the Indians, Commissary of the Sacred Inquisition, and above all, founder of three colleges, placed him in the highest rank in the college of Zacatecas, but, in his scrupulous observance of the rule, his submission and obedience, he conducted himself as if he were the least of all. He was quite satisfied, he used to say, to attend to the salvation of his soul. Soon, however, he was disturbed from this blessed rest, by appeals from the citizens of Guadalajara in the month of October, urgently requesting his presence there. For some time, D. Ferdinand de Urrutia, a member of the Royal Audience of that city, had caused serious disturbances, by his refusal to yield to the authority of the President. These quarrels, which kindled the fire of hatred in the hearts of the principal authorities, extended to the friends and adherents of both parties who divided the people into factions, and destroyed public order. Owing to these quarrels, everything else was neglected, and there was no one to restrain the outlaws, who were committing grievous crimes. Fortunately, however, the law-abiding citizens, cognizant of the ability

of Fr. Antony Margil to appease hatred and dissensions, which he had so successfully done in Escuintle, Guatemala and Zacatecas, had recourse to him, imploring that help which could not be obtained from any other source. Without delay, Antony started for Guadalajara. Immediately upon his arrival he had a private interview with the President, and finding him tractable and noble-hearted, easily induced him to yield to his entreaties, and to forgive his enemy. But not so De-Urrutia, who, relying on his adherents, had determined at any cost to gain his ends. He said the motives which urged him to defend his rights were too important, his reputation would not allow him to submit to the arrogance of others ; and he added that it was now too late to give way, even did he so desire, for he had written to the Court of Spain regarding the affair. The servant of God, by solid arguments and prayers, endeavored to refute his pretended reasons, saying : " My friend, there is yet time to do good. You can easily withdraw from this affair. The court of Spain will not act against the President to sustain one who is his inferior. Consider the state of matters in the city and let these petty questions pass." Seeing that

he could not prevail against the obstinacy of the proud man with arguments, Antony added : “ Don Ferdinand, you have not only refused to do for God’s sake, an action commanded by His holy law, but you have refused to do it in His name. He will, however, be revenged, and in a short time you and your family will experience the terrible effects of His vengeance. ” Events proved how true and well founded was the threat, for in a short time De-Urrutia, who for many years had governed the province, was struck by the hand of God, and reduced to utter penury, going from door to door asking for food, despised and rejected by his former friends, and abandoned by his adherents. His children, also, suffered from the curse that had fallen upon their father, and passed their lives in the most abject misery and poverty.

Despite the obstinacy of this man, peace was restored in the city, and the quarrels died out. All the resentment and hatred were concentrated upon the person of De-Urrutia, who was now powerless to cause any further disturbance.

It seemed to the man of God that having thus prevented an insurrection among the citizens of Guadalajara, it would be of small

benefit if he did not remove the source of the evil by combating sin. Therefore, availing himself of the opportunity afforded, Antony gave a mission, and with such marked success that many abuses were abolished, public order was restored, dissensions ceased, and places of ill-repute were closed. In order to render the fruits of the mission permanent, he collected large sums of money from the wealthy for the purpose of erecting asylums for the orphans, hospitals, homes for the poor, and houses of reform. He also visited monasteries of Religious, frequently giving spiritual retreats, exhorting them to observe their rule, and banishing abuses from among them.

One day, while our Venerable Father was preaching, a man of great wealth and popularity, but of low character, went to hear his sermon. The servant of God, ever eager to reclaim sinners, saw him in the church, and compassionating his deplorable condition, preached a sermon according to the particular needs of the man in question; but seeing him unmoved by his words, Antony, in order to obtain from Almighty God the grace of his conversion, at the end of his sermon, stripped his shoulders and scourged himself with an

iron chain so severely that his blood poured down in streams. God, deigning to accept the sacrifice of his faithful servant, touched the heart of the sinner, who began to shed tears of repentance, made his confession in presence of all there assembled, in order thus to repair the public scandal he had given. He moreover relinquished all he possessed, renounced sin, and from that day forth lived a truly Christian life.

The apostolic man then left the city of Guadalajara for Mechoacan where he remained some days to give a series of missions. The bishop, in consequence of the marvelous good effected by his words and example, sent him to several places of his diocese. Antony obeyed, and though fatigued and infirm, continued to preach assiduously, regardless of his health. So great was the desire of the people to hear the evangelical truths expounded by him, that every expedition of his, might have been considered a triumph rather than a simple pilgrimage. Some people went in procession to meet him, travelling great distances, others cleaned the streets through which he passed, and others again scattered branches of palms and flowers by the way, thus manifesting the sentiments of their hearts by these exte-

rior demonstrations of respect and love, and presenting to Antony the abundant fruits of that seed which he continually scattered among them.

CHAPTER XII

THE SERVANT OF GOD IS ORDERED TO PROCEED TO
GUERETARO, THENCE TO MEXICO, WHERE HE DIED.
— CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS DEATH AND BURIAL.

THE excessive labors of the servant of God to procure the salvation of souls, greatly undermined his health. He went to Gueretaro, in compliance with the command of his superior, but was in such a condition that he could scarcely move ; he had become so weak and emaciated that it was evident death was near. The Commissary General, fearing that Antony could not receive proper treatment in Gueretaro, advised him to go to the city of Mexico where he would have the advantages of an infirmary and excellent medical attendance. For some time, our Venerable Father had received from God, warnings of his approaching death, and when leaving the college of Zacatecas had told a certain man named Joseph Molina, that they would meet no more in this world, and said farewell until they were united in heaven. He felt

assured that all remedies would be useless, and that a journey of one hundred miles would but serve to shorten his mortal career. Still he regarded every word of his superior as an express command, and though his brethren opposed his departure, he left everything, regardless of their entreaties, and bare-foot, undertook the long journey to the city of Mexico. On the way he became so exhausted that his companion ordered him to travel on horse-back. Considering his companion as his superior, Antony obeyed without question.

He arrived at his destination early in the morning of the 2nd. of August, and as the doors of the church and convent were not yet opened he prostrated himself devoutly at the gate of the church to adore and give thanks to God for the graces and benefits bestowed on him during his entire life. After having performed this duty, he went to ask the blessing of his superior as soon as the doors of the convent opened and gave him a strict account of his journey and the purpose of his coming. Realizing that he had not come to be cured but to die, he added : " Rev. Father Superior, the donkey, " thus he used to call his body, " has come here to deposit its burden. "

He expressed the same sentiments a few

moments later in the infirmary; when taking off his sandals, he said: "I shall never again wear these sandals."

As mentioned above, the servant of God arrived in the city of Mexico on the 2nd. of August, the day on which the famous Indulgence of the Portiuncula can be gained each time a Catholic enters a Franciscan church. Full of joy, Antony said to his companion: "Let us try, dear Brother, to gain the pardon of Assisi for ourselves and for the souls in Purgatory. First, for our own souls, in order that Almighty God may have mercy on us, and then for the souls in Purgatory, to release them from that place of woe and suffering."

His illness, which lasted but five days, was a time during which he practised the most beautiful virtues, and was a silent exhortation to those present. He was never heard to complain of his sufferings nor to ask God for the least relief, only desiring that the will of God might be accomplished in him. He even entreated Fr. Simon De Hirro to celebrate Mass for this intention, at the shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Guadalupe. His words were full of faith, hope and charity, the most profound humility and continual

thanksgiving to the Lord. Always submissive to the will of others, Antony now displayed the same readiness in executing the orders of the physicians and infirmarians. Once he was given a potion so hot that it seemed to him impossible to swallow it, but upon being told by the infirmarian that the doctor had ordered it, he drank it without saying a word.

Deeming himself unworthy of so much kindness and consideration, Antony continually expressed his gratitude to his brethren for their services, and told those who visited him that he was not worthy to die among them, but rather deserved to be made to give up his soul in the mountains among brutes and wild animals. He never wearied of exhorting every one to detest sin with all their hearts and serve God in spirit and in truth.

When his illness brought delirium, Antony was heard preaching, singing devout hymns, making fervent aspirations, invoking the most holy names of Jesus and Mary, reprimanding sinners with great kindness and charity, encouraging the weak, comforting the afflicted, and at times, reciting the holy Rosary as he was accustomed to do among

the barbarians. Realizing that death was approaching and that he could no longer labor for the salvation of souls, he desired that his life might be prolonged. One day, unable to restrain the impulses of charity, he gently complained to D. Joseph Collado Martinex, saying: "Must I really die?" ... The good man surprised to find in the servant of God sentiments which he considered unworthy of his sanctity, replied: "Rev. Father, if you experience such feelings, what will become of me when I shall be at the point of death?" But our Venerable Father continued: "I am not sorry to die, but death will deprive me of laboring to promote the glory of God and the salvation of souls." Overcoming even these pious desires, however, Antony abandoned himself completely into the hands of the Lord, and never ceased to repeat: "Let it be done to me according to the holy will of God."

As his illness increased, it was thought best to administer the last rights of our holy religion; Fr. Emmanuel De las Heras went to hear his last confession. The servant of God on this occasion desired to continue his practice of making a general confession every time he changed his father confessor. Rising

from his bed, he knelt upon the ground, notwithstanding his extreme weakness, and began in an humble attitude to accuse himself of all the sins of his life ; the confession was very short, scarcely quaatl one ordinary one, and his faults were so slight that the confessor had difficulty to find sufficient matter to give him absolution. The servant of God perceiving the surprise of the priest, and fearing that he would attribute the merit to him for such rare, spotless purity, said : —
“ If Your Reverence should see a ball of gold suspended by a hair, though gold is very heavy, would you think that it was supported by itself ? Now, I have been a poor creature, liable to fall at any moment, and if God had not kept his omnipotent hand over me, I do not know what I might have done. ” Having finished his confession with this act of humility, remaining in the same posture, he received holy Viaticum with the ardor of a Seraphim rather than that of a man, and with his beloved Jesus in his heart, humbled himself further still ; considering himself the greatest of all sinners, and, fearing that he had given scandal to his brethren, he asked their pardon with such earnestness and sincerity that all who were present were moved

to tears. The holy man might indeed have been proposed as a perfect model of a true son of St. Francis. After this Antony lay down upon his bed, and began to give thanks to his beloved Jesus for having descended to dwell in his heart.

The religious, greatly afflicted by the loss they were about to sustain, and having employed every human remedy in vain, now implored assistance from heaven. To this effect, on the evening previous to the death of the holy missionary, they brought to his room, a miraculous image of the Blessed Virgin Mary called the "Remedy," which was venerated in the Monastery of St. Clare. Antony, upon seeing the Blessed Mother before him, humbly revered her, and after having poured out the sentiments of his heart in sweet expressions of tender affection, as a son who separates himself for a few hours from his beloved mother, said: "Good bye, my dearly beloved Lady, until to-morrow."

On the following morning at eleven o'clock Antony was anointed; during the administration of this sacrament he united his spirit and voice to the prayers of the Church. Then filled with faith, love and confidence in God, he raised his eyes towards heaven, and

remained thus for some time, contemplating the eternal rewards prepared for the faithful servants of God. While he was thus absorbed Fr. Francis Antony Sanchez De Tagle entered his cell; Antony turned to him and unwilling, as it were, to remain here below any longer, asked: "What time is it, Brother?" — "It is almost two o'clock," was the answer. "Beautiful hour," rejoined the servant of God, "to go to sing Vespers in heaven," and he then returned to his former position.

The religious, having heard the last words of their brother, surrounded his bed to recite the Apostle's creed, and having finished it, they began to sing the first verse of the canticle of Simeon: "Now, O Lord, thou dost dismiss thy servant, according to thy word, in peace." At this sweet aspiration, the face of the holy man shone with a heavenly joy, and his soul, yearning to be united forever to its God, departed, to receive the reward of his labors. Antony's happy death occurred on the feast of the Transfiguration, the 6th. of August, 1726, at two o'clock in the afternoon. He was sixty eight years, eleven months and twenty days old, having spent fifty-three years in religion, and forty-three years as a

missionary among the Infidels and Barbarians of North and Central America.

The moment that the notice of his death was received, all the bells of the city of Mexico announced it to the people and everywhere people were heard saying: "The apostolic man is dead, the holy father is dead." Citizens of all ages and conditions went to see the remains of the servant of God, which were conveyed to the parish church, where they remained exposed for three days, surrounded by guards. Persons of high rank, magistrates, priests, religious, and soldiers, prostrate on the ground, endeavored to kiss his feet, and among them were the Bishop of Cebu in the Philippine Islands, and the Archbishops of Manila and Mexico. Some took the flowers which adorned his coffin, others touched their handkerchiefs and rosaries to his remains, while those who obtained a piece of his habit considered themselves most fortunate. Many requested the honor of bearing upon their shoulders the precious remains of the Venerable Father. Among these were Fr. Peter Leon of Medina of the Society of Jesus, at that time professor of theology, and later, rector of the two colleges of Saint Peter and Paul, and the

Holy Ghost, and Fr. Antony Pinto of the Order of St. Dominic, Provincial of Mexico.

A Mexican merchant named George de Nazera, not being able to obtain a relic of the habit of Fr. Antony, requested one of the religious who surrounded the remains to touch the mouth of the servant of God with his handkerchief ; it was returned to him spotted with blood, and thus he received not indeed a piece of the habit but a more precious relic.

The high estimation which every one had formed of the merits of our Venerable Father was greatly increased by the condition of his body after death. His face, which in life had been pale, now assumed a beautiful rosy hue, his eyes expressed a celestial joy, his limbs remained flexible, his flesh warm, and his feet which, unshod, had trod thousands of miles to extend the Kingdom of Jesus Christ became soft like those of a child. These supernatural manifestations excited such surprise in the spectators that one, a religious of the Society of Jesus, said to his companions that if he had seen the body of St. Francis Xavier, he could not have conceived for him a greater veneration, and many others expressed similar sentiments.

Still more surprising was the fact that the servant of God, even after his death, continued to exercise his charity towards others as is shown in the following incident. One of the most illustrious artists of the city of Mexico was requested to take the portrait of our Venerable Father ; despite all his efforts, he could not reproduce the countenance. Greatly astonished, and at loss what to do, he made repeated efforts, but all were of no avail, for the features kept changing, and the face even changed color. Thinking that this prodigy was not due to accident but to some good cause, the artist examined his conscience, and there found the reason. He immediately made his confession to one of the fathers, and having received absolution, returned to his portrait and accomplished the work with ease.

The funeral services of Venerable Antony were carried out with great solemnity. The Canons of the cathedral of the city of Mexico went in a body to conduct the ceremonies, at the church of St. Francis, where all the secular priests of the city as well as the priests of the various religious orders assembled for the same purpose.

The Viceroy and the Audience were for-

bidden by royal decree to convene any public function not designated in the charter, but notwithstanding this prohibition, all the nobility assembled in public state, and great crowds of citizens were obliged to remain outside the church.

Rev. Fr. Joseph Guerrera was chosen to pronounce the eulogy as the one best acquainted with the servant of God. After a long and eloquent discourse, though much more remained to be said, he was on the point of closing his eulogy, when the audience, eager to hear more about the one so much beloved by them, all cried out unanimously : “ Go on, Father, go on, ” and obliged the preacher to relate in detail the entire life of Fr. Antony.

After the services, the remains were deposited near the main altar in a tomb which belonged to Count del Valle, who had built it for himself, but who without being requested, offered it to the fathers, and the remains of our Venerable Father were placed there. On the tomb was placed the following inscription :

“ Here reposes the Venerable servant of God, Father Antony Margil, Missionary, Prefect, and Superior of the Colleges of the

Propagation of Faith, of the Holy Cross of Gueretaro, of the Most Holy Crucifix of Guatemala, and of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Guadalupe, erected in new Spain ; famous for his virtues, and illustrious for his miracles, he died in this celebrated Mexican Convent on the 6th. of August, 1726. ”

PART II

THE VIRTUES, GIFTS AND MIRACLES OF
VENERABLE ANTONY MARGIL

CHAPTER I

HIS HEROIC FAITH.

WHOEVER reads the life of Venerable Antony Margil must observe the profusion of virtues and celestial gifts with which God endowed him ; but these being either obscured or completely hidden in the development of facts, it seems necessary to add, apart from his actions, a special treatise on his virtues, gifts and miracles, and present them as a panorama to the view of the faithful.

We shall first consider the gift of faith, as the one which is preeminent among all other virtues and which is the principle of our actions, the rule of our life and the door to eternal beatitude. We know that from his very childhood, our venerable servant of God regarded the mysteries of our holy religion with the most profound veneration and that the hours, even the days and nights, which he passed, kneeling before the tabernacle which contained his dearly beloved Jesus concealed

under the sacred species, seemed to him but moments. As he advanced in age, his devotion and fervor towards this Sacrament of Sacraments increased. Having by his ordination received the power to offer with his own hands the Divine Victim, who reconciled God to man, he never permitted to pass a day without renewing this august sacrifice, and when obliged to travel among Catholics as well as Infidels and Pagans, lest he should be compelled to abstain from saying Mass, Antony provided himself with a portable altar, which enabled him to celebrate the holy sacrifice in the mountains and elsewhere thus daily satisfying his devout desires.

The servant of God disposed his heart for this sacred duty by long and fervent preparation, never neglecting to purify his soul from the least stain, if possible, by making his confession. With equal recollection he made his thanksgiving after Mass. During the divine sacrifice, profound respect marked his exterior deportment ; an extraordinary composure of person was noticeable, though he frequently shed tears. After the consecration of the host, he was sometimes raised above the ground, his gaze directed heavenward, which so affected those who witnessed it that they

could not refrain from weeping. Antony's greatest pleasure was to proclaim the dogmas of our holy Mother the Church, and he exerted his influence to induce others to follow his example. There was no sermon nor public function which he did not end with a profession of faith, repeated in a loud voice in common with the faithful. He recommended that this practice be observed by the fathers of his colleges in all their missions. In this way the venerable father labored to spread a love and knowledge of the faith. He established the following practice in many places:—Every evening, a number of children, led by an older person, would go in procession to the public squares or around the streets of cities and towns, bearing a cross, and in a loud voice remind the faithful of the principal mysteries of our holy religion, thus keeping them ever present in their minds.

Antony then, appointed preacher and confessor by his superiors, diligently labored both in the pulpit and the confessional, in Valence, Denia and Unda, to instruct the faithful in the maxims of the Gospel, the mysteries and moral doctrines of the Church, as for instance, the ten commandments, the seven deadly sins, the virtues of faith, hope

and charity towards God and man, the commandments of the Church, and the obligation of hearing Mass every Sunday. Turning his mind towards America, the servant of God, unable to endure the thought that the greater part of the people of that vast continent was Infidel and barbarous, ignorant of the existence of God and of His holy law, he resolved to leave Spain and his beloved parents and friends to announce to those barbarians the true faith, determined to suffer anything, even to the giving of his life, if necessary, to attain this noble end.

Having received permission from his superiors, our Venerable Father, in company with other religious, departed for America. Upon his arrival there he found that the inhabitants worshiped the devil under various forms of idols, stones, trunks of trees, straw, clay, fashioned to represent animals, while vice, unrestrained, triumphed everywhere. Cruelty and ferocity characterized the savages, who were engaged in continual wars, slaughtering each other without mercy. They had neither arts nor culture to improve their rude minds; they did not know how to till the soil, and were satisfied to live upon what nature produced without labor.

In this American continent Fr. Antony labored unceasingly for forty-three years, and upon the ruins of barbarism and paganism he founded the kingdom of faith, supplanting the errors of superstition with the truths of our holy religion, and disreputable conduct and cruelty with modesty and meekness. It is not surprising that, strengthened by the grace of God, he succeeded in converting thousands of Infidels to Christianity, when we consider how little he valued his own life, and that he found great happiness in enduring hardships and labors, in seeking an opportunity to shed his blood to confirm the doctrine which he taught. The desire of martyrdom was one of the principal motives which induced Antony to go to America. This holy desire was manifested in every place he visited. Though he never obtained it, he did not cease to implore it from heaven by prayer. Even from the pulpit in Guadalajara, he once exclaimed : “ Oh, happy Guadalajara, who would not abandon your delights to obtain the joy of shedding his blood for the love of Jesus Christ. ”

In having induced thousands to pay homage to God, against whom they had been rebellious in the past, the holy missionary saw but the

beginning of his labors. He knew well that the fruits of his preaching would be of but short duration if the newly converted were not well provided with ministers of God, who would keep them from error, and with churches where they could practice the external worship so necessary to produce religious sentiments in the mind. For both these ends Antony provided by erecting, throughout the whole of North America, churches and missions, beside three colleges for the propagation of the faith, which he founded in Guatemala, Gueretaro and Zacatecas, where young religious were educated, to be sent afterwards to different countries to confirm and defend the Catholic doctrine already established. During his term as superior, Antony's principal care was to send missionaries everywhere. He also encouraged by word and example, members of other religious orders to cooperate in this noble work, and succeeded in influencing them to accede to his request.

When he was among the people already converted to the Catholic faith, Antony never ceased to remind the parents of the strict obligation which bound them in conscience, to instruct and educate their children in Christian doctrine and the practice of piety,

and to supply with their own zeal for the scarcity of priests. The fervent missionary, seeing how few priests there were to do the work among these people, frequently exclaimed with apostolic fervour : “ Oh, if I had power over all the religious of our Holy Father St. Francis, I would have none of them employed in any other office, but would send them two by two to preach the Gospel, to explain Christian doctrine and to hear confessions ! ”

The presence of God was Antony's most constant thought. No business, no change of occupation or country, no hardship could divert his thoughts from this Holy Presence. From the severe vigilance which he kept over himself, the regularity which he observed in all his actions, the diligence with which he scrupulously practiced his religious duties, both in the colleges as student and superior, and among Infidels and barbarians, it was evident that the thought of the presence of God whom he feared to offend, was ever in his mind. Once, when requested by the superior of the college of Guatemala to relate something about his missionary career for the edification of his brethren, Antony said that by the mercy of God, though he had

been in the streets, public squares, and almost every corner of the world, preaching and laboring for the welfare of others, yet he never lost sight of the presence of God . . .

Among many occupations of his missions he would frequently be seen kneeling, with his hands raised to heaven, or meditating, prostrate upon the ground, remaining motionless in this position for some time, or else stretched upon a cross, in the act of kissing and embracing it. When he did not pray mentally he recited other prayers, above all the holy Rosary. If he recited the Divine office in common with the community he observed all the ceremonies of the choir, and if travelling he always said it kneeling, notwithstanding his fatigue and great need of rest.

Antony was especially devoted to the most holy name of Jesus. While in the colleges he was accustomed to remain in the church after Matins, kneeling before a crucifix, his eyes filled with tears. The adorable name of Jesus was continually upon his lips. He exhorted his brethren with these words :“ Dear brethren, let us revere the name of Jesus.” During his journeys, the moment he arrived at the appointed place, he hastened to pay a

visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and remained there for some time. He celebrated the institution of the feast of Corpus Christi with great solemnity. Every year on that day he carried the Blessed Sacrament through the streets, frequently stopping during the procession to give benediction to the people. He also celebrated the feast of the most holy name of Jesus with great solemnity, in order to encourage the faithful to honor and reverence that most adorable Name. For this occasion he composed hymns of praise, which were chanted in the churches by the faithful.

Most tender also was his devotion to the Queen of heaven and earth. In her honor, he fasted every Wednesday and Friday on bread and water, and disposed himself to celebrate her feasts with novenas. In his sermons he exhorted the faithful to honor her with a special veneration, and everytime he spoke of her, his eyes beamed forth the love which inflamed his heart. To increase devotion to her he distributed Rosaries among the faithful, beseeching them to wear them around their necks and to recite them daily. He established the practice in Guatemala, that every second Sunday of the month should be consecrated to the honor and veneration of

the Mother of God in a special manner by a procession, the recitation of the Rosary and a moral lecture. He also introduced the pious custom that persons should salute each other with these words: — “ *Ave, Maria, purissima; sine peccato originali concepta.* — Hail Mary, most pure ; conceived without original sin. ”

Antony manifested his devotion towards the saints whom he venerated as friends of God and most powerful intercessors. On New Year’s day he was accustomed to assign two saints to each of his brethren as his particular patrons during the year.

He revered St. Joseph in a special manner as the chaste spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary and foster father of Jesus Christ, made man for our salvation. In his sermons he ardently commended the virtues of this holy patriarch but especially his purity. He frequently pronounced the name of St. Joseph, venerating him as the protector of Jesus and Mary during their exile in Egypt. He professed also a fervent devotion for his holy Father St. Francis, St. Antony, and St. Peter of Alcantara, manifesting in the veneration he paid them, his heroic faith, for we cannot doubt the assertion that he who believes in God, believes also in His friends.

CHAPTER II

HIS LIVELY HOPE.

IT is obvious that the more clearly the idea of some great possible good exists in the mind, the more ardent is the desire to obtain it. Hence it is not surprising that venerable Antony, who had firm confidence in a future state of blessedness, directed his earnest desires towards it from his early childhood, and in comparison with that blessed state considered most contemptible all the advantages, delights, riches and honors which this deceitful world offers. Having a profound conviction of his nothingness, he deemed himself unworthy of the ineffable happiness of heaven, but encouraged by the remembrance of the infinite mercy of God and that of Crucified Jesus, who came down from heaven to redeem mankind and made them a gratuitous gift of His infinite merits, Antony confidently hoped to attain eternal happiness.

When he arrived at the age of reason, he meditated continually on the eternal rewards

promised to those who faithfully observe the law of God. Hence it was that he avoided the company of his companions and their diversions, so as to punish himself, and rejoiced in being ill-treated by others. At the age of sixteen, realizing the immensity of the promise of Jesus Christ to give a hundredfold in this world and eternal life to those who leave home and parents for His sake, and knowing also that the sufferings and hardships of this world cannot be compared to the eternal glory which will be revealed in the future, he hastened to the cloister to embrace the poverty and mortification of the religious state. In addition to these Antony voluntarily practised many austerities, and imposed upon himself penances and labors not required by the rule of the Seraphic Order. To a heart as generous as his, it was not sufficient to have chosen the surest way to salvation, but he ardently aspired to that perfection which would obtain for him an exalted throne in the kingdom of heaven. Knowing that in that blessed Kingdom, they who had not only attended to the affairs of their own salvation, but had also laboured to direct others in the way of justice would acquire greater glory, Antony undertook long journeys and endured hard-

ships, teaching the Catholic doctrine to the savages in America, exhorting Christians to the practice of virtue, establishing churches and missions, and introducing religious practices among the faithful. At the same time he diligently applied himself to every duty required by the rule of his Order, performing the most arduous labors, and abandoning himself completely into the hands of his heavenly Father, firmly hoping, with His assistance, to accomplish great things. Every action of his life is a proof of his tender confidence in God.

Upon his arrival in America, Antony found superstition and vice of every description, united with the most deplorable blindness, practiced by the crude and savage inhabitants; but far from being discouraged, he displayed in an extraordinary degree, his unlimited confidence in God by continually recommending these miserable people to Him. Faith assured him that he would obtain whatsoever he asked for His honor and glory, and the welfare of these souls. He often said: "I trust, through the mercy of God, that these infidels and barbarians will one day be converted." In the same spirit of confidence he undertook to build churches, houses, convents and col-

leges for the propagation of the faith. Almighty God, to reward him for his confidence, sent Antony extraordinary aids, which enabled him to carry out his designs. He faithfully observed the Evangelical Counsels, by leaving the care of his sustenance wholly to the Lord. He regarded as trivial the privations he suffered during his journeys in the wilderness and in places entirely deserted and without vegetation. His entire possessions consisted, as we have already seen, of a crucifix, a breviary and a staff, to which he added, in his long journeys among Infidels, the Bible and the vestments necessary to celebrate the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Though he frequently asked for alms, it was to aid the poor that he did so, and not for himself and his brethren. He absolutely refused whatever was voluntarily offered him by the generosity of benefactors, saying that they could give it to the guides, if they so desired, but that he and his companions needed nothing. On one occasion, perceiving that the guides had received twenty-five dollars, destined for the use of himself and brethren, during the long journey they were about to undertake, Antony immediately obliged them to return the sum to the donor. To avoid these gifts, our venerable father often

departed from places without giving notice and during the night, saying that he was abundantly provided for by his beloved God, who never abandoned His servants.

He earnestly endeavored to inflame the hearts of others with this holy confidence, in regard both to their temporal and spiritual needs. While, to arouse sinners to repentance, he preached from the pulpit the temporal punishments of Divine Justice, yet when the people, desiring to be reconciled to God, went to him to confess their sins he was all charity and meekness. So thoroughly did he excite them to contrition that several of his penitents testified that they felt they would have been admitted to heaven had they died immediately after leaving the confessional. He assisted the dying in their last moments, quieting the fears of those who were terrified by the enormity of their sins, reminding them that the Lord had promised to receive the repentant and humbled sinner, and that Divine clemency was greater than the iniquities of this world and that no greater injury or insult could be offered to God than to despair of His divine mercy. He employed every means to encourage them to hope for eternal life through the merits of Jesus Christ, often using for

this purpose, his insight to men's hearts and the gift of prophecy which had been conferred upon him. Thus he encouraged and comforted Don Felix Paredes, who greatly feared for his salvation, saying in a prophetic tone: "Son, we shall see each other in heaven." In a similar manner he consoled Don Alexander Reales, who, trembling at the uncertainty of the future life, while conversing with the servant of God, said: "Oh, if I had at the hour of my death, the merits of Fr. Antony Margil." The venerable father, striking his hands on the table said: "Why these sad thoughts? *All, all* will be saved through the merits of Jesus Christ and the mercy of God." There are many other instances of this kind, which it would be too tedious to enumerate. Antony continually encouraged the afflicted and distressed with the hope of eternal salvation. If any one in great trouble or about to begin a serious undertaking, appealed to him, Antony exhorted him to confide in God, promising him a happy issue, and the event always confirmed his word. While superior, he exercised his religious in this holy confidence in God, by commanding them to distribute to the poor whatever was in the convent, saying: "Let us place our trust in God and He will take

care of us. ” In a word, our venerable father never neglected any occasion to encourage among the faithful a virtue so beautiful and at the same time so necessary to attain eternal beatitude, for they who hope in God shall be blessed. His ceaseless efforts to instill this virtue into the hearts of the faithful, and the constant practice of it in his own life, prove how unbounded was his own confidence in God. But as a candle gives its greatest light just before it burns out, so this holy virtue shone more brightly during the last moments of his life. In fact, the calm of his countenance, the imperturbable peace with which he awaited the coming of his Lord, desiring only that the Divine will might be accomplished in him, the filial confidence with which he saluted the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary presented to him, saying : — “ Good bye, my Lady, until to-morrow, ” and finally the firm confidence in his eternal salvation shown a few moments before expiring, in these words: “ Beautiful hour to go to sing vespers in heaven, ” evince a hope bordering on heroism which can only be experienced by one who has reached the highest degree in the practice of perfection.

CHAPTER III

HIS LOVE OF GOD.

THE Apostle St. Paul says that the greatest of all virtues is charity, without which all other virtues are nothing. Charity is the most noble virtue since it directly regards God Himself and the soul loves Him as the greatest and only good. Charity unites man to God, and renders him like unto his Lord. It is the virtue which is most prominent in the saints, and since all law is founded on the command to love, he observes it perfectly who loves sincerely. Now this divine fire so inflamed the heart of Venerable Fr. Antony Margil that it was manifested in his every word and action. He spoke of God in a familiar manner as "Our beloved." He showed his love for God by pious ejaculations and daily quoting passages of holy Scripture into which the inspired authors had infused the divine fire of their souls. His mind being always occupied with holy thoughts, he was cold and reserved in discoursing on useless things or

such as would not promote the honor and glory of God, evincing so little attention by his half intelligible answers that it became necessary to discontinue the subject. If however the conversation was about God or anything respecting his holy service, Antony was full of life and energy, speaking with such eloquence, amiability and sweetness that all who heard him were inflamed with an ardent love of God. On such occasions his countenance brightened, his eyes sparkled, he shed copious tears, and was often so overpowered by the excess of his love that he seemed oblivious of everything else. As Antony's sole happiness consisted in increasing the glory of God, nothing grieved him so deeply as the offences committed against Him. So intense was his horror of sin that he often said, if he was obliged to choose between a single mortal sin on one side and hell on the other, he would not hesitate to cast himself into hell to suffer for all eternity in that fathomless abyss of misery rather than commit a single mortal sin and thus become an enemy of his beloved God. Consequently Antony never neglected an opportunity of combating sin. To this end he directed all his works ; his principal object in asking alms from the wealthy being to

prevent persons from offending God, to legitimize illicit unions, by the sacred bonds of matrimony, to abundantly provide for the poor, lest their privations should induce them to commit crime. But since it is impossible to banish sin from this corrupt world, Antony endeavored to produce such sentiments of contrition in those who had sinned that at least they might daily offer to God some satisfaction by tears of sincere repentance. He therefore exhorted them in their homes, in the confessional and in public: after his sermons he often scourged himself with an iron chain most cruelly, in order the more effectually to move the sinner to repentance.

Antony entertained the most tender compassion for the name of Jesus crucified for the salvation of mankind, and every night to revive in himself the memory of His bitter passion and death, he made the Way of the Cross, with a heavy cross upon his shoulders. Not satisfied with exciting within himself these emotions he exhorted all to cultivate a true devotion for the passion of the Redeemer. Hence he introduced in all his colleges, the pious custom of making the Way of the Cross every Friday evening. At every station our venerable father gave a discourse, so

impressive that those present were moved to tears. Through his influence Calvaries were erected to increase this devotion and crosses were placed on the mountain, in the public streets, and especially at the entrance to cities and towns. In order that this pious exercise might be more beneficial, he composed for each station pious meditations on the sufferings of Jesus, and had a large number of copies made, which he distributed among the faithful.

Whenever, during his frequent journeys, he saw the stations of the Cross, he always knelt down to pray at them, singing some devout verses which he had composed, and in this manner succeeded in establishing the practice of this devotion among the faithful to such an extent, that when journeying, they never failed to dismount to venerate the cross and recite some prayers.

Jesus crucified formed the subject of Antony's sermons and he always inserted even in his panegyrics, reflections on the sufferings of the Redeemer, saying with the Apostle: "We preach Jesus crucified."—Whenever he spoke on this subject, he held a crucifix in his hand, and frequently pressed it to his breast. Most singular, however, was the emotion he

excited in Mexico on a Good Friday by speaking of the journey our holy Redeemer made to Mount Calvary. Not only in his expressions and tears could the faithful read his deep grief, but by carrying a heavy cross, wearing a crown of thorns, and shedding a profusion of blood, he gave a living representation of the painful subject of which he treated. No less vivid was the impression which he produced upon the faithful of Aduas on a similar occasion, by exclaiming, "Our Father died!" Having thrice repeated the same words he began to weep bitterly, and only with great difficulty could continue his sermon.

Antony took great delight in meditating before the most holy Sacrament of the altar, where he remained motionless in ecstasy for two and three hours. He would have passed all his time in this holy exercise, had not the duties of his office as superior demanded his attention. Though compelled to leave the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in person, in spirit he remained continually there. Every time he heard the bells calling the faithful to assist at religious functions, or ringing at the time of the consecration of the Host, he knelt down to adore the Eucharistic Sacrament.

He longed for a thousand tongues that he might praise God incessantly, but since that was impossible, he satisfied his desire by causing this Sacrament of love to be praised by others, teaching the people sacred hymns in Its honor, which were heard repeated publicly in the work-shops at noon and sunset, and particularly when the Viaticum was carried to the sick. To inculcate a proper regard for the accuracy and decorum required by the ritual, Antony imposed upon his religious the obligation of holding a conference once a week on the ceremonies of the holy sacrifice of the Mass. He also required that everything in the church should be kept neat, clean and in a condition worthy of the divine majesty of God. He exhorted the faithful to ornament the altar as much as they could ; he was very solicitous that the vestry should be well provided with sacred articles necessary for divine service, and that these should be kept with the greatest care. He required that the purest olive oil should be used in the sanctuary lamp, that plenty of lights should burn when the Blessed Sacrament was exposed to public view and devotion, and that no other candles should be used for the celebration of the holy sacrifice of the Mass,

except those made from the purest bees wax, though they were very expensive. He was frequently seen sweeping the church and dusting the altars, and when at home, used to make the altar breads himself.

A soul so enamored of God could not fail to be often completely absorbed in His sweetness, and enveloped in the rapture so common to the saints. These ecstasies were habitual to Antony. Frequently his soul, ravished by holy charity, was borne so strongly on the wings of his love towards his heavenly spouse, that the vehemence of his desires raised his body into the air. Rev. Fr. Simon De Kierro, who was Antony's faithful companion for many years, attested to having seen the servant of God wrapped in ecstasy many times while engaged in prayer. In Adaes, Mary Trejo observed his body raised above the ground while he was praying, and in the same place, John De Armiso saw him elevated several feet in the air while celebrating Mass. In Mexico, our venerable father, having gone to the monastery of St. Clare to hear the confession of a nun, was observed by her to rise from the floor while exhorting her to do the will of God. — Rose de Rivera testified that on many occasions, the servant of God,

admiring the flowers in her garden, and perceiving in their beauty, that of their Creator, had exclaimed : — “ Wonderful, wonderful ! ” and while he pronounced these words his body was raised several feet from the ground.

Another remarkable incident occurred in the convent of St. Francis in Mexico. — Brother Martin Garcia, whose duty it was to awaken the fathers for matins, hearing the wind blowing violently near the belfry, went there to ascertain the reason, and to his astonishment saw Fr. Antony, who had gone to the choir some time before the hour, raised in the air with his arms outspread, flying around with a miraculous swiftness.

In Guatemala, Rev. Fr. Joseph saw him resplendent with celestial radiance. — John Surraine Birriesa of Jesus certified that having gone to church during the night, he saw Antony raised so high from the floor that the bottom of the holy man’s habit touched his head, and on another occasion, while serving his Mass, he noticed, after the consecration, that the altar was moving, and raising his eyes towards the celebrant beheld him elevated over two feet from the ground. This spectacle so amazed him, that the

servant of God having come out of his ecstasy, had to strike the altar to attract John's attention to continue his office.

What has been said concerning our venerable father is sufficient evidence of his intense love for God, the fire of which so consumed him that his soul ascended to the contemplation of the divine mysteries.

CHAPTER IV

HIS WONDERFUL CHARITY TOWARDS HIS NEIGHBOR.

IT is the property of love to extend itself over whatsoever belongs to the one beloved and to anticipate with tender affection every desire of the beloved. Hence it is that a fervent love for God is always united with an ardent love for our neighbor, which is manifested by endeavors to assist him in every possible manner.

This solicitude appeared in every action of the venerable servant of God. He was the comforter of the afflicted and the consoler of the despairing. All who visited him found him willing to receive them at all times, notwithstanding the many occupations which kept him constantly employed. He satisfied some by kind words and advice, others by visiting them, and all obtained from him the desired comfort. He was especially attentive to the sick, voluntarily visiting them in the hospitals and private houses, encouraging them to be patient and reconciled to the holy

will of God, and he pleaded fervently with the wealthy that they provide the poor with every necessity and proper treatment.

His assistance was often asked while he was immersed in the delights of spiritual contemplation, or giving his body a brief rest or some scanty nourishment, and he immediately left all to go where he was needed, regardless of weather, rough roads or any other difficulty, saying: — “ The works of charity must be preferred to everything else. ” How well he observed this precept is shown by the following incidents. On one occasion Antony was seen to cross a large river on foot to comfort a person in need of spiritual aid. Another time, being told that a religious of his college, who had gone in quest of alms, was dangerously ill in a place seventy-five miles distant from Guatemala, he started at once to visit him, covering the distance in one day, leaving his companion behind completely exhausted. The servant of God administered to the religious the rights of the Church, and assisted him in his last moments, and the following morning celebrated a Requiem Mass and returned to his college.

For Fr. Antony Margil there was no dif-

ference between the rich and poor, noble and plebeian, Indian and European, black and white. Poverty, either spiritual or temporal, in his neighbors, far from being repellant to him, was a most powerful incentive to increase his love for them. He exhorted his priests that when they were asked for, not to inquire the name or quality of the person, but to see in the visitor and the person, Jesus Christ and the opportunity for the sanctification of souls. He also admonished them to be kind to great sinners and to those who for a long time had absented themselves from the sacraments of the Church, or who did not come well prepared or well disposed. "For," he said, "harshness only tends to increase their obduracy and aversion for the sacraments, and on the other hand, kindness will conquer the most obstinate heart."

One of his favorite customs in visiting monasteries was to encourage the religious to aspire to perfection, and in visiting prisons to console the convicts and instruct them in Christian doctrine. To induce these latter to listen to him, he would intercede for them before the public authority, and obtain, if possible their pardon, or at least shorten the term of their imprisonment.

Family disagreements deeply grieved Antony's compassionate heart, and he earnestly endeavored by the influence of his gentle manners and kindness to restore peace and love. Through his interposition children were often reconciled with their parents and husbands with their wives.

A woman who had separated from her husband through her own fault, being in affliction, desired a reconciliation, and accordingly determined to have recourse to Fr. Antony, knowing his great charity as well as his power as a mediator. But being afraid, or rather ashamed, to expose her misfortunes to him, she went to another priest named Don Ignatius Corranza. While she was speaking to him the servant of God suddenly appeared, and without having heard anything, said to the priest: "You look after her and I will look after her husband." And in fact, with his usual kindness, Antony persuaded the husband to receive her, and from that day forth, they dwelt together in peace. He never wearied of laboring for the spiritual welfare of his neighbor for whom he would have, as he said many times, come down from heaven to work and suffer again, if it were possible.

Antony's charity extended to the suffering

souls, for whom he endeavored to gain as many indulgences as he could, and he exhorted others to follow the same practice. He was accustomed to offer one day of his missions as suffrage for them, by reciting the office of the dead, and celebrating a solemn requiem mass. In his colleges, he established the custom of celebrating a great number of masses for the dead and an anniversary mass, and for this he went around begging to secure the means. Another practice which he inculcated was to assign to his brethren on New Year's day, in addition to their patron saints, a soul in Purgatory for whose relief they were obliged to apply their good works and works of piety.

A soldier having died while Antony was among the Lacandoni, the saintly Father retired to his oratory, and after praying for the man, assumed the responsibility of paying the debt which the soul of that soldier brought before the tribunal of God's justice, by scourging himself so fearfully, that his companion and the other soldiers, though accustomed to such occurrences, hastened to the place where the noise came from. They did not dare to enter, but were amazed at hearing the servant of God speaking, as it were, with another per-

son, and giving and receiving answers. The noise of the scourging prevented them from distinguishing the words, and they could only hear the last sentence: — “ May God the Almighty be blessed forever. ” They soon understood the meaning of it all when they were assured by the venerable father that the the man’s soul was delivered from Purgatory.

Fr. Antony was very solicitous that his subjects should have everything necessary for their state of life, and gently requested them to have recourse to him in every necessity ; but he ordered strictly that they should have a special care for the poor. While he was superior in Gueretaro he had a porter whose sentiments regarding the poor were like his own. Provisions destined for the poor were brought to the convent in such abundance that the faithful used to say that God, Fr. Margil and the porter emulated each other in relieving the poor.

Some religious, fearing that the community would suffer by his generosity, complained, and the vicar of the convent remonstrated with him. Without replying, Antony simply called the porter, and in presence of all the religious, said: “ Dear brother, give abundantly to the poor, for by doing so we shall merit

that Almighty God take care of us. ” Whenever he left the convent, he had the sleeves of his habit well filled with fruits, cakes, chocolates and candies, which he distributed among the children, who usually ran after him. In his journeys he often gave all his provisions to the poor, so that he and his companions were obliged to fast sometimes whole days. He never neglected an occasion of exercising his charity towards the soldiers who accompanied him. In case of sickness among them he was most considerate, rendering all the assistance he could by compounding medicines for their relief and applying them according to the needs of the sufferers. He exhorted all to the exercise of works of charity, requesting them to consider the great advantage derived from this practice, adding: — “ We must serve our neighbor more than ourselves, for by so doing we make Almighty God our debtor, and He will aid us in our necessities. ”

CHAPTER V

HIS CONSUMMATE PRUDENCE.

WE have observed how far Venerable Fr. Antony practiced the virtues which directly regard God, and which are called theological virtues. It now remains to show how he excelled also in the moral virtues, which have for their immediate object the probity of human actions and their conformity to the divine law.

Among the moral virtues prudence ranks first, and serves as a rule for the others. We can convince ourselves of the eminent degree in which this virtue appeared in Antony, by examining his conduct towards himself and others. He gave evidence of this prudence in his early childhood, by removing every obstacle opposed to Divine grace, by avoiding useless diversions, applying himself diligently to study, and by occupying himself wholly with God.

Though regularity and purity characterized his whole life, he saw in life many dangers

liable to entice the spirit, many cares apt to divert him from his purpose, many snares which at any moment might cause him to fall. He knew that observance of the precepts of God, though apparently quite easy, is in reality, very difficult, and that he who performs only what is of obligation will find it very hard to secure his eternal salvation. In order, therefore, the more surely to sanctify his soul, Antony bade farewell to the world at the age of sixteen, and embraced the religious life in the Order of Saint Francis, to the end that by the practice of the evangelical counsels he might follow closely in the footsteps of his Lord. Having entered upon this career, he devoted himself assiduously to the exercise of holy obedience, knowing that victory has been promised to those who cultivate this virtue. He desired to always submit to others. Sometimes when far away from his convent, and not having any one to command him, he endeavored to find someone to act as his superior, as we shall perceive in treating of his heroic obedience. To the practice of this virtue he gave great consideration and regulated every action with such prudence, that inconstancy was wholly foreign to him.

Realizing that the time was quickly passing, in which he could promote the glory of God, Antony employed every moment in the accomplishment of some good. When he was obliged to converse he directed the conversation to pious topics for the edification and spiritual advancement of others. If he had any leisure time from his ordinary occupations, he devoted it to the reading of the Sacred Scriptures or the works of the Fathers of the Church, in order to enrich his mind with divine truths. He endeavored to save time on every occasion, even during his meals, that he might give himself to some good work. He deprived himself of rest to perform acts of charity, to answer letters received from the faithful, and to the business of the colleges, so that for their fulfilment he would not be obliged to take the time allowed to other important duties.

An illustration of this is cited in the process for his beatification by Rev. F. Blasius Guillen: — During their sojourn among the Lacandoni, one stormy night, Fr. Guillen, being in the room with Fr. Antony, observed that the servant of God, instead of taking his repose, was mending his habit which was torn and in a very bad condition. Finding this

very singular, considering the darkness, he remarked to Antony that he could do it more neatly the next day. But the venerable father replied that such work would not be recognized by the bishop, and continued his mending with great diligence. Fr. Blasius, hearing him moving the habit and cutting pieces of cloth, began to smile, saying to himself: "that habit will look funny to-morrow, after being repaired in the dark." But the next morning he noticed that the habit was so well mended that the most skilful tailor could not have done it better. This caused him to change his opinion regarding the work done by Fr. Antony.

His prudence was duly appreciated by his brethren, who entrusted to him the most delicate matters. He was appointed by the Commissary General to preside over the Provincial Chapter in Saint Luis Potosi in order to restore peace and harmony among the religious. For the establishment of every new foundation, no matter how far away he was at the time, Antony was called upon to superintend the work, because of his prudence in transacting business and dealing with men.

When he was not engaged in the missions,

the religious availed themselves of the opportunity to appoint him superior. For this same purpose, they frequently compelled him to leave his missions, though very distant: all of which can be attributed to no other reason than their knowledge of his consummate prudence, as his exactitude in keeping religious discipline was known to all. It is true that by his agreeable manners, charity and kindness, Antony encouraged his subjects in the strict observance of the rule and accomplished more by example than by command. Though most kindly, a single word or a glance from him was sufficient to stop any infraction of the rule. To show how great was his firmness in requiring the scrupulous observance of every religious practice and at the same time his kindness in giving reproofs, we shall relate a few facts attested by eye witnesses.

In the college of Zacatecas, the time of meditation was determined by a water clock, invented by a member of the community. One of the religious to whom the time of mental prayer seemed too long, fixed the clock in such a way that the time of prayer was shortened. The servant of God, having discovered the artifice, called the religious and said: "Brother, please take that clock away,

for the devil is there." From that day forth there was no more shortening of time.

A lay-brother once returned to the college very tired, and instead of retiring to his cell, went to the infirmary to rest upon a mattress bed that was used only for the sick. The venerable father allowed him to rest for a little time, and then wishing to reprimand him for his weakness, said: "Enough, Brother, of this delight: get up, and go to your cell."

Another religious, who, while walking in the convent garden, was eating fruit without permission, was seen by Antony, who thus addressed him: "Please, Rev. Father, stop eating the fruit, because it might injure you."

The infirmarian, either through negligence or forgetfulness, failed to give the medicine at the proper time to a young religious who had an attack of fever. Fr. Antony being aware of this said to him: "Brother, take care of that young religious, for should he die so young, who would afterwards perform the duties of the old ones?"

Thus by strict discipline he obtained whatever he desired, and at the same time by kindness and charity he gained the affection of his religious. Hence he was rather beloved as a father, than feared as a superior. Joy and

satisfaction was depicted on every countenance, and many who during other administrations had left the college to enter some other convent where less strict discipline prevailed, returned willingly under Fr. Antony on account of his paternal administration. There was no day so joyful in the convent as that on which he entered upon his duties as superior, no time of greater sadness than when he finished his term. It was a common saying among the fathers that his conduct as a superior might serve as a perfect model for any other superior. He displayed equal prudence in every other employment and circumstance. While he was laboring for the conversion of the idolators, Antony used every possible means to give them a thorough knowledge of the Catholic doctrine, and to have them baptized, not from any natural motive, but from the conviction of the truth and holiness of the Catholic religion. He never resorted to violence on such occasions, and severely reprimanded a missionary father who had by force taken some Indians from the mountains to catechise them. In order to avoid the least shadow of compulsion he never allowed soldiers to accompany him when he went to instruct the savages.

Moreover, our venerable father knew so well how to exhort and reprimand according to the circumstances and condition of every one, that he dismissed them satisfied and consoled. His advice was always sound and prudent. He was consulted by persons in every state of life, in every place and on most important affairs. His tact for extirpating hatred and appeasing dissensions, either domestic or public, was truly wonderful. Governors, viceroys and bishops often had recourse to him in urgent affairs, and always with marked success.

In the various places he visited Antony restored peace in families, or put an end to popular insurrections, as for instance in Escuintle, Verapace, Zacatecas, Guatemala and Guadalajara. In a word, if he was most prudent in governing himself and choosing the means best adapted to enable him to serve God and sanctify his soul, he was no less so in directing others in their temporal as well as spiritual affairs.

CHAPTER VI

VENERABLE ANTONY'S EXACTITUDE IN REQUIRING JUSTICE.

JUSTICE, taking the strict meaning of the word, consists in the perfect accomplishment of duties towards God and one's neighbor; hence, he alone can be called truly just, who gives exactly to each that which belongs to him. But as love and veneration are esteemed the principal duties towards God, it is proper to treat especially of the Venerable Fr. Antony's charity towards God and the worship he rendered Him. Having already spoken of these virtues in the previous chapters, we shall consider here only his obedience to the divine law and fidelity in keeping his solemn promises made at the foot of the altar at the time of his profession. It would not be convenient or possible in the present work to enumerate separately the divine and ecclesiastical precepts in order to show that this servant of God was an exact observer of each of them. The easier and better way of doing

this is by giving the evidence of his father confessors, who had many opportunities of looking into the interior of his conscience, especially during his general confessions, which he used to repeat every time he was obliged to change his director. Seven of them deposed positively, in the process for his beatification and canonization, that they never found him guilty of any sin, that in his accusation there was not sufficient matter for absolution, and that they felt convinced that he had always preserved his baptismal innocence. Some among whom was Fr. Francis De Astavia, even went so far as to attest emphatically that Fr. Antony was without serious sin, an angel in human form, adding that his confessions only excited admiration and afforded new motives of giving thanks to Almighty God for the grace of beholding a conscience so pure and a soul so privileged.

To render the innocence of his servant more manifest, Our Lord was pleased to disclose other credited testimony in the person of our venerable father himself. A religious of the Order of Poor Clares in the city of Mexico, for some time had Fr. Antony as her confessor. One day when approaching the confessional she asked herself whether the servant

of God had always been just, or was a sinner who had been converted. With this thought she presented herself to him to make her confession. Knowing by divine inspiration the doubt of the religious, the holy father at once told her that the grace of God had from his childhood watched over him continually, and preserved him from every sin.

We must not fail to add that public opinion was so firmly convinced of the purity of Antony's life, that several witnesses certified in the process for his beatification that he had never given the least occasion to doubt his innocence. We shall not dwell longer on this subject, for the testimony of seven confessors and his own confession are more than sufficient to corroborate the claim of his absolute innocence.

Antony was no less exact in keeping the promises made to God at the time of his solemn profession. He was so enamored of holy poverty, that he always designated it by the title of "My Lady". — He was never known to keep for himself even any articles which are allowed to religious. Two or three boards, which served as a bed, a wooden pillow, a crucifix, which was the object of his love and his faithful adviser in time of doubt, constituted the furniture of his cell. If a stool was

added to these, it was only that it might be used in hearing the confessions of those who had recourse to him during the night. He never had more than one habit, though sometimes it was drenched with the rain, or wet with perspiration, nor other undergarments save a pair of trousers of coarse canvass. In order to have the same habit a long time he used to mend it with such care that he wore one for fourteen years, though he traveled hundreds of miles. It was distinguished from those worn by the other fathers by its poor appearance and age. When he returned from Talamanca the fathers observed that, having no cloth, he had patched his habit with the bark of a certain tree called Mastastes, which though quite hard is thin and served very well for the purpose. When his habit was absolutely worn out, he would never accept a new one, but always chose one which had been rejected by others as too much worn. Thus it happened that at the time of his death, it was necessary to search for a habit in which to clothe him, because the one he had was worthless.

From the foregoing we can easily judge of Antony's detachment from other earthly goods, especially money. While Fr. Antony

was at the mission in Nachodoches, a lay-brother, having found some gold while tilling a piece of ground, hastened to show it to the servant of God, expecting to please him, but the latter with a severe glance, ordered him to go away, at the same time reminding him that he had come with the missionaries not in search of gold, but of souls.

In one of his journeys to Talamanca, Antony noticing some small shining pieces in a ditch, had the curiosity to examine them. The moment he found them to be pieces of gold he threw them away with disdain. He regarded money with such contempt that when it was offered to him by kind benefactors he would send them with it to the syndic or procurator of the convent. It follows naturally, that he was ignorant of its value. This he proved one day while in the house of the procurator by making a sign to a workman who had come for his wages of twenty-five cents to take from the table a piece of silver which was worth three times that amount. This ignorance of the value of money was remarked wherever Antony was known, so that when any one desired to change money of great value they jestingly said: — “Go to Fr. Antony to change it.”

He observed the same care in receiving presents, no matter for what purpose they were offered, lest they should be contrary to holy poverty. The Archdeacon of the cathedral in Guadalajara offered him a piece of land valued at \$10,000, to build upon it a new college and convent of his order, but he absolutely refused to accept it, thereby giving a proof of his perfect detachment from all worldly goods.

Our venerable father was equally observant of the vow of chastity. Fr. Simon De-Hierro asserts that in hearing his confession he had never found even a scruple in this particular. Fr. Joseph Lopez Prieto attests that he always observed an angelic purity in the servant of God, and another confessor, Fr. John Gonzalez, speaking of his chastity, says that he was specially privileged in this respect. His eyes were always cast down, even in conversing familiarly with men. Many witnesses testified to having employed every means to obtain a glance at his eyes, but they never succeeded, except at such times as he was engaged in prayer, when his fervor induced him to raise his eyes towards heaven.

The severe vigilance over his senses, the admirable composure of all his actions instilled a love of purity in those who saw him while

his very presence was sufficient to stop conversation opposed to this holy virtue. Sinners plunged in the contrary vice, exposed their miseries to him and returned thoroughly purified from their former state, as innumerable facts of the kind cited in the process for his beatification prove.

A woman of most notorious character in Guatemala, having gone to confession to our venerable father, was so completely changed that she made a firm resolution from that moment to free herself from corrupt associates, and lead a regular and Christian life, and to repair her scandals as much as possible by performing public penances. She gave up everything, reducing herself to extreme poverty, in which state she persevered until her death. Innumerable were the insults and marks of contempt this woman received from strangers as well as from her own children; but she attained such perfection that she desired to be despised by every one, and often pressing to her heart a little crucifix given her by the servant of God, said: — “This is what I desire; this is the comfort allowed me by Fr. Antony.”

A soldier living in one of the forts situated in Texas was overcome by the passion of lust,

and despite his earnest efforts he could not free himself from this baneful vice, though he had resorted to prayer, mortification, and frequent reception of the sacraments. At length, despairing of curing himself of this evil propensity, he neglected every religious exercise and abandoned himself to a most licentious life. One day, hearing Antony preach, he desired to have recourse to him in order to make his confession, but did not dare to expose his immoral conduct to a man so holy and pure. The venerable father, inspired by Almighty God, assisted the soldier in his anxiety, called him by name, and encouraged him to put into execution the good inspirations which had arisen in his heart, adding with great kindness: "Why, my brother, have you neglected your confession for the last ten years? Make haste, have courage, free yourself from the load which so much troubles you."—Thus encouraged, the soldier made an humble and sincere confession and though he lived forty years longer, he was so pure in mind and heart that at the hour of his death he declared to Fr. John Perez that since he had made his confession to our venerable father he had never committed a sin against purity.

Besides these outward signs of Antony's angelic chastity, there were others which are related in the acts for his beatification such as are depicted in the lives of the saints, whose purity was manifested by our Lord before all men. Those who knew him attested that his countenance portrayed his virginal purity, and shone with such radiance that every time he assisted at some public function with the community he appeared resplendent as a burning light. His person exhaled an odor which did not pertain to earth. It was remarked that in the hot climate of the diocese of Nicaragua, though he was often saturated with perspiration, and never changed his habit, his presence instead of emitting an unpleasant odor, diffused the fragrance of paradise. He admitted that in the confessional, when the penitents entered he could distinguish those who had been chaste from those who had been impure, and he was endowed with the rare gift of banishing, in some circumstances, all impure thoughts and desires from the hearts of those who approached him. Antony's obedience deserves special mention and to it we shall now direct our thoughts. Clear and sufficient evidence of this virtue has already been given in his life,

in the long and painful journeys made by the apostolic man from Talamanca and Lacandoni to Gueretaro, from Costa Rica and Adaes to Zacatecas. He showed his willingness to execute the orders of his superiors, who called him from those distant countries, by at once leaving the work among the Infidels and barbarians, who formed the principal objects of his care and zeal.

Fr. Massir, the author of the life of St. Francis Xavier, ends the narration of that Saint's heroic achievements by relating that a short time after his death, St. Ignatius wrote him a letter recalling him to Rome, and he adds: " We did not deserve to see St. Francis, that marvel of obedience, for we do not doubt that if the letter had arrived before his death, he would have hastened at once to the feet of the holy founder." That same marvel, however, which God did not wish to show us in that great saint, we have witnessed many times in Fr. Antony, who did not hesitate for a moment to abandon his enterprises and every hope of success and travel hundreds of miles through the roughest and most dangerous country, wholly unprovided, to obey the order of his superiors.

The continual occupations and labors of our

venerable father afforded him very little opportunity of being subject to superiors. During the time he remained in the colleges and convents he was generally superior, and on his journeys he had no legitimate superior to obey, yet so great was his love for this holy virtue that he always found some one to submit to, while away, and in the colleges he gave admirable proof of his obedience every time occasion presented itself.

When journeying Antony insisted on being subject to his companion, who, however, strenuously opposed this design, and thus disputes, worthy of saints, often arose, each trying to be excused from presiding with the same earnestness with which others, often without merit, seek to be superiors. To settle the matter without further dispute, they agreed to preside one each day, and thus neither of them was deprived of the merits of holy obedience.

Antony never undertook anything without having first asked permission from the bishop of the diocese, to whom he was accustomed to present himself, humbly offering his work. If it was accepted, he entered some town or city. If there was a convent or college in the place, he went to submit himself to the su-

periors. But if there was no convent he addressed himself to the parish priest to whom he showed his letters and faculties, placing himself at his disposal for the use he should make of them, desiring to depend on his commands, and not presuming to leave the parish residence without having obtained his permission.

On one occasion he stopped for some time in the city of Leon, where there was a convent of his order over which Rev. Fr. Melendez presided as vicar. Antony obeyed Fr. Melendez implicitly in everything, notwithstanding the objections of that religious, and during his stay gave continual proofs of his reverence.

During the few months he remained subject in Zacatecas, his term as superior having expired, he was a perfect model of obedience and submission though his qualifications entitled him to the highest position.

So too while he was superior in different colleges, he never neglected at the first sound of the bell to hasten to perform the common exercises of the community, though sometimes tired or occupied, and frequently after having delivered a long sermon.

Two facts, however, are worthy of special

notice as they are only peculiar to truly heroic obedience. Towards the close of his administration in Zacatecas, and while he had in view the conversion of the inhabitants of Texas, a respectable person of great influence obtained, from the Commissary General of the missions for the Indians, permission for Fr. Antony to preach the Gospel wherever he wished, and to choose for his companions whomsoever he thought fit, without depending on anyone else. A permission of this kind would have caused others to rejoice, but the servant of God, on the contrary, displeased, wrote thus to Fr. Antony Andrada: — “I do not know who has presumed to take the liberty of obtaining a permission from our Rev. Commissary General of the Indies, enabling me, at the expiration of my term as superior, to choose what is most convenient to me according to my will. I am determined to do the contrary, and as soon as my term is ended, I shall place the permission in the hands of our Commissary General in order that he may command me as he desires, because I, through the mercy of God, have always lived under obedience, have never undertaken any enterprise, not even a step, without permission”. He acted accordingly, and did not

start for the missions in Texas without having received the order from the superior.

The other incident, perhaps far more remarkable than the preceding, occurred in Guatemala. The superior of the college founded by our venerable father was one day preaching in the church, which was too small to accommodate the great number of the faithful there assembled. An order was given that another missionary father should preach at the same time in front of the church, and Antony was chosen for this purpose. As soon as the faithful knew that Fr. Margil was preaching outside, all left the church to go to hear him. The superior finding himself deserted, immediately sent an order to Fr. Antony to stop preaching, and come into the church to assist at the mission. The servant of God entered the church accompanied by the people, and sat down in the sanctuary, remaining there until the sermon was finished. This example of obedience edified all and at the same time gave evidence of Antony's profound humility.

But the servant of God by fulfilling his solemn promises with such perfection proved his fidelity to what he had vowed to God. No less regardful was he that no one should be

defrauded of what belonged to him. When he ordered something to be done for the church, convent or college, he always insisted that the syndic (administrator, who is always a secular man,) should pay at once. He was impartial towards his subjects, and was never influenced by human respect to give any office to those who were incapable or unworthy. He was very careful that no abuses should be introduced into the community, and to this effect reprimanded those in fault, but with great kindness and charity. He was always sincere and truthful, detesting the least shadow of deception and flattery. He was very grateful to his benefactors, and, if he could not compensate them in deed, he never neglected to express his thanks with great affection and to pray for them. He regarded his secular as well as his religious superiors as ministers of God invested with His power, and placed on earth to represent Him and preside over others, and accordingly rendered them the homage due to their rank. In meeting a bishop or parish priest, he always knelt before them, kissed their hands, and asked their blessing.

In order that justice should be loved and respected by all, Antony continually ex-

horted the faithful to render to each one his due. When some one had stolen another's goods or slandered his neighbor, he severely insisted on restitution. He reproached those who in daily conversations censure others without scruple. He publicly admonished the judges to render strict justice in punishment for crimes, without distinction of persons, and reproached them for their omissions, reminding them that they made themselves accomplices in all the disorders since, having the power in their hands, and the remedy for the evils, they neglected to use them.

In a word our venerable father exercised all the offices incumbent upon him in the various qualities of subject, superior and missionary, with the greatest diligence, care and justice towards all.

CHAPTER VII

HIS ESTIMABLE FORTITUDE.

WHILE the servant of God was most careful to mete out strict justice to others, with equal diligence he cultivated in himself those virtues which concerned the conduct and regulation of his actions. One of the defects which restrain men from undertaking great works is pusillanimity, which creates a sensation of fear, and causes them, should disappointment follow their efforts, to give up disheartened.

No less defective is the opposite excess, that inconsiderate daring which urges them to undertake very arduous and imprudent enterprises. Our venerable father observed a medium between these two extremes. Thus while he courageously undertook to perform noble deeds, remaining firm amid the greatest difficulties, he at the same time avoided every excess, and regulated his actions with such care according to the circumstances of time, place and persons, that no one ever evinced

the least sentiment of discontent for what he did. It was indeed a generosity akin to heroism which induced him to begin his apostolic career, and persevere therein for forty-three years without being disheartened.

The cruelty of the Indians and the Infidels, the immense distance of the countries, the heat of the deserts, the cold of the mountains, the roughness of the roads, the lack of proper nourishment, privations of every kind, the ever present danger of death, the ignorance of the people, and the difficulty of the language were all powerless to subdue his firm and determined will. With admirable constancy he surmounted all obstacles, and carried the light of faith to many people blinded by error, despite their prejudices, mode of living and strong adherence to their customs.

His great and difficult achievements were spread over an immense tract of country, and their accomplishment resulted in an entire alteration of the customs and manners of the people. Fr. Antony acted with so much discernment that he excited the esteem and admiration of bishops, priests and religious as well as the faithful, who regarded him as an affectionate friend and loving father.

In considering any of his actions we always find the same virtues reflected as the preceding relations of his various journeys have evinced. In travelling he frequently encountered distinguished personages who offered him their carriages or horses, but he always courteously declined, disdaining to allow his body the least comfort. To increase the difficulties of his journeys he walked bare-foot, carrying sandals with him to be used only at the altar during the sacrifice of the Mass, as a sign of reverence. This practice he scrupulously observed during his entire life. In Talamanca one of his feet was so severely wounded that it caused him the most excruciating pain. He covered it with a piece of the bark of a tree, but left the other one bare. The stumps and stones, which often tore the sandals of those who accompanied him, must have been exceedingly painful to his feet, still he never put on the sandals, but plucked out the thorns which were driven into his feet, and sewed the cuts and openings with a needle.

During his journey to Talapa, Antony's feet were in a distressing condition, and being obliged several times to cross a river, called from its windings Rio de las Bereltas, the

continual wetting opened the wounds in his feet ; yet he continued his journey over fifty miles of rough roads, his pain and fatigue increasing at every step, until he arrived at his destination.

In the diocese of Nicaragua, while searching for idols hidden in the cemetery, one of Antony's feet was badly injured, and the wound not being cared for, soon became ulcerated. Instead of washing and covering the foot, the expedient he used to cure it was to insert a little stone in the wound and bind the foot tightly with a rough piece of leather ; and he thus continued his researches until it pleased God to heal the wound. All this is told in the history of his labors and journeys.

A parish priest by the name of Fr. Emmanuel Ramos, certifies that in these journeys the fatigue, hunger and privations were so great that considering the places through which Antony passed, only the omnipotent hand of God could, in his estimation, have sustained him, yet he never neglected preaching.

Brother Emmanuel Gonzalez, who for some time was the companion of our venerable father, asserts that he could not endure the fatigue of the journey, while the apostolic man, who, in addition, heard confessions,

sometimes preached until midnight, often passed a long time in the church fasting, walked all day, seeking Infidels, without asking for anything to eat or drink, and was never tired. No fatigue could restrain him from laboring assiduously for the honor and glory of God.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SERVANT OF GOD PRACTICES THE MOST RIGOROUS TEMPERANCE.

LAST among the cardinal virtues is temperance, whose office, according to the teaching of St. Augustine, is to restrain and calm all passions which tend to prevent us from observing the law of God. This virtue principally concerns the order and use of those pleasures peculiar to the senses. Hence it embraces chastity, abstinence, sobriety and mortification which so well serve to restrain the passions. To give then an idea of the high degree of perfection in which the servant of God practiced temperance, we shall speak of each of these virtues, omitting, however, to treat of chastity, which has been sufficiently dwelt upon in a previous chapter.

Abstinence and sobriety were very familiar to all the saints whom the Church now venerates upon her altars. There is no doubt they practiced them to the fullest extent. This

virtue of temperance appears in an admirable degree in individuals who lived a domestic life, a life in the quietude of religious cloisters or one peacefully in solitude, all aspiring to perfection of their state. But virtues acquire greater splendor when seen in some privileged souls, who spent all their days in the most trying hardships, burdened with arduous labor, who never allowed themselves a moment of rest, though it seems almost impossible that they could have endured so many hardships and privations without affording the body the repose and nourishment required to sustain life.

The reader has had the privilege of seeing in venerable Fr. Antony Margil, one of these saintly characters, who, amid the continual labors which occupied his whole life, observed an abstinence and sobriety truly admirable. With the exception of Sunday his fast was uninterrupted. He took food but once a day, never used meat nor fish; a few herbs, a piece of bread and some water constituted his daily fare. He never tasted the exquisite fruits which are found in those countries, and when they were offered to him, he either took them to the refectory for his brethren, or, if he was giving missions or visiting per-

sons, after having given a portion to his companion, if the latter desired it, he gave the remainder to the poor, the sick, or to benefactors.

To render his scanty food more insipid and distasteful, Antony used powdered aloes instead of salt. The excessive labors of his apostolate could not make him vary this rigorous practice. It was indeed quite a luxury for him in those wild countries to find cake made from Indian corn or beans to satisfy his appetite. Though the food was sometimes abundant, he made no difference in the quantity he allowed himself. On one occasion in Adaes where food was plentiful, he partook of nothing save a few small bitter pumpkins, cooked in water, without any salt to diminish in any degree their bitterness.

Neither his advanced age nor weakness could induce Antony to change his way of living. On account of his great infirmities he was sometimes obliged to use the food prescribed by the doctors or infirmarian, but the moment he felt better, and was able to leave the bed, deeming himself at fault for the food he had taken, he made his body pay severely by decreasing his usual scant nourishment, saying, that it was necessary to

endure mortification for the delicacies he had taken while sick.

He was equally abstemious in drinking, always avoiding liquor or wine, being satisfied with the use of water within the most rigid limits of necessity. The Rev. Fr. Francis Adrade, who was his companion for some time, thus expresses himself concerning the sobriety and manner of living of our venerable father: "He was most temperate in drinking, never taking a drop of water except at the time of meals and then in a very limited quantity, though he was often very thirsty." When they arrived at the banks of a river during the course of their journeys, his companions drank of the water to quench their thirst, but the servant of God never indulged in this gratification.

Speaking on the same subject, D. Christopher Rodriguez, who accompanied Antony on his expedition to the Lacandoni, after speaking of his great abstemiousness in eating, adds that he never knew him to ask for anything to drink during a long journey. When crossing a river he could have drunk some of the water as the others did, but despite his fatigue and thirst he never did.

Antony was no less careful in guarding his other senses.

Whether he was in towns, cities or country places, he never allowed his eyes to look at any of the objects which surrounded him, closing them even to the beautiful scenery of the country through which he travelled, thus depriving them of the slightest satisfaction.

His ears were always closed to profane words and to useless or indifferent conversation. The sense of smell, also, he deprived of the pleasure peculiar to it, refusing to keep or smell flowers of rare fragrance. He always abstained from the use of tobacco, though it might have been beneficial to him during his long journeys, on account of his excessive weakness. He continually subdued his flesh with the rigor of penance. His repose was very short, never exceeding two or three hours. He generally rested upon a mat or upon a board, the ground, or a bow-net of sticks. He always wore next his body a rough hair shirt which from time to time he changed for one more painful. His scourgings were frequent, especially in his cell after his sermons or in the church after matins ; for this purpose he had iron chains, to the extremities of which were attached sharp nails, with

which he scourged himself so severely that the floor and walls were sprinkled with his blood. These instruments were his precious possessions. He always carried them with him on his journeys and they served as a pillow during his brief repose. Before using these penitential instruments to punish himself, however, Antony waited until his companions had departed, that he might be at liberty to scourge his body without mercy. On one occasion a certain man, named Francis Perez, was obliged to raise him up, as he had fallen unconscious from the violence of the scourging.

Even prayer, which was his great solace and comfort, he rendered very painful by a new kind of self torture. He fixed two iron rings to the ceiling of his room, and when he desired to pray, he lifted himself up by them, holding his body suspended, his arms outstretched in the form of a cross, and in this position he persisted in prayer until exhausted by the acuteness of his pains.

In addition to these external austerities and penances, we must also consider the mortification of the spirit. Although the principal aim of temperance, as we said above, is to restrain the senses, still it does not cease to

be the office of this virtue to moderate the natural passions of the mind.

We might here treat of the meekness, clemency, modesty, affability of manner and tranquillity of spirit, portrayed in the servant of God, but as we have elsewhere depicted his amiability towards every one, his sweetness and kindness in reprimanding others, and his modesty in all his undertakings, we shall restrict ourselves to showing how he kept self esteem in subjection by his profound humility.

The two elements which form the base and foundation of that virtue, that is, a knowledge of God and of one's self, were deeply impressed upon Antony's heart and soul, and, realizing that of himself he had nothing but imperfections, he attributed all good to God. Though he had achieved great deeds for the honor and glory of God as well as for the Catholic Church, he considered himself a useless servant, calling himself a mere nothing, deeming himself most unworthy of the honor everywhere bestowed upon him by the Christians, standing in their midst confused and abashed. He accepted these honors not as offered to him but to God, whose humble minister he was, and to his holy Father

St. Francis, the habit of whose order he wore.

Besides deeming himself absolutely nothing, he considered himself the greatest sinner on earth, even worse than Satan, who was guilty of one sin only. He ascribed all public calamities to his own faults, to punish which he feared that God, angered by him, would inflict his scourge upon the places wherein he had dwelt.

In Guadalajara, Fr. John Riaza once heard Antony exclaim :

“I do not know how Almighty God can tolerate this city, since I am within its limits.”

Filled with these sentiments he humbled himself before all, believing himself to be the least of his brethren, and never omitting to practice every exercise or mortification which would humble him in the presence of others.

Whether he was subject or superior Antony was often seen kneeling in the centre of the refectory, with tears in his eyes, confessing his faults, in presence of all, and pleading for pardon. Many times during Lent and Advent, he placed a crown of thorns on his head, and a rope around his neck, and kneeling before each religious, kissed his feet. At

other times he begged food in the refectory, eating whatever was given him by his brethren in charity. Though his merits entitled him to a place above all the other religious, he always desired to occupy the lowest place, as if he were subject to each of them over whom he presided. He would not retire to his cell without first asking their blessing. He never allowed any religious or domestic to serve him, but frequently assisted the lay-brothers in sweeping the church and convent, and in performing the most menial services.

When he was obliged, as superior, to use his authority, it was rather to humble himself more by commanding some one of the community to punish and despise him as the greatest sinner, than to impose a penance on others.

Once he ordered a religious to walk over him and strike him, for he said that he deserved to be treated more as a criminal than as a worthy member of the order.

Many similar instances could be related in testimony of Antony's profound humility; but one in which we discern this virtue in its greatest perfection deserves particular mention. While among the Lacandoni Antony was instructing his faithful companion, Fr.

Blasius Guillen, who was to be his successor. For this purpose he was teaching him the native language of the savages, which he spoke fluently, having received from heaven the gift of tongues. The pious and zealous religious was doing his best to learn, but the difficulties were so great that he sometimes became disheartened. His discouragement increased when by the advice of the venerable father he attempted to preach to the natives. During his sermon, Fr. Blasius found a difficulty in pronouncing the words, and lost the thread of his discourse. The missionary made a sign to Fr. Antony to intone the final ejaculations of the mission, and dismiss the people. The servant of God sincerely pitied his companion in his humiliation and realized at the same time the loss the people would sustain, should Fr. Blasius lose courage and confidence in himself, and retire from that field. To obviate this, he thought of an expedient as charitable as human mind could devise. First, he endeavored to reanimate his discouraged companion by attributing the failure not to him, but to the difficulties of a language, liable to confuse the most adept linguist. Then, in order to dispel any further trouble, he offered to

preach the next day. Fr. Blasius willingly accepted the offer. The object which the servant of God had in view was to conquer the natural timidity of his companion, and at the same time to encourage him by showing that all are subject to such mischances. Accordingly on the following day Antony ascended the pulpit, and began to preach, but in a short time he suddenly paused, feigning to have forgotten what he intended to say, gave a sign to intone the ejaculations of the mission, and dismissed the faithful. A voluntary humiliation so charitable and at the same time so ingenious produced the desired effect, for he dispelled the timidity of his companion, and encouraged him to apply himself with diligence to master the language. Under his guidance Fr. Blasius became a great missionary, and for nineteen years after the apostolic man left the place, he labored zealously for the salvation of the barbarians.

From this it is evident that humility and charity, which form the basis of all virtue, were firmly impressed upon the mind and heart of Fr. Antony; the higher the building, the deeper must be its foundation.

CHAPTER IX

THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

HAVING seen with what zeal Fr. Antony labored for the glory of God and the sanctification of souls, it is proper to consider what God did to glorify his faithful servant before men, and enumerate those supernatural gifts which shone so conspicuously in him. These gifts were diffused so abundantly in this privileged man that some of them appear in all his actions. We shall restrict ourselves, however, to a few facts in which they shine most brilliantly, particularly the gift of prophecy.

Amazing was the prediction made by the servant of God about a young woman in Guadalajara. One day he went to see Don John Martinez De-Soria, Secretary of War, in whose house he had never been before, and with whose family he was altogether unacquainted. After having spoken to him on business affairs, he asked him where the little Sister of St. Clare was? "What Sister?" replied

Don John, "there is none here." The venerable father smiled at this answer, and going towards a room where the children were, fixed his gaze upon a child, saying: "Behold the little nun of St. Clare." Not long after the girl expressed a desire to embrace the religious life, and having arrived at the proper age, entered the Monastery of St. Clare, where she lived a holy and edifying life, and died in the odor of sanctity, at the age of seventy-five years.

Many similar predictions were made by Fr. Antony. He called the son of Antonio Farinas the little Provincial, and in truth, twenty years after the death of Fr. Margil he was elected Provincial. — He foretold that Fr. Antony Aquila, while yet a young child, would one day become an apostolic missionary, a prediction verified later.

On one occasion whilst visiting the home of a nobleman, named De los Rios, who had four children, their mother, well aware of the gift which Fr. Antony possessed, asked him what would become of her children. He replied: "You are a happy mother, to be able to give to religion so many children." Then pointing out a child called Francis, he said: "This one will not be given to the Church."

Designating one named Michael, he said: " This child belongs to me. " Turning towards the little girls, and referring to one called Josephine, who showed an inclination to become a nun of St. Clare, he said : " This one will be a beloved spouse of Jesus Christ, but not a nun of St. Clare ; " and of the last, named Mary, from whom her mother did not expect anything on account of her lively disposition, he said : " Please, let her amuse herself ; she will become a nun in an austere monastery. " Later Francis was married, Michael became a Franciscan, and, afterwards, went to Texas among the Infidels, where he remained for several years, and was finally killed by the savages, Josephine became a nun of the Monastery of Jesus, and lastly, Mary embraced the Order of Poor Clares. Thus the prophecy of our venerable father was verified in every case.

Los Chasones, a place located in a remote corner of the city of Guatemala, had, owing to its solitude, become a resort for libertines and profligates, who went there to plunge themselves in excesses of every nature, blasphemies, quarrels, and far worse evils. It seemed to the servant of God that the power of religion alone could remedy the evil. According-

ly he placed a cross there, that the presence of this holy sign should prevent further evils, and at the same time foretold that that place would one day be sanctified by piety and religion. The fulfilment of this prophecy seemed impossible under the circumstances, particularly as the position of the place afforded no special advantages for a religious establishment. However, a year after his death, a hermitage was built there, where the faithful assembled every evening to recite the rosary, and twice a month, Christian doctrine was explained by a religious of the Order of St. Francis, to the great spiritual advancement of the faithful.

On the feast of St. Sebastian, while the venerable father was preaching in the city of Mexico, he spoke with ardent zeal against the immoral productions presented in a theatre located near the church, saying that God the Almighty would soon send down fire to destroy that place. The prediction was confirmed, for that same night the building was reduced to ashes. No one was able to tell the cause of the fire until some citizens, who were returning to their homes at that time and who knew nothing of the prophecy, made it known that they saw balls of fire descending from above upon the theatre.

In the same city, a young woman, the daughter of Elizabeth Faxardo, was unable, owing to lack of sufficient means, to make her religious profession in the Monastery of St. Clare. Antony, aware of this, collected from kind benefactors the requisite sum of two hundred dollars, which he gave to a wealthy man, named Don Luke de Larave, requesting him to give it as a loan to the young woman's mother, thus providing the dowry for her daughter. At the same time he warned him to get the receipt in his own name, for in a short time those two hundred dollars would be necessary for him. This prophecy seemed very strange to the gentleman as he was immensely wealthy, still he executed the order, and returned home with the receipt, which he placed among his papers. In a short time Larave, through unforeseen circumstances, lost all his wealth, and was reduced to utter penury. His wife remembering the prophecy of the servant of God, began to search for the Mrs. Faxardo's receipt and having found it, claimed the money, which, owing to their reverse of fortune, was now most welcome.

From her childhood, Rose of Paniaqua was afflicted with St. Vitus' dance, against which all remedies were unavailing. Fr. Antony

went to see her, gave her a rosary, telling her to keep it around her neck for five days, after which time she would be exempt from further attacks during her life ; he assured her, however, that she would die of that disease. At that time she was twelve years old, and she lived to the age of sixty-nine when an attack of the old disease caused her death.

In Zacatecas, Don Melchior Figueroa being very ill, desired to make his confession to the servant of God, but not having any one to send to the college where the father was stationed at that time, his wife decided to send for another priest. In the meantime Fr. Antony arrived quite unexpectedly, and though he had never been in that house before, after greeting the wife, went directly to the patient's room. He heard his confession and assured him of his recovery, but at the same time told him to prepare himself and become a tertiary of St. Francis, for within a year he would die. Don Melchior Figueroa, firmly believing the words of Fr. Antony, led a good and pious life, frequented the sacraments almost every day, and at the end of the year died a holy death.

Far different was the end of a young woman, by the name of Catherine De Rivas. This

young woman was in the convent of St. Rose under the direction of her sister Magdalene, who was a religious, but not wishing to remain there, she ran away. Her sister, deeply grieved, had recourse to Fr. Antony who assured her that she would return in a short time. So it happened, but she soon left the place a second time. Sr. Magdalene again had recourse to the servant of God, who thus addressed her : “ I have seen Catherine, and warned her that should she dare to leave the convent the third time, she would die on the threshold covered with her own blood. ” Unfortunately she heeded him not, and her death verified the prophecy; for at the door of the convent she was stricken with a violent attack of vomiting of blood, which made her unconscious and reduced her to the last extremity. A priest was sent for, but alas ! too late, for he scarcely had time to anoint her.

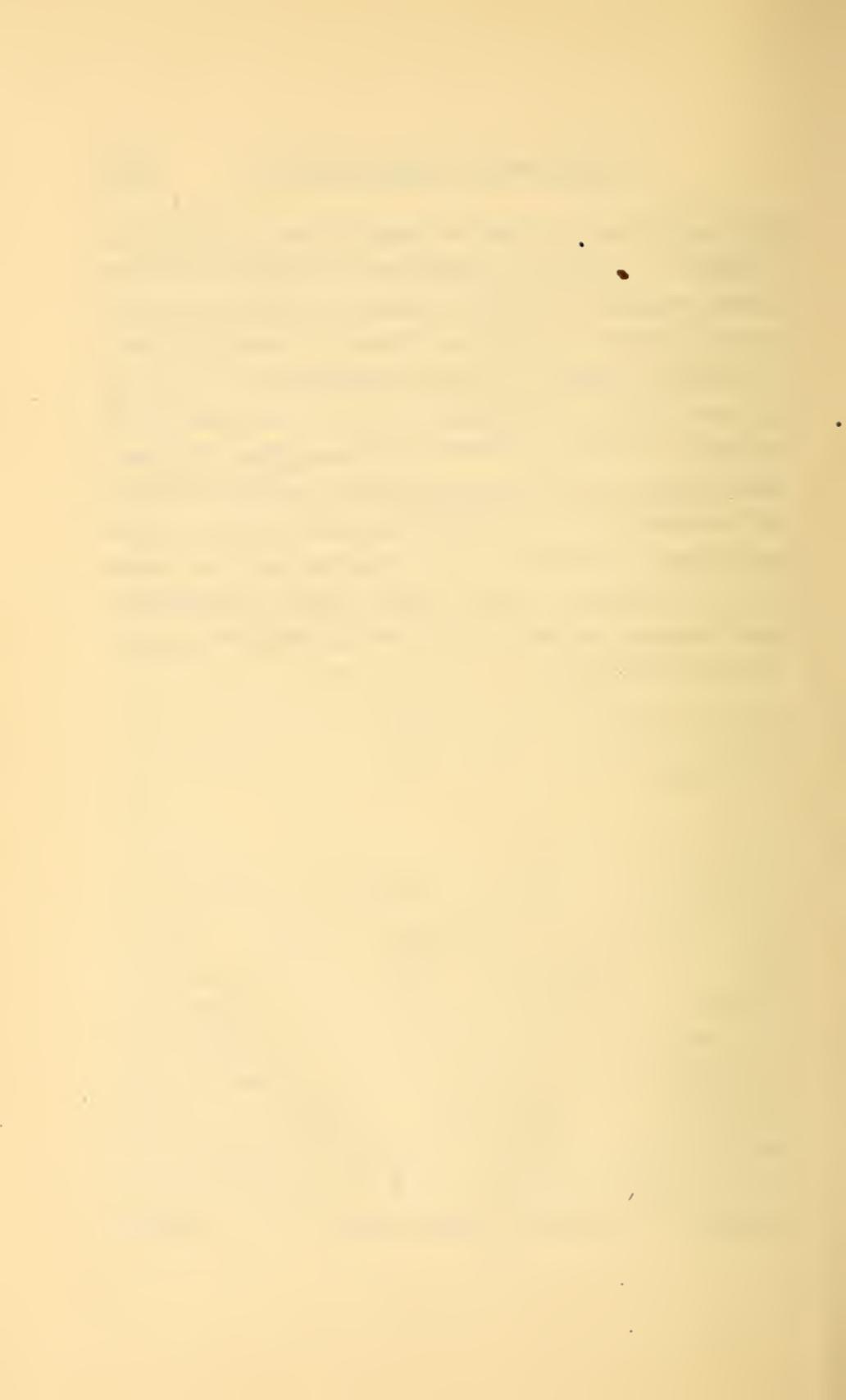
On another occasion our venerable father prophesied to a woman of infamous character. He repeatedly exhorted her to change her life, and become reconciled to the Almighty by making her confession ; but scorning his works, she persisted in her immoral conduct. Seeing that she persevered in offending God Antony said to her : “ Take care, -in a year

you will die, and if you do not change your life your end will be a miserable one." Treating this warning with contempt, the woman continued her unholy life, until at the end of the year she became seriously ill. Fr. Antony and Fr. Thomas De-Arrivillada were immediately sent for, but it was too late, for God, who had offered her mercy and pardon through his holy servant, now abandoned her. Notwithstanding the efforts of Fr. Antony and his companion the woman died without being able to reconcile herself with her Creator.

Having recounted these fatal prophecies I will conclude this chapter by relating a happy circumstance in which our venerable father announced the eternal salvation of a highwayman.

While travelling in the mountains from the city of Nombre De Dios towards the valley of Suchil, Antony encountered a bandit, well armed, who abruptly demanded where he was going. Fr. Antony replied very gently and kindly : " My dear friend, I am going towards heaven. " — At these words, the malefactor, touched by divine grace, considered how different was the way he was going, and humbly added : " And I, Father, where am I going ? " — " Also towards heaven, " replied

Fr. Antony. — “ How can it be, ” said the outlaw, “ for I am burdened with innumerable crimes. ” — The servant of God encouraged him to trust in the divine Mercy, induced him to make a general confession, and gave him absolution. He then wrote a note in these terms : — “ Rev. Father, please give the bearer of this note, ecclesiastical burial, because he is worthy of it. ” Giving the note to the converted criminal, he requested him to take it to the nearest parish priest ; the man did so, and as soon as he arrived at the priest’s house, died suddenly.



CHAPTER X

THE SERVANT OF GOD IS ENDOWÉD WITH A KNOWLEDGE OF DISTANT AND HIDDEN EVENTS. — POSSESSES AN INSIGHT INTO HEARTS.

TO have a knowledge of distant incidents and the time in which they occur, to see hidden things, and to read the thoughts of others are all comprised in the gift of prophecy, but are given different names according to the objects to which they refer. To portray, therefore, in every aspect, the prophetic spirit of our venerable father, we shall relate several other facts.

We will commence with the knowledge of distant events. Fr. Simon Collado testified in the process for the beatification of Ven. Antony that a religious in the college of Guatemala received a letter from the servant of God, who at that time was in Gueretaro, about six hundred miles distant from Guatemala, in which he manifested his pleasure at the beatitude of the soul of Fr. Diego Rivas, his companion in the missions to the Lacan-

doni, who he said was now in heaven enjoying for all eternity the Kingdom of God. Admirable indeed was this announcement, but the surprise of the community was increased when by comparing the date of the letter with the time of the death of Fr. Rivas, they were found to be the same, and the time which had intervened was barely sufficient for a letter to reach Guatemala.

The strict limits of a chapter will not permit us to enlarge on this subject by relating many examples, hence we shall only point out briefly a few facts regarding Antony's knowledge of hidden events. It was a common occurrence for him to designate and enumerate the sins of his penitents in the confessional, reminding them of the ones they had forgotten. — In Aadaes, an officer of the army, named Dominic Del Rio, went to confession ; after he had accused himself of all his faults as he believed, Fr. Antony said to him : “ And that chocolate you took from your mother, was not that a theft ? ” These words both confused and surprised the officer.

In Zacatecas, Fr. Antony said to Michael de Torres, after he had made his confession : “ Brother, have you anything else to say. ” — “ No, father, ” he replied. “ Do you not

remember," said the servant of God, "what you did one day in the garden? Did you not commit such and such an action forbidden by the law of God?" — Greatly confused, the penitent acknowledged, and confessed the fault.

The apostolic man when journeying with the soldiers, frequently reproached them for the sinful conversations they engaged in, and in the confessional he often disclosed to them the sins they had committed as clearly as if he had been present at the time, so that one of the soldiers said: "We must be very particular here, for this father knows everything."

Many similar incidents occurred outside the confessional. One morning the afore named Dominic del Rio, while yet a child, after having eaten a piece of chocolate went with his companions to receive holy communion, having forgotten that by breaking his fast he was obliged to abstain from communicating. When the servant of God who was distributing holy communion to the faithful approached the boy, he gently bent his head and whispered to him: "My dear child, the chocolate;" at which the boy left the railing in confusion.

Another remarkable fact deserves to be mentioned, since it gives evidence of the supernatural gifts of Fr. Antony, and at the same time affords a lesson to those hypocrites who observe the mote in their neighbor's eye, but fail to see the beam in their own. — In the city of Guatemala there was a tertiary of St. Francis, a man of good and pious life, but very scrupulous, and overpowered by the fear of eternal damnation. He one day went to confession to the servant of God, who understanding well his scruples, and enlightened by divine grace, assured him of his eternal salvation in these words : “ Fear not, brother, for your name is already registered in the Book of Life.” But as it is natural for the scrupulous never to be convinced, the good man, greatly troubled, went to see a friend whom he considered very wise, prudent and learned, and repeated to him the words of Fr. Margil. Upon hearing these words, the wise friend, moved by false zeal, went to see the servant of God and reproached him severely for having expressed an opinion, which besides being rash, imprudent and condemned by the Church, could produce a disastrous result by engendering in the mind presumption, which could induce one

to commit sin without reserve. The servant of God listened to the wise man patiently and when he concluded, said : “ He who informed me that you are not leading a good life, assured me of the eternal salvation of that man.” The wise friend, quite confounded, did not presume again to criticise the actions of the venerable father.

Another evidence of this great gift was Antony’s keen discernment in reading the hearts of men. Fr. Antonio De-Escovas, the infirmarian, was attending Fr. Antony during his illness, was often tempted to run away from the convent. One night, the violence of the temptation increasing, he resolved to accomplish his design, and accordingly determined to wait until the servant of God should be asleep. While he was tormented by this idea, Fr. Antony turning towards him, said : “ Brother, it seems to be very cold to-night ; please cover yourself with my mantle and go to sleep.” No sooner had the infirmarian executed the order of his superior than he was overtaken by sleep. Upon awakening he was freed from internal anguish and reconciled to his position. In the morning our venerable father said to him : “ Brother, the sleep has removed from you the temp-

tation to run away from the convent. ”

In the process for his beatification Fr. Thomas Cabrera testified that on one occasion, being severely reprimanded by the Master of Novices, he determined to leave the Order, and accordingly went to his superior, who happened to be Fr. Antony Margil, to request his secular clothes. The moment Fr. Thomas rapped at the door, our venerable father opened it and without waiting for him to speak, asked him if Jesus Christ came down from heaven to eat biscuits, or to please His flesh? The father, confused, returned to his cell, and never again had the desire to leave the Order.

Fr. Gabriel D'Oynela cites the following in the informatory process for the beatification of our venerable father : — Weary of his life in the college of Gueretaro as an apostolic missionary, Fr. Gabriel began to think one evening, while reciting his office in the choir, of entering some other convent where the discipline was less severe than in the college. As he was leaving the choir Antony said to him : “ That was a beautiful point of meditation, Fr. Gabriel, which you took to-night while reciting the divine office, that desire to be transferred to another place. ” “ Yes, ” he

continued, "yes, you will go there, father, but you must know that you will die among us."—In fact, Fr. Gabriel went to Gueretaro to be present at the religious profession of his nephew, where, touched by the grace of God and remembering the prophecy of Fr. Margil, he remained with the permission of his superior and in a few years died happy death.

Many pages could be filled with incidents of this kind, but one more will suffice. One night our venerable father was summoned to assist a nobleman who was attacked by a sudden illness. Without delay he hastened to the house of the invalid, accompanied by a tertiary, Brother Joseph Ruix. The tertiary, who had been aroused from his slumbers, began to murmur saying : " My superior is in much haste because he is going to the house of a nobleman. I should like to see him do the same for a poor man. " He had scarcely expressed this thought when the servant of God kindly said : " Believe me, brother, that I do not make the slightest difference in my treatment of rich and poor, because we are all brothers in Jesus Christ who shed His blood for all without exception ; I would go to the assistance of the poorest man as willingly as to the richest. "

CHAPTER XI

VENERABLE ANTONY'S REMARKABLE FLEETNESS.—THE
GIFT OF TONGUES.—VENERATED BY ANIMALS.

IT is obvious that the many supernatural gifts so resplendent in the servant of God tended to increase the esteem and veneration paid him, contributing indirectly to make his preaching more efficacious. His fleetness, however, and the gift of tongues directly regarded the propagation of faith, since without the one or the other it would have been almost impossible to travel so many thousand miles and preach the Gospel to Indians and Infidels. Had he not been endowed with the gift of languages, Antony would have been obliged to spend years in acquiring a knowledge of them and mastering their difficulties, which would have rendered the labors of his Apostolate less fruitful.

In regard to his fleetness, innumerable eye-witnesses testified in the process for his beatification that the most expert horseman could not overtake him, and that he frequently

travelled two and even five hundred miles in less than a day.

One morning while he was walking from Mexico to the convent of Chiurubusco, ten miles distant, he met a number of persons who, going in the same direction, entreated him to accept one of their horses. He thanked them kindly, but in order to decline their offer only in part, requested them to take his mantle, which was rather heavy. They willingly complied and having arrived at Chiurubusco delivered it to the porter of the convent saying, that Fr. Margil was coming behind on foot. To their astonishment they were informed that he had arrived long before them, and was then in the church reciting the divine office with his brethren.

A young man was despatched in great haste to the college of Zacatecas to summon the venerable father to the bed-side of a dying man, and took with him a good horse that the father should arrive in time. The servant of God, however, refused the horse, telling the youth to return, that he would be there in time. Believing it impossible that a man could walk faster than a horse, and be able at the same time to prepare a dying person, the young man, deeply griev-

ed, returned, hastening his pace, in order to report his disappointment. But the moment he arrived, to his great astonishment he beheld the servant of God, who thus addressed him : “ My child, he is already in heaven.” Upon entering the house he learned that the venerable father had already heard the dying man’s confession, and assisted him in his last moments.

Don Antony Gomez Pego relates in the in-formatory process, that, having important things to speak about to Fr. Margil, who, a short time previous, had left the city of St. Michael for Guatemala, he endeavored to overtake him on horseback. He followed him for some distance and inquired for him of some people of Moncagua, who told him that Fr. Antony had stopped there to preach, hear confessions, celebrate the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and distribute holy communion, adding that he had just departed. Don Pego followed to the settlement of Chimamecha near by, and thence to a country place called Umana, where he also heard that the apostolic man, after having occupied himself with his usual exercises, had continued his journey. — He then hastened to Apasteteque, and having heard the same story repeated, endeavored to

overtake him at Cuxutepeck, and failing to find him there, he decided to continue his course as far as San Martin where he learned that the venerable father after a few hours' delay had left the place. Weary of the pursuit after having travelled more than ninety miles he returned home, saying that Fr. Margil was a better traveller than the swiftest horse in Mexico.

Through this gift Antony was enabled to walk over rivers and was often seen crossing them in this manner; the providence of God thus facilitating his journeys in those parts where many difficulties met the traveller. The fact that the servant of God could cross a river without touching the water appeared most incredible to one of the soldiers who accompanied him on his expedition to the Lacandoni, and who had heard it often said. One day being obliged with other soldiers of the same company to cross a river, after having passed it, he, feigning sleep, waited for Fr. Antony. The venerable father arrived a few moments later, having as usual crossed with dry feet. He said to the soldier: " Now go ahead, since you have seen me cross the river. " The soldier, surprised no less by the prodigy than to hear his thought expressed,

afterwards proclaimed the marvel everywhere. Fr. Francis Andrate asserts that he heard this not only from the soldier but also from his companions who were with him at the time.

What appeared most remarkable in Antony was the power of communicating this gift to his companions by giving them some articles belonging to himself. Fr. Simon De-Hierro, who was one day travelling with the servant of God, could not continue his journey on account of excessive fatigue. The venerable father gave him his sandals saying courteously: "If you are too tired, father, let us change horses." Thus he gave him strength and vigor to follow him for several miles.

In Adeas, on one occasion, going in great haste to baptize an Indian who was at the point of death, Antony took with him Don Cajetan Games, who after walking long away, was unable to continue, being completely exhausted. The venerable father in compassion gave him his own mantle, by which he communicated to him such fleetness that during the remainder of the journey Games walked without difficulty and as quickly as Fr. Antony. Many similar incidents occurred in regard to other persons.

United to the gift of agility was that of sub-

tility, which enabled Antony to enter dwellings through closed doors. Philip De-Agreda relates that on one occasion being engaged with others in gambling in the house of a certain Blasius Cantum, he closed the door and secured it with an iron bar for fear of being detected by the officers. Suddenly the servant of God appeared in their midst and compelled them to withdraw.

A notorious woman in the city of Guatemala, knowing with what success the servant of God had converted many women, and fearing to meet him, studiously avoided him always concealing herself at his approach. One day while she was sitting on the threshold, perceiving F. Antony in the distance, she immediately entered the house, and closed the door to prevent his entering. This precaution was useless, for the servant of God entered the house despite the closed door. He reproached her for her unholy life, and advised her to make a general confession as soon as possible, stating that in a few days she would die. Moved by the prodigy and by Antony's charitable admonitions, she made a sincere confession of her whole life, and after the lapse of eight days died, filled with hope of her eternal salvation.

No less remarkable is the fact that Antony appeared in different places at the same moment. At various periods of his life evidence has been given of this supernatural gift of bilocation : first in the visit he made while in America to his sick mother in Spain and the assistance he rendered her at the time of her death ; later, during the construction of the new college in Guatemala, when without leaving that place, he went to warn the draymen to bring lime, as the workmen could not continue with the building for lack of that material. — On another occasion while preaching in the church of S. Lucy, Antony was seen at the same time in a certain house, assisting a woman who was about to be murdered by her husband.

To these events we shall add another which occurred in Mexico in 1713. It is related by Fr. Emmanuel Gonzalez, who was the companion of the servant of God during the time he remained in that city. One day the venerable father was seen at the hour of vespers in the college of Chiurubusco, ten miles, as we have said above, from that of Mexico. After a brief interval passed in prayer in the church, he went to the superior Fr. Antony Castellon, who being at the time extremely agitated by

scruples, was alone in his cell in a most pitiable condition. The servant of God entered the room, and after saluting him with his usual kindness, placed his hand over his head, and recited the Gospel of St. John, after which he departed. The effect produced by this act was marvelous. Hope arose in the heart of the superior whose scruples disappeared and were replaced by calm and peace. Greatly surprised at this event, he afterwards related it to Fr. Gonzalez, stating the day and hour in which he was aided by Fr. Margil. Fr. Gonzalez, who was never separated from our venerable father, was greatly amazed, for, on that day they had not left the convent of Mexico. Both were sure of having been in the company of Fr. Antony Margil, but it seemed incredible that he could be in Mexico and Chiurubusco at the same time ; so they came to the conclusion that it was due to a prodigy of the divine power, which had been manifested on many other occasions.

Equally admirable was the gift of languages bestowed upon Antony by Almighty God. Though he travelled through many countries, among various peoples, speaking no language but his own, yet he was understood by all as well as if he had spoken their native tongue.

He also understood all who came to him to confession as if he had been instructed in their dialect. This gift appeared more conspicuously in the presence of his companions, who could only be understood by the Indians by means of signs or an interpreter, and only by the continual application of study did they succeed after a long time in mastering the difficulties of these dialects.

In his entire life, there are only two missions recorded which the servant of God undertook with the aid of interpreters: namely, his first attempt to convert the Lacandoni, and his mission in Nayaret. On these occasions God was pleased to revoke this gift, since in his eternal decrees, the time had not yet arrived for the conversion of these people.

Finally, Antony received distinct marks of veneration from irrational animals, such as we read of in the lives of many other saints.— When the college for the propagation of the faith was being built in Guatemala, some Indians arrived with a gift of twelve cartloads of stone. The servant of God came out to receive them and after having given them a brief exhortation, blessed them. On his appearance the Indians knelt and at the same time the animals that drew the carts fell on

their knees. Our venerable father shook his mantle to make them rise, but that was of no avail. The animals remained kneeling until he blessed the Indians; God desiring, by this example, to show men the respect and esteem due to his servant and the submission they should render to his holy words.

CHAPTER XII

MIRACLES WROUGHT DURING THE LIFE OF THE SERVANT
OF GOD.

THE power of performing miracles has always distinguished the Catholic Church from heretical sects, which though practicing proselytism by inspiring terror, indulging the passions, or deceiving by the illusions of sophistry, have been obliged to yield to the solidity of arguments, above all to the wonderful deeds performed by the followers of the true religion. Thus faith was established and propagated, and whenever it pleased Almighty God to spread it among people who ignored Him, He has never failed to authenticate the words of his messengers by deeds surpassing human power in order that by these manifestations they could be recognized as true ambassadors of the living God.

Our missionary, being one of these men sent by God to preach the Gospel, was endowed with all the gifts necessary to enable him to faithfully discharge his office as a mes-

senger of God. He performed innumerable miracles, the authenticity of which has been attested by eye-witnesses. We shall relate only a few of them :

While our venerable father was journeying in the diocese of Nicaragua, the servant of a nobleman of Sevacó, who accompanied him, while cutting a branch of a tree, accidentally cut one of his fingers very severely. The father, pitying his misfortune, joined the parts of the finger, which was suspended by the skin, and placing some tobacco over it (to conceal the miracle he was going to perform) bandaged it with a piece of cloth and blessed it. They then continued their journey for about the space of an hour, when the servant feeling no pain, out of curiosity unbandaged the finger to see if it was cured, and found it perfectly healed.

In Guatemala, in the house of Joseph John Medinilla, a child, when playing, fell into a kettle of boiling water which had just been removed from the fire and was scalded, his entire body, but particularly his face being terribly burned. The case was related to the servant of God who arrived immediately after the accident. He asked to see the child, and after placing his hands on the little one's

face, blessed him. The child was instantly cured, and not the least soar marked his face or body.

One day our venerable father went to the house of D. Nicolas de Paz, whose son, stricken with a severe attack of fever, had already been given up by the doctors. The servant of God called him by name, and the child responding to the call arose from his bed. Fr. Antony read the gospel over him, and in a few moments he was perfectly cured. He then told the parents that the boy would become a religious of the Order of St. Dominic. The prediction was verified, for at the required age the young man made his profession in that order in which he died a short time afterward.

Fr. Antony in company with the Commissary General, Fr. Emmanuel de Monzaval, and other religious, being in a solitary place on the occasion of the Fifteenth of August, the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, discovered that there was no wine. The servant of God, who never omitted to offer daily the holy sacrifice, was very sad at being deprived of the comfort of saying mass especially on that day. He directed the lay-brother to look into the vase where the wine was kept, but upon being told that it

was empty he ordered it to be brought to him, then pressing it between his hands, a quantity of wine came out sufficient to enable him to say mass.

One day our venerable father went to the Monastery of Poor Clares in Mexico to hear the confession of Mother Nicolas of St. Ildefonsus, who for some time had been confined to her bed by a serious illness. He remained a few minutes after having heard her confession, and when departing said: "Get up, you are only lazy." His words were a command of God, for on the same day the patient recovered and assisted at the exercises of the community.

Xaveria della Garza Cantum was afflicted with a dangerous and malignant fever accompanied by a violent flow of blood from her nose. Her father, despairing of obtaining relief through human aid, had recourse to Fr. Antony, who immediately went to see the patient, read the gospel over her, and then assured the father of her recovery. In fact the following day the young woman was able to leave her bed and go to church to give thanks to God for having restored her to health through the intercession of his faithful servant.

Our venerable father having exposed a crucifix to the public veneration of the converted Indians of Texas, it happened that the lights burning around the crucifix communicated the fire to the straw roof of the church, and in a moment the flames had spread everywhere. The faithful, who were listening to Fr. Antony's sermon, frightened at the sight of the fire, were on the point of rushing from the church, when the servant of God made a sign for them to remain where they were, and blew at the fire which was immediately extinguished.

Another and far greater fire occurred later in the same place. All the houses of the soldiers which were built of straw and very close together, took fire. In one of these a barrel of powder was kept. The fire was making such rapid progress that it was impossible to extinguish it, and all tried to save their lives by fleeing from the place. Fr. Herize, moved by the spectacle, ran to notify Antony saying: "Now is the time for you to work miracles." But the apostolic man, holding up his crucifix, said: "Behold Him who works miracles." Hastening, however, towards the fire he held up the sacred image to the flames, which, respecting their Creator, were instantly extinguished.

Another remarkable event occurred in the same country in the presence of twenty persons. In the year of our Lord 1721, Antony left Garrapatas, and after having journeyed about six miles noticed that he had forgotten a skull which he always carried with him to remind him of the frailty of this world. Grieved at the loss of the skull, he told an officer of the company that he had left behind something very important. As prudence would not permit a person to remain alone in that wild and dangerous place, the officer ordered twenty of his men to accompany the father. They started back towards Garrapatas, but they had scarcely gone a mile when they perceived the skull coming towards the father. The soldiers were amazed at such a sight, but the servant of God without showing the least surprise, placed it in the sleeve of his habit, and then said to his companions : “ Let us return ”.

On his way to give missions in Reale di Vetagrande he lodged in the house of Don Gabriel Micheo, whose son was afflicted with a cancer on the face, and had been pronounced incurable by the physicians. The servant of God seeing the grief of Micheo and his wife, asked to see the patient. Entering the room, he began to caress the child, at the

same time reading the gospel. He then said to the parents: "Fear not, your son will recover, and will become the priest of this parish;" the same day the child recovered and later became the parish priest.

The gift of miracles, however, was not restricted to the person of Fr. Antony Margil, but was also communicated to the objects used by him. In Zacatecas, Don De Vera, having a violent attack of dysentery, was considered by the doctors to be beyond recovery. A religious of the college of Guadalupe went to visit him, and having that day received a letter from Fr. Margil, who was in Texas, and being very anxious to hear about the mission, opened the letter, and left the envelope on the patient's bed. While he was reading, the invalid trusting in the merits of the servant of God took the envelope and applied it to his body and immediately recovered.

John Martinex, Royal Treasurer of Mexico, relates that he had a mantle used by Fr. Antony Margil which he donated to a certain person of Angelopoli named Francis Lopez. A few days after, the latter had a dispute with a man of Guaniuago, who determined to kill him. Accordingly towards evening this man lay in wait for Martinex, and at the first

opportunity fired at him. The latter, fortunately, was wearing the mantle of venerable Antony, which saved him from certain death, as the bullet only glanced against the mantle without penetrating it.

CHAPTER XIII

MIRACLES PERFORMED THROUGH THE INTERCESSION
OF VENERABLE ANTONY AFTER HIS DEATH.

GOD manifests the glory of the blessed in heaven by miracles and prodigies wrought by the invocation of their names or by means of some article used by them during life. This mark of sanctity was manifested in an eminent degree in our venerable father and proved most efficacious to all who implored his intercession ; his name became illustrious throughout North and Central America, but principally in Texas where he labored so many years for the conversion of Infidels and Barbarians.

In Zacatecas, the son of Gasper De Larraga, who was afflicted with a serious illness, was cured by the simple touch of the sack-cloth used by the servant of God. In gratitude for this favor, his father had him clothed with the habit of Saint Francis.

In Guadalajara, a nun, Sister Mary of the Conception, being reduced to the point of

death and having already received the last rites of the Church, placed over her head the hood used by the servant of God and instantly recovered.

In Texas, Anicetus De Barrio was suffering with a violent attack of lock-jaw, and according to the opinion of the doctors was fast approaching his end ; but by the invocation of the name of venerable Margil he was completely cured.

In the same place, a priest, Don John Mary Perez Romo, had for some time been confined to his bed with delirium, and as all remedies had proved futile, a pillow used by the servant of God was placed under his head. He recovered consciousness and was never again afflicted with the same disease though he lived twelve years longer.

Fr. Isidorus De Espinosa, a companion of Fr. Antony, suffering with a dangerous malady, had been declared incurable by the doctors. With confidence he placed upon his breast a particle of the blanket used by Antony imploring him to obtain his recovery if it was the will of God, promising at the same time that should his health be restored he would write an account of his life. No sooner had Isidorus made this promise than he was

perfectly cured, and faithful to his word, he afterwards wrote a beautiful life of Fr. Antony.

Cajetan Benites, a Mexican physician, relates of himself that for several months he suffered the most excruciating pain in his eyes and despite all medical skill he was daily growing worse; seeing that human aid was of no avail he applied to his eyes an image of the venerable father, trusting through his intercession to obtain relief; instantaneously, the pain ceased and perfect vision was restored.

A similar case was that of Michelina Barrios in a place called Rancio Vecchio belonging to the parish of St. George in the diocese of Durango. After a severe attack of illness her eyes remained covered by a sort of hard scale, which not only prevented her from distinguishing objects but also from seeing the light of the sun. While she was in this deplorable state, Fr. Philip Zavalza, a member of the college of Zacatecas, arrived in the place, and moved by compassion gave her an image of our venerable father advising her to recommend herself to him with confidence. The young woman obeyed, and while taking a brief repose afterwards, it seemed to her that

through the intercession of the servant of God her sight had been restored. Upon awakening she found it to be a reality, for her eyes were able to discern the smallest objects.

In Guatemala, a daughter of Lucrecia de Carzama, suffering from a malignant fever which threatened to prove fatal, was instantly cured by placing over her head an image of the servant of God.

Josepha Flores, in company with her husband and several other persons left the fort of Rio Grande, Texas, September 1777, to go to another place, but during the journey being unexpectedly assailed by armed Indians, all sought refuge in flight. Josepha, after being followed for five days and harassed on all sides, was on the point of being overtaken by the Indians. Her only hope of safety consisted in crossing the Rio Grande, a river which, owing to the heavy rainfall, had risen above its banks. Rather than be captured by the Indians, she preferred to throw herself into the river; but at the same time she placed her confidence in Fr. Antony, imploring him for aid. The moment she invoked his assistance, she felt herself supported by superior strength upon the surface of the water, which enabled her to reach the opposite bank in safety. Her

husband, as well as the others who knew how to swim, was greatly astonished to see his wife, not knowing how she could have crossed the river.

These and other marvelous works, rendered the name of our Apostle more and more illustrious. But that which raised him to such honor was the constant exercise of every virtue which made him dear to God and worthy to obtain for the faithful those graces which were implored in his name. His merit before God, attested by so many, should encourage us to imitate the virtues which made him worthy to obtain so many favors from his Lord and at the same time dispose us to seek confidently through his intercession that which we desire.

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Life of venerable Fr. Antony
Margil

