

# Relic of St. Anthony visits San Antonio

SAN ANTONIO - The biggest city in the world to be named for St. Anthony of Padua welcomed a relic of the saint to its San Fernando Cathedral for the first time March 3-4.

The event marked the close of the jubilee year proclaimed by Pope Benedict XVI to mark the 275th anniversary of the cathedral in San Antonio. With a population of 1.2 million, it is the eighth largest U.S. city.

Following each Mass during the weekend the faithful were able to venerate the relic, touch the reliquary and receive a holy card.

The reliquary, which came from the Basilica of St. Anthony in Padua, Italy, contains parts of St. Anthony's skin which were removed during the most recent examination of the saint's body in 1981.

The relic was accompanied by a small group of friars from the Padua basilica, who concelebrated at seven Masses that weekend. Members of the five Conventual Franciscan provinces also were present.

Before the evening Mass March 3, officials of the Italian Messenger of St. Anthony publishing house introduced the first volume of the complete "Sermons of St. Anthony," translated for the first time into English.

The work comprises 53 Sunday sermons, written in Padua between 1227 and 1230 during the three years when Anthony served the Franciscan order as provincial of northern Italy. Anthony was proclaimed a saint by Pope Gregory IX just 11 months after his death, the shortest time for a sainthood cause in the history of the church.

St. Anthony's sermons were written during the Middle Ages, and were meant as a guide and as a source of inspiration to those friars whose task was to go out into the world and preach.

"This fact has led some to erroneously conclude that the sermons are outdated and without relevance to modern life," said Father Danile Salezze, director general of the Messenger of St. Anthony publishing house.

"However, anyone who allows these writing to act on his soul will be amazed at Anthony's profound knowledge of Scripture and his deep insight into human nature and the social context of his times," he added. "It is this which confers timeless value and relevance to his sermons."

The final Mass of the weekend was celebrated by San Antonio Archbishop Jose H. Gomez to close the jubilee year, which had been marked by a series of cultural and prayerful events, including special pilgrimages to the cathedral.

"Throughout this season of joy we have walked together along the path of remembrance and renewal," the archbishop said in his homily. "We've celebrated the noble beginnings of our San Fernando Cathedral, established 275 years ago. We've pondered the mystery of God's loving plan in the evangelization of Texas and the new world of America."

The archbishop expressed his gratitude to Pope Benedict, who granted his papal blessing and the indulgences of the jubilee.

"Every jubilee is a new creation, a time for a new beginning," he said. "It is a time of joy as we thank our Father in heaven for his bounty, for his tender mercy."

"It is a time especially when we thank him for the gift of Jesus Christ - and for the salvation Christ brings us through the forgiveness of sins. ... Christ has set us free from sin and death," Archbishop Gomez added.

"He has set us free for love and for mercy - to love one another as he has loved us, to forgive one another as he has forgiven us, to bear witnesses to his mercy and justice in our world. ... This cathedral is a sign of the great reconciliation that God has made with us in Christ," he said.

The archbishop said that during the special year he found himself thinking a lot about the faith of the founders of the cathedral.

“Because of the faith of these men and women, because of their obedience to the word of God, the light of salvation was made to shine in this land,” he said. “Because of their faith, Jesus Christ was made present in our midst in word and sacrament. By their faith and sacrifice, they sowed the seeds of a new world of faith, a civilization of love.”

Renewed by the jubilee pilgrimage of faith, the archbishop called on attendees to be more devoted to knowing and loving Jesus Christ. “Let us listen for his voice. Let us seek to encounter him in the Scriptures, in the teachings of the church and in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and the sacrament of penance,” he said.

“This is hard sometimes. We all know that,” Archbishop Gomez added. “There are many other voices that we hear in our often-noisy culture. Voices of fear and division. Voices of terror and unbelief. ... But even in the darkness Our Lord still speaks to us.”