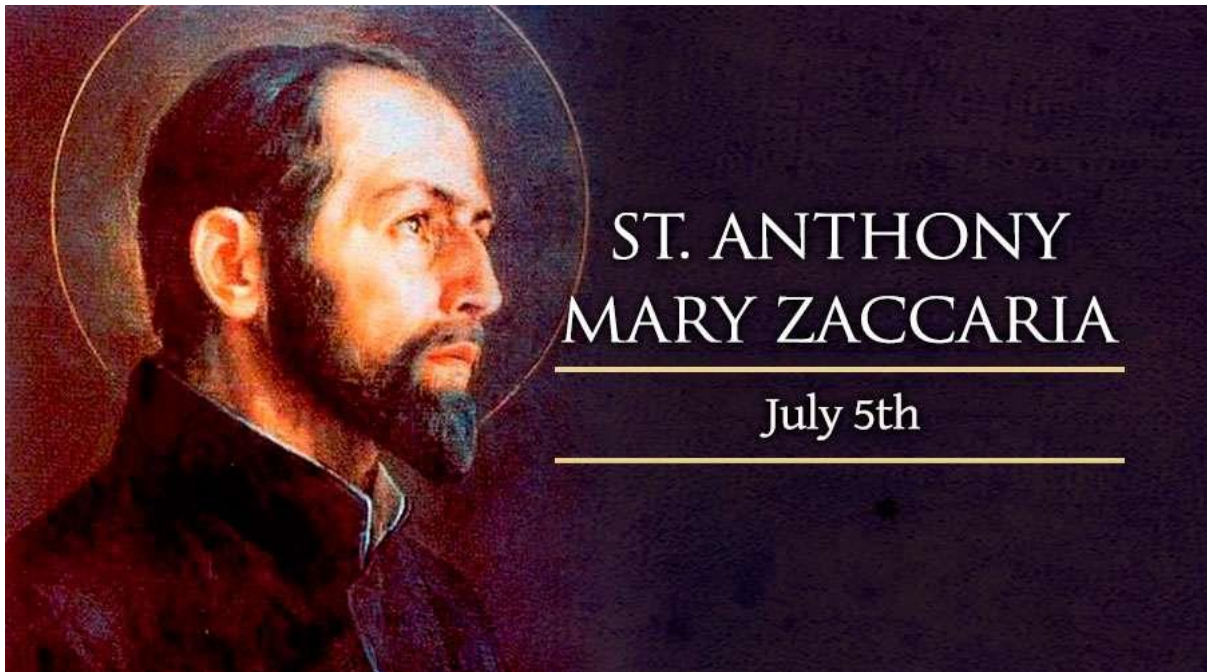


## St. Anthony Mary Zaccaria



On July 5, the Catholic Church remembers Saint Anthony Mary Zaccaria. A renowned preacher and promoter of Eucharistic adoration, he founded the order of priests now known as the Barnabites. In 2001, the future Pope Benedict XVI, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, wrote the preface for a book on St. Anthony Mary Zaccaria, praising the saint as “one of the great figures of Catholic reform in the 1500s,” who was involved “in the renewal of Christian life in an era of profound crisis.”

The Italian saint, Cardinal Ratzinger wrote, “deserves to be rediscovered” as “an authentic man of God and of the Church, a man burning with zeal, a demanding forger of consciences, a true leader able to convert and lead others to good.” Anthony Mary Zaccaria was born into an Italian family of nobility in Cremona during 1502. His father Lazzaro died shortly after Anthony's birth, and his mother Antonietta – though only 18 years old – chose not to marry again, preferring to devote herself to charitable works and her son's education.

Antonietta's son took after her in devotion to God and generosity toward the poor. He studied Latin and Greek with tutors in his youth, and was afterward sent to Pavia to study philosophy. He went on to study medicine at the University of Padua, earning his degree at age 22 and returning to Cremona. Despite his noble background and secular profession, the young doctor had no intention of either marrying or accumulating wealth. While caring for the physical conditions of his patients, he also encouraged them to find spiritual healing through repentance and the sacraments.

Anthony also taught catechism to children, and went on to participate in the religious formation of young adults. He eventually decided to withdraw from the practice of medicine, and with the encouragement of his spiritual director he began to study for the priesthood. Ordained a priest at age 26, Anthony is said to have experienced a miraculous occurrence during his first Mass, being surrounded by a supernatural light and a multitude of angels

during the consecration of the Eucharist. Contemporary witnesses marveled at the event, and testified to it after his death.

Church life in Cremona had suffered decline in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. The new priest encountered widespread ignorance and religious indifference among laypersons, while many of the clergy were either weak or corrupt. In these dire circumstances, Anthony Mary Zaccaria devoted his life to proclaiming the truths of the Gospel both clearly and charitably. Within two years, his eloquent preaching and tireless pastoral care is said to have changed the moral character of the city dramatically.

In 1530, Anthony moved to Milan, where a similar spirit of corruption and religious neglect prevailed. There, he decided to form a priestly society, the Clerics Regular of St. Paul. Inspired by the apostle's life and writings, the order was founded on a vision of humility, asceticism, poverty, and preaching. After the founder's death, they were entrusted with a prominent church named for St. Barnabas, and became commonly known as the "Barnabites."

The priest also founded a women's religious order, the Angelic Sisters of St. Paul; and an organization, the Laity of St. Paul, geared toward the sanctification of those outside the priesthood and religious life. He pioneered the "40 Hours" devotion, involving continuous prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. In 1539, Anthony became seriously ill and returned to his mother's house in Cremona. The founder of the Clerics Regular of St. Paul died on July 5, during the liturgical octave of the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, at the age of only 36.

Nearly three decades after his death, St. Anthony Mary Zaccaria's body was found to be incorrupt. He was beatified by Blessed Pope Pius IX in 1849, and declared a saint by Pope Leo XIII in 1897.