

### **A visit to St Leopold Mandic**

During a pilgrimage trip to Italy in 2005 with Swami Vishwananda we arrived late in Padua. It was midnight so I proposed to stay outside of Padua to find a hotel but Swami wanted to sleep so close as possible from the church where St Anthony of Padua is buried. So we went with the car in the middle of the city and I parked the car on the big place of the old city where the cathedral of St Anthony can be seen. I was wondering how we will get a hotel here tonight. Swami told me: "Look for an hotel". I answered: "Yes for sure, I see some hotels but all of them seem to be closed. I don't see any light. But lets go and check". Swami went also out of the car and we were checking one hotel after the other. All were closed. So we came back to the car. Suddenly, from nowhere came a man and he asked us in Italian if we were looking for a hotel and he told us that he knew a hotels' owner who was living not far from here. So he called the man with his mobile. The owner said that his hotel was full but he knew a friend who had also a hotel not far away. I was already out of service dreaming from a nice bed after this long drive. After a while the owner of the hotel called back and said he is on his way to our car. Leaning on the wheel of the car I was trying to sleep. But Swami was very alert and was discussing with the man about the different churches of the place and their opening times. After another while the owner of the hotel we were waiting for, arrived. He had some rooms that we could rent for tonight just 100 meters from here. He showed us where to park the car. And I was once again amazed with the performance of Swami Vishwananda to get two free rooms in the middle of the night, it was 2AM, in the center of Padua and for a good price, just where he wanted to stay.

We stayed two days in Padua with our small pilgrimage group. We visited the cathedral and venerated the relics of St. Anthony. Swami wanted to see another saint of Padua that he had heard about: St Leopold. The monastery of the Capuchin Franciscan monks is very close to the church. Swamiji found out the place. Here we could venerate the tomb of St Leopold Mandic. Swami had vision of the saint in the monastery. St Leopold Mandic told him that he would get a relic of him.

Swami asked and got a small relic of the great saint from a resident priest as it was told to him during the vision. He also bought a big picture of Leopold Mandic which was hanging many years in the temple of the Center in Steffenshof in Germany. Many visitors had been asking who this friendly looking old man on the picture was.

Leopold Mandic was native of Croatia, he joined the Capuchin Franciscans and was ordained several years later in spite of several health problems. He could not speak loudly enough to preach publicly. For many years he also suffered from severe arthritis, poor eyesight and a stomach ailment. Leopold taught patrology, the study of the Church Fathers, to the clerics of his province for several years, but he is best known for his work in the confessional, where he sometimes spent 13-15 hours a day. Several bishops sought out his spiritual advice.

Leopold's dream was to go to the Orthodox Christians and work for the reunion of Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy. His health never permitted it. Leopold often renewed his vow to go to the Eastern Christians; the cause of unity was constantly in his prayers. He spent also one year in Italian prison during world war, since he did not want to renounce his Croatian nationality. He was gifted with mystic abilities like prophecy. Leopold, who lived most of his life in Padua, died on July 30, 1942. His tomb was opened 1966 his corpse being still intact.