

## “How to Return”

*A sermon delivered by Saint Anthony (1195-1231) a Franciscan friar to a shoal of attentive fishes*

What is here is also somewhere, and it follows, that if something is somewhere it is also there. And if it can be there, the Creator allows that it could be anywhere. So why do we perceive it as missing? What I preach today is meant to be observed



from a distance like a painting brushed freely on canvas with a wild, loose hand that gesticulates as a fin. As a Servant of God, I’m often in one place at a given time, and at the same moment, in another place a distance away, where impartial witnesses see me speak and move in a normal fashion.

You, my brother fishes, have your choice of sweet water and salt; you have a pure and transparent element for your nourishment.

Wherever you are lost, you are also found.

God, your bountiful

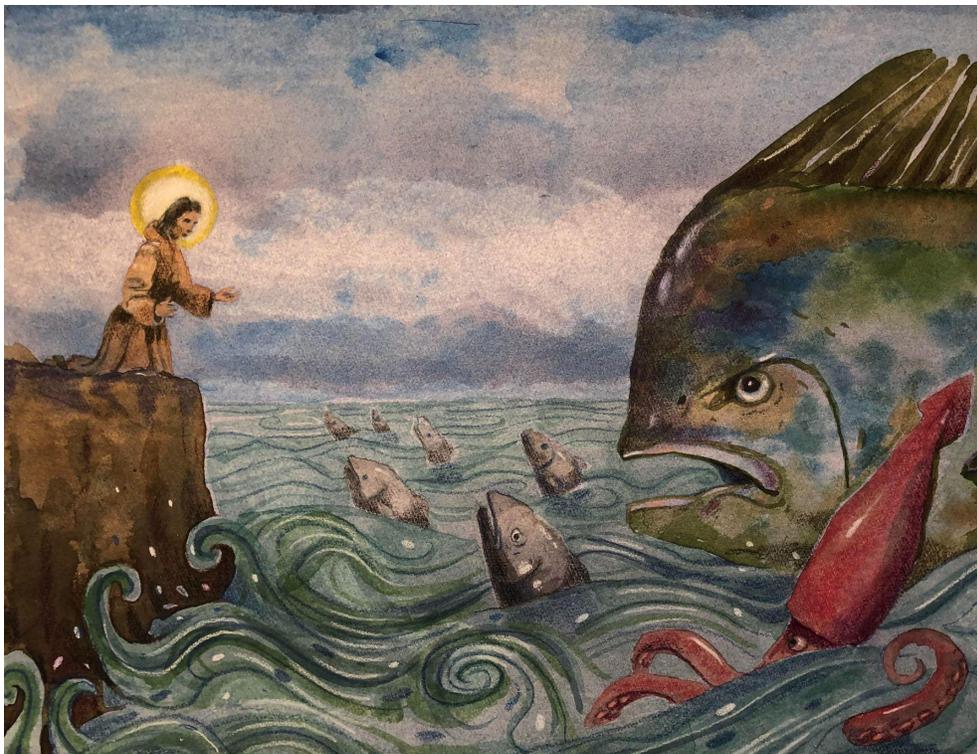
and kind Creator, when he made you, ordered you to increase and multiply. In the great flood all other creatures perished; you alone did God preserve from all harm. I praise you for your nature, which denies you speech and distraction. Such an ordinary pain is yours that it’s almost imperceptible. With this pain you are blessed

to be incorruptible, for you are impossible to domesticate and unequipped to challenge and resist your Creator's love.

That bilocation is physically impossible, that is, contrary to all the conditions of matter at present known to us, is a quandary for heretics and unbelievers to ponder.



Diverging in form to be physically present in two places at once is a power bestowed by God. Thus, for those who believe, no object is ever lost; simply it is bifurcated,



heeding a divine calling to split its presence between here and there, behaving in compliance with God's mysterious demands; to bring comfort to bedside of the sick and dying; to

appear as a sign of hope to a lonely wretch in the darkness of his days; to reunite estranged family members. This is the purpose of all objects under God. Preaching one Easter Sunday in the Cathedral of Montpellier in the presence of the clergy and a vast multitude, I remembered that I was expected to sing at the same time at the Solemn High Mass in the choir of a neighboring convent monastery. Distressed, I drew the cowl of my habit over my face, sank back in the pulpit and remained silent for a long time, still visible to the congregation. At the same moment, I appeared in the monastery choir among my brethren and sang in my office.

Therefore, I say to you, my brethren fishes, that wholeness is restored through belief alone.

Oh, Blessed Saint Anthony,  
The grace of God as made you  
A powerful advocate for our  
needs,  
And a patron for the return  
Of things lost or stolen.  
I turn to you today with fish-like  
love  
And mute belief.  
You have helped countless  
schools of believers  
To find the things they have lost:  
Material things, and more  
importantly,  
The ephemera of the spirit:  
Faith, hope, and love.  
Help me in my present need.  
I recommend what I have lost to your care  
In the hope that God will restore it to me  
If it is in His Holy Will. Amen.



