

Venerable Antonio Margil

1657 - 1726

PARADISE

Venerable Antonio Margil's nephew was stricken with tertiary fever in August of 1740 and he fervently prayed for healing from his uncle who died in 1726. Once, at about mid-day, while in his cell and praying for this intention, the Venerable appeared in resplendent light and addressed him in these words: "I am your uncle, Antonio Margil of Jesus, who because of the extreme humility I experienced while alive, now partake of an indescribable glory!" Then as he signed the sick boy's forehead with a cross, he promised him healing and he disappeared. The nephew was healed and at once arose from his bed.

Antonio Margil was born in Valencia, Spain, on August 18, 1657, of a middle class family. He attended the local schools and was truly outstanding in his humility. He was still a young man when he experienced a desire to follow the example of St. Francis of Assisi. He joined the Franciscan Order on April 22, 1673 at the Convent of Christ the King and took Antonio Maria of Jesus as his name in religion. He pursued his philosophical and theological studies and was ordained a priest at 25 years of age. He immediately volunteered for the missions to the American Indians simply to bring the message of Christ to these natives. He left on March 4, 1683 and arrived at Vera Cruz in New Spain on June 6. The

young friar joined the faculty of the missionary college of the Holy Cross at Queretero. It was for many years the base of all missionary activity for the Yucatan, Costa Rica and Guatemala. In 1716 he departed for Zacatecas where he established the College of Our Lady of Guadalupe. In 1716 he traveled to East Texas where many missions had previously been closed. He arrived with 3 priests and 2 lay-brothers. His intense efforts increased the number of foundations to six, including Our Lady of Sorrows and St. Michael of the Andes. This latter foundation was in Louisiana where Father Margil's concern was also for the French colonials. Those particular territories were in dispute between France and Spain and their governors would install missionaries of their respective nationalities, seeking always to limit any expansion of their adversaries. The Church, however, desired simply to preach the Gospel. As a result, its mediation was instrumental in weakening the controversies about the territories. In 1719, East Texas had to be abandoned and the entire Spanish population had to emigrate to San Antonio which became the most important mission in Texas. Father Antonio of Jesus was the guiding presence in all of these undertakings. As soon as it was feasible, he attempted to return to those missions that had been abandoned, but in 1722, he was recalled



to the capital of Mexico as the Father Guardian (superior) of the College of St. Francis which he had founded. For the next three years, he re-organized the missionary activity of the entire country. His apostolate was extraordinary, traveling and covering long distances on foot, often in his bare feet as a penitential gesture. He adapted himself to all the weather conditions; he ate neither meat nor fish. He slept infrequently, spending most of the night in prayer. He died in Mexico City on August 6, 1726 – regarded as a saint. Gregory XVI declared him Venerable in 1836.

