**Franciscan Routes in Coimbra**

1. ***Machado de Castro National Museum***

*The place nowadays occupied by the Machado de Castro National Museum was the site chosen by the Romans two thousand years ago, to implant the forum – political, social, and economic center – of Aeminium, name given by the Romans to Coimbra, having been transformed in the Episcopal Palace of Coimbra during the medieval period, where the bishops of Coimbra lived until the Portuguese Republic was established in 1910. It is now one of the largest museums in the country, where various elements of devotion to Saint Anthony are kept, from different eras and in different types of materials, and where it is kept the reliquary urn ordered by abbess Catarina D'Eça (1444-1521) to house the relics of the Franciscan Protomartyrs in the monastery of Lorvão.*

1. ***Old Cathedral of Coimbra***

*Constructed by order of king Afonso Henriques in 1162, this cathedral was the headquarters of the bishopric of Coimbra and the city's main temple until 1772, initially having been the chosen site for the reception of the relics of the Franciscan Protomartyrs. Inside, one can admire a canvas representing Our Lady delivering the Infant Jesus to Saint Anthony of Padua.*

1. ***Monastery of Santa Cruz***

*Founded in 1131 with the patronage of Afonso Henriques, the first king of Portugal, this monastery was the headquarter of the Order of Canons Regular of Saint Augustine in Portugal, and one of the most important cultural centers in Western Europe in the Middle Ages. In 1220 the relics of the Five Franciscan Protomartyrs, brought under the influence of Infante D. Pedro, son of King Sancho I of Portugal, arrived at the Monastery of Santa Cruz of Coimbra. Fernando de Bolhões, who in that year had taken the priestly order as Canon Regular, felt irresistibly attracted by the Franciscan spirit. He leaves the opulent Canons Regular monastery to go and live in the poor hospice of Olivais, exchanges the habit and white murza of Canon Regular of Saint Augustine for the Franciscan burel and changes his baptismal name – Fernando – to that of António and, in July of 1220, he leaves Coimbra for his preaching journey, dying in Padua in the year 1231, and being canonized in the next year by Pope Gregory IX.*

1. ***Monastery of Santa Clara-a-Velha***

*Founded in 1283 by Dona Mor Dias, a noblewoman from Coimbra, the Monastery of Santa Clara was initially a modest complex, consisting of a small church, cloister and dormitory. The initial works were interrupted by the Canons Regular of Saint Augustine, who did not look favourably on the foundation of a new monastic house and filed a lawsuit with the intent of extinguishing this monastery. Years later, in 1314, the Queen of Portugal, Elizabeth of Aragon, future Holy Queen Elizabeth, became interested in rebuilding the monastery, ordering the construction of new buildings, of which the cloister and the church, consecrated in 1330, stand out. Housing the female branch of the Franciscan Order- the Poor Clares- the monastery received hight patronage from the Portuguese royal family. However, the frequent floods caused by the Mondego River led to constant architectural changes in the monastic buildings, until their final abandonment in the mid-17th century. After almost 300 years submerged in the river, the monastic complex was rescued from the waters of the Mondego and its ruins are now an integral part of the Interpretative Center of the Monastery of Santa Clara-a-Velha.*

1. ***Convent of São Francisco***

*In 1247, the Franciscans left Olivais to settle in the large Convent of São Francisco, on the left bank of the Mondego River. Located next to the current Santa Clara bridge, the name of the old Convent lingered in the memory as São Francisco da Ponte. The rise of the Mondego riverbed, responsible for successive floods and silting, forced the friars to build a new building in a safer location, at the foot of Santa Clara Hill. The Franciscans settled in the new Convent in 1609, which lasted until the extinction of the Religious Orders, in the 19th century. Having been bought at a public auction and converted into a wool factory, the convent has been owned by the Coimbra City Council since the end of the 20th century, which, by keeping what was left of the original architecture as possible, transformed it into the largest cultural and congress center in the Central Region of Portugal.*

1. ***Monastery of Santa Clara-a-Nova***

*In the middle of the 17th century, the Poor Clares saw their dream of a new monastery come true, more sheltered from the banks of the river. This new building, sponsored by king John IV of Portugal, was completed in 1696 and would come to be known as the Monastery of Santa Clara-a-Nova, with not only the nuns being transferred here, but also the two tombs of Holy Queen Elizabeth, which previously laid in the Monastery of Santa Clara-a-Velha. In the lower choir, one can admire the medieval tomb of the queen, built by master Pêro. The other tomb, made of silver and crystal, was commissioned by the bishop of Coimbra Afonso Castelo-Branco,* *in the first quarter of the 17th century, and can be found at the altar of the Church of Holy Queen Elizabeth.*

1. ***Church of Santo António dos Olivais***

*Since the beginning of Portuguese nationality there has been a chapel invoking Saint Anthony the Great, located at the top of Olivais hill. In 1217-18, queen Urraca, wife of king Afonso II of Portugal, lent this chapel to the Franciscans that had just arrived in Portugal, who settled here. Next to the chapel of Saint Anthony the Great, the Franciscans founded a humble hermitage. In 1219, Friar Otto landed here with four companions (Friar Berardo, Friar Pedro, Friar Acúrsio and Friar Adjuto) on their way to the mission in Morocco and to death, as they were the first Franciscans sacrificed to the faith of Christ, beheaded by the Amir al-Mu'minin, Abu-Jacub. After leaving the Monastery of Santa Cruz, the reborn Friar António, who was preparing to leave for Morocco, following the example of the Franciscan Protomartyrs, lived for a short time in the hermitage formerly occupied by them. After the canonization of Saint Anthony, in 1232, the modest convent of Olivais of Coimbra, in memory of the great thaumaturge, changed the invocation from Saint Anthony the Great to Saint Anthony (of Lisbon/Padua).*

***Final Note:*** *A visit to the old town area of Coimbra (no. 1, 2, 3 and 7) allows the visitor to be transported to the foundation of the kingdom of Portugal. The journey of Saint Anthony of Padua, right henchman of Saint Francis, starts in the Monastery of Santa Cruz, where the young Fernando will be touched by the faith of the protomartyrs, forever changing his life and ways. In the Old Cathedral and the National Museum Machado de Castro, the visitor can find artistic inspirations based on the life of Saint Anthony, which will culminate in the Church of Santo António dos Olivais, where Anthony spent some time before departing on his spiritual odyssey of evangelization and preaching. In this church the visitor will be able to see “azulejos”, paintings and other forms of art that will tell the entire narrative of the saint Anthony life, documenting that his history began in Coimbra.*

*By visiting the Franciscan monasteries (no. 4, 5 and 6) the visitor can discover the origin of the establishment of the Franciscan order* *in the city, and especially the female branch. These three monuments grant the visitor an understanding of the mendicant monastic reality in Coimbra, its origin and evolution, from the 14th to the 18th centuries.*