

Antony

Saint Name: Saint Anthony, Abbot
Dates: January 12, 251 – January 17, 356
Location: Egypt
Feast Day: January 17

Anthony was born in Coma, Lower Egypt on January 12, 251 to Christian parents. As a young adult he inherited about 300 acres of land and his younger sister. One day at church he read Mathew 19:21: “If you wish to be perfect, go sell your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come follow Me”. Anthony was a doer not a seer; upon leaving the church, he gave away all of his property except what he and his sister needed to live on. Later, upon hearing Mathew 6:34, “So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today,” Anthony gave away everything else and sent his sister to a convent. For the next 15 years, Anthony served as a disciple to a local hermit. Anthony struggled with both his decision to give up his possessions and his faith and was ridiculed, beaten and even thrown into a tomb for his actions. It was written that Anthony asked God, “Where were you when I needed you the most” and God replied, “I was here, I was watching your struggle. Because you didn’t give in, I will stay with you and protect you forever.” He left the village where he lived to follow a path of prayer, fasting, and manual labor. For him, it was not enough to listen to the Word of God, he lived it. Anthony left town and moved to the desert where he lived sealed in a room for twenty years surviving on bread and water alone. After 20 years of seclusion, Anthony opened his door and walked out calmly. People came to talk to him, to be healed by him, to be comforted by his words, and to learn God’s grace from him. Some formed the first monastic community where they came to meet Anthony. Eventually, with so many people coming to seek Anthony out, he became afraid that he would become too proud or that people would start to worship him instead of God; so, he left his desert home for a more secluded area of Egypt where he was unknown. His friends found him and brought him back. For all of his solitude, fasting and service to God, Anthony was rewarded with a long and healthy life, dying at the age of 105 on January 17, 356.

Anthony is known as the Father of All Monks because he organized his disciples into a worshipful community and inspired other similar communities throughout Egypt. He was not canonized – he was proclaimed a saint by early Christians. Canonization did not begin until the 12th century. Saint Anthony’s feast day is January 17 and he is the Patron of skin diseases, basket makers, brush makers, and gravediggers.

