



Saint of the Week

Anthony of Egypt

Feast Day—January 17
c. 251-356

Associated with the beginnings of monasticism, Anthony gave his inherited lands and wealth in Egypt to the poor. From the age of about 20 until his death at 105 years old, he lived as a hermit in remote hilltop and desert locations. What is known about him comes from a hagiography written by St. Athanasius of Alexandria. Around the year 306, Anthony began to accept disciples, founding his first monastery as a collection of hermits' cells. He cultivated a garden, wove rush mats, and fought many temptations and demons. Visitors sought his wise counsel, collected in the sayings of the "desert fathers," and the bishops of Alexandria summoned him at age 87 to help refute Arianism.

He is the patron of basket and brush makers, butchers, gravediggers, and skin diseases.

Speaking about the power of the monastic life during his visit to Egypt, Pope Francis exhorted, "I urge you . . . draw upon the example of St. Paul the Hermit, St. Anthony, the holy Desert Fathers, and the countless monks and nuns who by their lives and example opened the gates of heaven to so many of our brothers and sisters. You too can be salt and light, and thus an occasion of salvation for yourselves and for all others, believers and non-believers alike, and especially for those who are poor, those in need, the abandoned and discarded" (Address, April 29, 2017).

