

Saint Antony performed the visitation of his monks a little before his death, which he foretold them with his last instructions; but no tears could move him to die among them. It appears from Saint Athanasius that the Christians had learned from the pagans their custom of embalming the bodies of the dead, which abuse, proceeding from vanity and sometimes superstition, Saint Antony had often condemned. To prevent this, he ordered that his body should be buried in the earth as the patriarchs were, and privately, on his mountain, by his two disciples, Macarius and Amathas, who had remained with him the last fifteen years, to serve him in his remote cell in his old age... He hastened back to that solitude, and some time after fell sick: he repeated to the two disciples his orders for their burying his body secretly, and after bidding them farewell, he stretched out his feet without any other sign, calmly ceased to breathe. His death happened in the year 356, probably on the 17th of January, on which the most ancient Martyrologies name him, and which the Greek empire kept as a holyday soon after his death. He was one hundred and five years old.

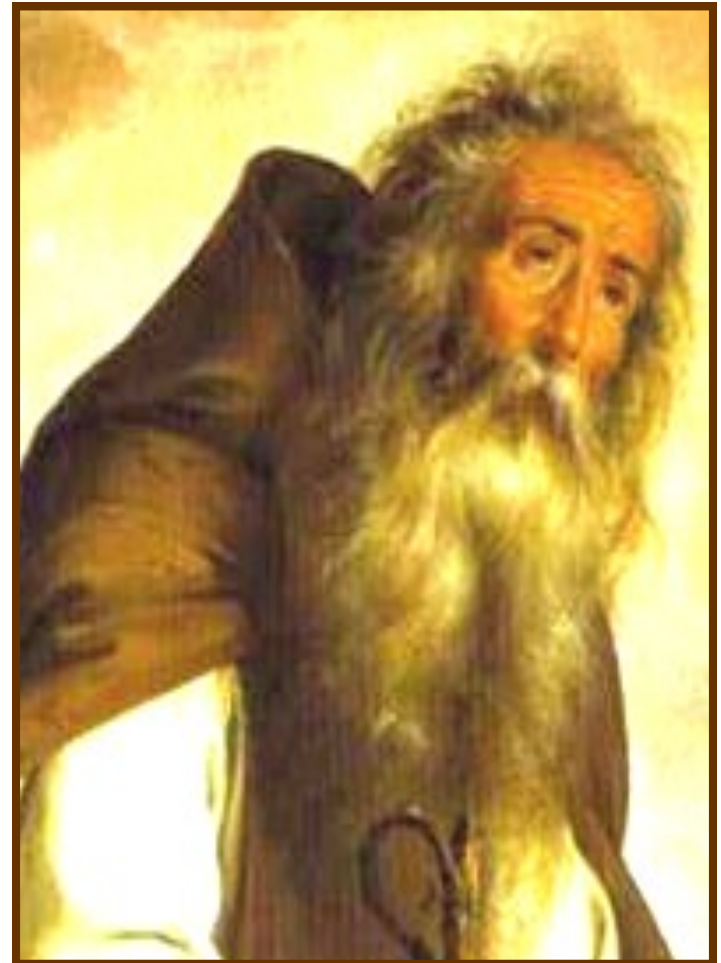
A most sublime gift of heavenly contemplation and prayer was the fruit of this great saint's holy retirement. But the foundation of his most ardent charity, and that sublime contemplation by which his soul soared in noble and lofty flights above all earthly things, was laid in the purity and disengagement of his affections, the contempt of the world, a most profound humility, and the universal mortification of his senses and the powers of his soul...

Antony always told those who came to visit him that the key to the ascetic life was perseverance, not to think proudly, "We've lived an ascetic life for a long time" but treat each day as if it were the beginning. To many, perseverance is simply not giving up, hanging in there. But to Antony perseverance meant waking up each day with the same zeal as the first day... *(excerpted from: www.cin.org; www.catholic.org)

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.pamphletstoinspire.com

Saint Antony, Abbot

Feast Day: January 17



**Father of Monks
and
Patron of Skin Diseases**

Saint Antony, Abbot and Patriarch of Monks

*Saint Antony was born at Coma, a village near Heraclea, or Great Heracleopolis, in Upper Egypt, on the borders of Arcadia, or middle Egypt, in 251. His parents, who were Christians, and rich, to prevent his being tainted by bad example and vicious conversation, kept him always at home; so that he grew up unacquainted with any branch of human literature, and could read no language but his own. He was remarkable from his childhood for his temperance, a close attendance on church duties, and a punctual obedience to his parents. By their death he found himself possessed of a very considerable estate... Nearly six months later, he heard read in the church those words of Christ to the rich young man: "Go sell what thou hast, and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." He sold all his possessions and retired into a life of solitude near his village, in imitation of a certain old man who led the life of a hermit in the neighborhood of Coma...

To satisfy the importunities of others, about the year 305, the fifty-fifth of his age, he founded his first monastery at Phaium... strangers knew him from among his disciples by the joy which was always painted on his countenance, resulting from the inward peace and composure of his soul... Retirement in his cell was his delight, and divine contemplation and prayer his perpetual occupation... He often exhorted his disciples to guard against temptations, and to resist the devil with vigor...

When the Emperor Maximinus renewed the persecution of Christians in 311, Saint Antony, hoping to receive the crown of martyrdom, went to Alexandria, served and encouraged the martyrs in the mines and dungeons, before the tribunals, and at the places of execution. In 312, the persecution being abated, he returned to his monastery...

Saint Antony always looked upon himself as the least and the very outcast of mankind... We are told that he once fell into dejection, finding uninterrupted contemplation his strength, and he applied himself to manual labor as directed by a vision of an angel who appeared to him saying, "Do thus, and thou shalt be saved."...

In 339, he saw in a vision the havoc which the Arian persecution would bring to Alexandria and clearly foretold it... Saint Jerome and Rufin relate that at Alexandria, Antony met with the famous Didymus, and told him that he ought not to regret much the loss of eyes, but to rejoice in the treasure of that interior light which the apostles enjoyed, and by which we see God, and kindle the fire of his love in our souls... When certain philosophers asked him how he could spend time in solitude without the pleasure of reading books, he replied that nature was his great book... When others, despising him as an illiterate man, came with the design to ridicule his ignorance, he asked them with great simplicity, which was first, reason or learning, and which had produced the other? The philosophers answered, "Reason, or good sense." "This, then," said Antony, "suffices." The philosophers went away astonished at the wisdom and dignity with which he prevented their objections...

Saint Jerome mentions letters written by Saint Antony to divers monasteries, wherein, he inculcates perpetual watchfulness against temptations, prayer, mortification, and humility. He observes that the devil fell by pride, so he assaults virtue in us principally by that temptation. A maxim which he frequently repeats is, that the knowledge of ourselves is the necessary and only step by which we can ascend to the knowledge and love of God... No ancients mention any monastic rule written by Saint Antony. His example and instructions have been the most perfect rule for the monastic life to all succeeding ages...

Hearing that his disciples express their surprise at the great multitude who embrace a monastic life, Antony told them with tears that the time would come when monks would be fond of living in cities and stately buildings, and of eating at dainty tables, and be only distinguished from persons of the world by their habit, but that still some among them would arise to the spirit of true perfection... In the discourses he made to his monks, a rigorous self-examination of all their actions, every evening, was a practice which he strongly inculcated. He exhorts them to contemn the world for heaven, to spend every day as if they knew it to be their last...