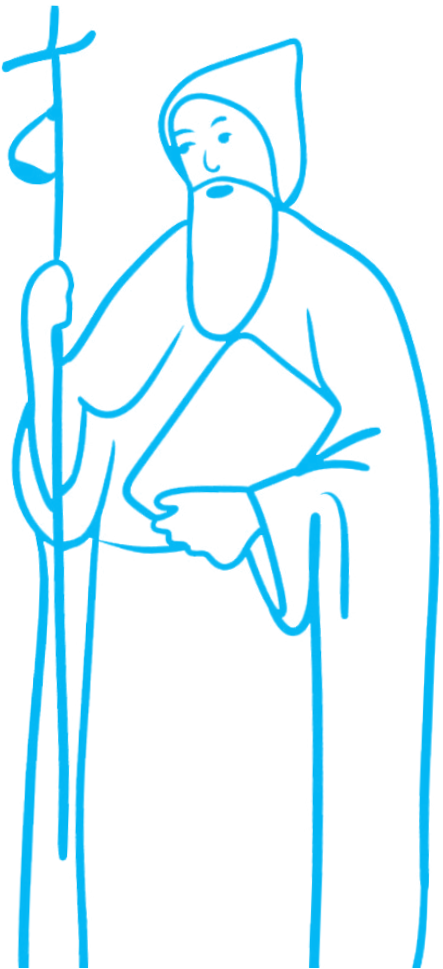




RAISING SAINTS

CHILDREN + FAMILY MINISTRY // WEEKLY GUIDE FOR TEACHERS + PARENTS

FEAST OF ST. ANTHONY THE HERMIT



How do you cope with the challenges presented to young and old who live in our Western society? Wealth and opulence, technological advances, and fast communication through social media enable young and old to be connected to a great deal of knowledge. Commercial advertisements which continually bombard our attention give the message that ownership of material goods is the only source of happiness in life. The importance to have all that is available and to be involved in all sorts of activities has left many impoverished for time. Children and adults are so programmed throughout the week that they don't have time to relax and just be! Recently health care professionals have conducted studies which point to the dangers of not having unscheduled, quiet time for good physical, mental and emotional health; and for faithful believers the same is true for spiritual health. They have even pointed out that this type of existence does affect healthy brain development in children, particularly in their thinking and creative abilities.

We might attribute this enslavement to the dictates of society and the secular world only to our times. However, we know that in every age human beings have had challenges to face in balancing their time or being influenced by the dictates of their society. We know that in third century Egypt Christians who were devoted followers of Jesus Christ faced the same challenges. Our attention turns to St. Anthony the Hermit, sometimes also called St. Anthony the Egyptian. Our Church commemorates his feast day this year on January 17. We have much to learn from St. Anthony about cultivating our ability to be still and quiet.

St. Anthony was born 251 A.D. into a well-to-do Egyptian family which was well reputed for their Christian life. Even as a child Anthony did not indulge in worldly wealth and pleasures. He

lived a simple life and devoted his youth to learning and practicing his Christian faith. His parents died early and left him at the age of twenty in charge of the care of his sister and their estate. One day as the Gospel was being read in Church he heard the words, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come follow me." Mt. 19:21. He did so, reserving some funds for the care of his sister. He withdrew to solitude outside his village. Most of his time were devoted to self-discipline and working with his hands weaving baskets for his simple livelihood. He visited older men who practiced this simple and devout life of prayer and learned from them how to perfect his own spiritual life. He fought the temptations of the devil through praying the psalms and speaking the name of Christ so that he could live according to the will of God.

Certainly not all are drawn to the monastic discipline of St. Anthony. However, all Christians are called to become saints. We can learn much from his life to help our spiritual development:

the need to be quiet
 the need to be alone
 the need for discipline

Parents and teachers can encourage children to start developing good habits of taking time to be quiet, enjoying and playing outdoors in nature. Time alone to read a good book or work with one's hands can lead them to listen to their "heart", their inner world where God speaks to them. And finally, regular practice to take the quiet time, or time alone will strengthen in them the ability to make good choices. This will lead for discipline which is so essential as they grow into their teen years.

Through the prayers of St. Anthony may we all grow in relationship to Christ our Lord.

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