

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE

SERVICES

Wed: Moleben to the Theotokos 6:00 AM

Friday: Moleben to the Cross 6:00 AM

Saturday: Great Vespers 5:00 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM

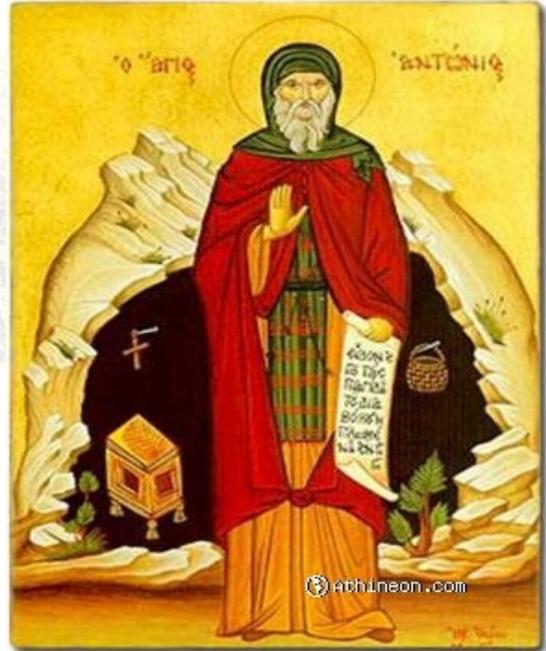
***Please note that attendance is currently limited by restrictions dictated by local response to the COVID-19 pandemic; if you are currently not assigned to an attendance group, please contact outreach@apostlethomas.org for information on when you may attend.**

January 17, 2021 | 32nd Sunday After Pentecost

Venerable Anthony the Great

Perhaps the most effective tactic adopted by the adversary of man's salvation has been to blind man to the reality of the spiritual warfare being waged for possession of his soul. We have consequently become spiritually flabby and easy prey for the enemy. To escape such a perilous condition we would do well to contemplate more often the examples of the saints who engaged in direct combat with the Evil One, unmasking his deceptions and thereby disarming him. Nowhere is this illustrated more dramatically than in the life of St. Anthony the Great. Written by St. Athanasius who personally knew St. Anthony, this Life is a spiritual classic with which all Christians should be familiar.

St. Anthony was an Egyptian, born c. 251 of noble Christian parents who provided well for their son's future by educating him in the fear of God. His parents left this world when Anthony was 18 or 20, and he inherited a substantial fortune in terms of earthly wealth. But although he was at the age most attracted by fortune's delights, he aspired only to amass the riches of virtues.



Anthony was reflecting one day upon how the Apostles had forsaken all to follow after Christ. when he heard in church the words of the Gospel: "If you wish to be perfect, go and sell everything you have...and come and follow Me" (Matt. 19:21). Thus confirmed in his desire to do likewise, Anthony sold his estate and distributed the money to the poor, persuading his younger sister to be likeminded, he gave her into the care of some virgins.

Now free of all earthly attachments, the young man began to lead a life of great abstinence and self-denial on the outskirts of his village. He gave his mind no occasion to think back upon the affairs of this world but led it into a desert that it might be occupied with thoughts of pleasing God alone. He delighted in visiting the dwellings of righteous men and studying their virtuous habits which he proceeded to adopt for himself, exercising himself in their practice. Indeed, he was like a bee which gathers nectar from various blossoms and creates out of it a fragrantly sweet honey. With his concentrated desire Anthony rapidly ascended the ladder of perfection. The enemy, however, could not endure to behold the likeness of Christ shining forth from this creation of dust and ashes, and he determined to destroy this 'house of virtue.'

The first campaign was waged on the battlefield of the mind. Anthony experienced a barrage of unsettling thoughts--flattery, the allurements of the world and all the pleasures his former wealth could buy, concern for his sister's welfare, the difficulties of the path he had chosen. The vicious net was craftily woven, but the Saint recognized it as the handiwork of his adversary and tore it apart by means of intense prayer and vigilance, deflecting any and all disturbing thoughts before they took hold in his mind. The battle grew more intense when the 'Enemy', taking advantage of the Saint's youth, assailed him with lustful thoughts, inflaming the natural appetites of the flesh until the Saint was burning with his own lust. He manfully fought back by mortifying his body with increased fasting to quench the passions of the flesh, and by meditating on death and the eternal torments which await those who give themselves over to the spirit of fornication. And so he escaped unharmed, even strengthened by this experience.

When the Evil One found himself so disgraced, he took on a human voice and complained bitterly to Anthony: "I have deceived and conquered many in my time; but now in your case, as in that of many others, I am defied by your ascetic labors."

Knowing that his antagonist would continue to stalk him as a roaring lion after his prey, Anthony did not allow himself to relax his vigilance on account of his victory. He passed many nights without sleep, engrossed in prayer, and limited his bodily nourishment to bread and water, of which he partook once a day at evening. For, he said, by weakening the pleasures of the body the mind is

strengthened. Such disregard did he have for the body as to imitate the nature of the fleshless ones, i.e., the angels. The severity of his labors and his accumulated virtues astonished the older ascetics, but Anthony never thought about his spiritual progress and regarded each day as the beginning of his spiritual journey, thereby shielding himself from pride and vainglory.

For the sake of greater solitude, Anthony moved further from the village to a burial place at the edge of the desert, where he locked himself up in a sepulchre; only allowing a servant to come at rare intervals with a supply of bread. The enemy, embittered by his previous defeat, attacked with vengeance. This time the assault was physical. A whole troop of demons came one night and beat the Saint until the very breath of life was ready to leave him. But even as he lay on the ground, covered with bruises and unable to stand, he said in a loud voice: "Here, devils, here am I, Anthony, ready for more of your wounds. Try your worst, for you shall never separate me from Christ." He fortified himself by singing the words of the Psalmist: "Though a host should encamp against me, yet my heart shall not fear."

Incensed by the audacity of Anthony's challenge, the Devil gathered his minions: "Don't you see now? This fellow could not be restrained either by the spirit of fornication or by bangs and bruises,.. We must assail him by other means."

That night, as Anthony was still lying on the ground recovering, a horde of demons shook the walls of the sepulchre and rushed in to terrorize the Saint. For this purpose they had taken on the forms of hideous wild beasts--hissing snakes, roaring lions, ferocious wolves, a bull which threatened to gore the victim. But Anthony was not frightened by what he perceived to be mere spectral creatures, and he made bold to mock his enemy's impotence: "What is the use of all this vain uproar? If you have power to hurt, why don't you? But you can't, for the Lord is my shield and my wall of safety." The demons could only gnash their teeth in reply.

When Anthony had thus manfully proven himself as a champion athlete in the spiritual arena, he was granted to experience the comforting presence of the Lord. Lifting his eyes heavenward he saw a roof-curtain drawn aside and a ray of light descending upon him. Straightway the demons vanished, and Anthony felt his bodily pains melt away. Consoled by this outpouring of Divine Grace, he rested briefly from the fatigue of battle before addressing his Master aloud: "Lord, where were You when these sufferings and tribulations came upon me? Why didn't You help me?" He heard a voice in reply: "I was here, Anthony, but I wanted to witness your combat. Having seen that you withstood your adversary without retreating, I shall from now on be your Helper and shall make your name celebrated far and wide as My faithful servant."

Anthony knelt in prayer to give thanks to God for this promise and for the peace and newfound strength which filled his soul, the grace-given rewards of his victory. He was then about 35 years old. The next day Anthony left the place of the sepulchres to live as a hermit in the desert. Even as he journeyed, the enemy continued to lay all kinds of traps for him, but the Saint was not to be outsmarted. Seeing a large silver disk in his path, he immediately surmised that it was a ruse of the devil, for had some traveler passed that way and lost it, surely he would have retraced his steps to recover such a valuable object. "O Devil," he cried out, "you will not so easily draw me away from my purpose. May you take your silver and go down to perdition together." No sooner had he said this than the silver disk disappeared in a cloud of smoke, proof that it was indeed the devil's creation.

At length Anthony settled in a cleft of some rocks beside a river, blocking the entrance so as not to be disturbed. For twenty years he remained there in solitude, admitting no visitors but only a supply of bread three times a year. It must not be imagined, however, that he enjoyed a blissful life of uninterrupted peace. Those who came in hopes of seeing or hearing a word from the far famed ascetic were often perplexed by the raucous din coming from the cleft. They supposed a band of angry men had somehow gained entrance, for they could make out shouts of: "Depart from us! Why have you come to our country to cause our death?!" Through a fissure, however, they saw that the Saint was quite alone, and they understood that the tumult was made by demons.

Indeed, the demons quite exhausted their bag of tricks in their frantic efforts to deter the Saint from his course, for fear that his example would inspire others to invade their desert domain with fasting and psalm-singing which they found intolerable. And this is just what happened. Whole multitudes began coming to the desert to lose their lives, like Anthony, for the sake of the Kingdom. Persuaded by their entreaties, the Saint relinquished his solitude to share the light of his accumulated experience with these eager new recruits in Christ's army. By word and example he fanned such zeal for the ascetic life that many monasteries--the first in the history of Christianity--were founded under his influence, for which reason he is known as the Father of Monasticism.

In guiding these warriors of Christ, St. Anthony exhorted them to pursue their aim with diligence, for "the promise of eternal life is bought with a small price.., and the work is easy, if we be only willing." He warned them of the subtle craftiness of the demonic powers, exposing their numerous tricks and guises whereby they seek to trip and destroy the Christian whom they find laboring on the path of salvation. He spoke of the evil and impure thoughts they try to instigate and of the fearful appearances they assume, of their pretention in foretelling future events. "Sometimes, too, they appear in the habit of monks, and talk very religiously in

order to gain our confidence and then to seduce us." At the same time, he encouraged the brethren not to fear when they came under attack, but to fortify themselves by faith and the sign of the Cross: "If they find us rejoicing in the Lord, and meditating or conversing on divine things, then demons have no power over the Christian...for when they see the soul secured by such thoughts, they turn away deeply ashamed of themselves."

Besides his extraordinary skill in discerning spirits, St. Anthony had other gifts --of healing, of casting out demons, of foretelling future events. And although he was illiterate he readily outwitted many philosophers. Once, when some 'wise' men came thinking to mock his Christian faith, St. Anthony brought forward several people who were troubled with demons, and said, "Can you heal these men by your reasoning? or by any art or magic, calling upon your idols?" The Saint then called upon the name of Christ and marked the demoniacs with the sign of the Cross, a first, second and third time. Immediately the men were healed of their insanity, and the philosophers departed amazed by the miracle and by Anthony's wisdom.

Crowds flocked to this heavenly-born physician of the Egyptian desert, and no one left without being enriched from St. Anthony's store of gifts. "For who," writes St. Athanasius, "went to him in sorrow, and did not come back rejoicing? Who went to him in anger, and was not converted into a friend? What poor man met him, with a dejected heart, who, after he saw and heard him, did not go away despising riches and content with poverty? If a monk was remiss, he excited him to diligence. If a young man went to the mountain and beheld Anthony, he straightway renounced pleasure and embraced a life of temperance. Whosoever came to him, tempted by a demon, was relieved; or if troubled with evil thoughts was tranquilized."

Even when St. Anthony had attained the heights of perfection, he never hesitated to learn from someone else. Nor did he, in his humility, ascribe his spiritual gifts to his own achievements, but exhorted those who benefited by his prayers to thank God Who is the source and cause of all that is good.

St. Anthony reached the venerable age of 104, still sound in mind and body notwithstanding his severe mode of life, Foreseeing the approach of death, he gave a final word of instruction to the brethren, warning them to beware of schismatics and the Arian heretics, and urging them to diligently guard their hearts and not to fear the demons. He died in peace after a short illness, welcoming his journey into eternity as et foreigner returning to his homeland. His life, once hidden in the desert, became famed throughout the Roman Empire, not on account of worldly wisdom or riches or political power, but because of his profound piety, towards God, to Whom he brought glory and honor. Amen. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians 1:12-18

Brethren, give thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Luke 18:18-27

At that time, a certain ruler asked Jesus, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good but One, *that is*, God. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother.' " And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth." So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." And those who heard it said, "Who then can be saved?" But He said, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

A Word From the Holy Fathers

We give praise to Christ for his immeasurable grace.

We ask him to infuse our hearts with the Holy Spirit that we might not be ashamed of the pains he suffered for us. We ask him to help us abandon sin and forsake worldly pleasures, as well as the counsels of Satan, our enemy, through whose deception we were first cast into the abyss of sin. We beseech Christ to purify our intention, that we might love him more fully and more truly and keep our baptismal covenant with him, lest in exchange for sin we cast away what we received through his pains and eat his flesh and drink his blood in an unworthy manner and thus sin our souls and experience a punishment worse than what we merited through our sins alone. We beg him not to turn away from us, according to

his promise in his gospel, and to help us live in accordance with his precepts for moral conduct, which are life for our souls, that we might share with him in his kingdom even as now he makes us share in his pains, as also the apostle Paul said. We ask him not to allow us to give in to our lusts so that we sink into sin and end up in destruction. Rather, may he guide and direct us, that we might live in his felicity and joy. To him be praise, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever! Amen!

— Theodore Abu Qurrah

Three Prayers For Every Orthodox Christian Household

Prayer When We Light an Oil Lamp or a Candle In Our Homes

Let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven.

Prayer When We Light Incense In Our Homes

Let my prayer be set forth before You as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. Hear me, O Lord.

We offer you this incense, Christ our God, as a fragrant spiritual aroma; accept it upon your heavenly altar, and send down upon us the Grace of Your All-Holy Spirit.

Prayer When We Drink Holy Water

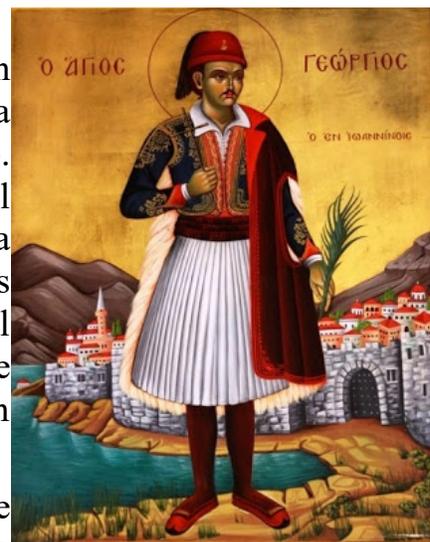
Lord make this to be for me a source of incorruption, a gift of sanctification, a deliverance from sins, an averting of diseases, to be unapproachable by hostile powers, filled with angelic strength.

(from johnsanidopoulos.com)

Also Commemorated Today: George the New Martyr of Ioannina

George was born in 1808 in the village Tsourchli in what is now Grevena Prefecture, Greece, the son of a poor farmer Constantine and his wife Vasilo. Orphaned at a young age and without any formal education, George moved to Ioannina and became a servant of the Turks, employed in the Turkish army as a horse groom and stable hand under the name “Infidel (Giaour) Hasan”. Modest in demeanor, George wore the traditional long foustanela of his village and an embroidered waistcoat, as now depicted on his icons.

George entered into a new phase in his life as he became engaged to and then married to Eleni, a



Christian girl from Ioannina, on the feast day of St. Demetrius. In December 1837, the couple had a son, John who they had baptized according to the Orthodox tradition on January 7, 1838. These events aroused the suspicion of the Islamic Turks and provoked his persecution as the Turks had considered him a muslim Turk who was abandoning Islam.

George refused to deny his Christian faith and he was subjected to torture by the Turks. During the tortures he courageously maintained, "I was never a Turk, I was always a Christian". Sentenced to the gallows, George steadfastly defended his faith. Facing the gallows with composure and bravery, George answered his tormentors' final question to him "What are you?". After he had asked that his hands be untied, he made the sign of the cross and replied, "I am a Christian and I shall die a Christian, I bow before my Christ and my Lady Theotokos." His martyrdom occurred on January 17, 1838.

His body was left to hang from the gallows for three days. When taken down, his body was found not having begun decaying, which caused even many Turks to believe in his holiness and allowed George's body to be buried honorably.

The people began to honor George as a saint even as he was being tortured, and soon after his death asked for formal recognition of George as a saint from the Ecumenical Patriarchate. George of Ioannina, the New Martyr, was officially glorified on September 19, 1839 by the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. To make his sainthood less obvious to the Turks, the Synod, at the time, asked that it be celebrated on January 17, together with St. Anthony the Great.

The first icon to the newly martyred saint was made on January 30, 1838, only days after his martyrdom. It was commissioned by the Hieromonk Chrysanthos Lainos who was George's spiritual father and guide and depicted St. George in his traditional clothes, holding a cross in his right hand and a scroll in his left. (*from myocn.net*)

Fifth Issue of SPF50 NOW AVAILABLE!!



Scripture – Prayer - Family

Thank you to all our families who have participated in the SPF50 Ministry. Together we have completed 4 of the SPF50 publications!!

The fifth edition of SPF50 is now available. The reading schedule will begin on **January 10, 2021.**

We are excited for the NEW reading program in the fifth edition!! The NEW reading program will

highlight many **ESSENTIAL Biblical Stories** like Creation, Noah and the Ark, the Exodus, the call of the Prophet Samuel, and many others throughout the Old and New Testaments.

In addition, in order to support families and parishes engaged in the SPF50 Ministry, we will be hosting an **online event for parents** across the Diocese on **Thursday, January 14, 2021 at 6:30pm**. The online event is being offered to support and encourage us as we make prayer and Scripture reading a part of our family's life of faith at home. Join other parents around the Diocese as we simply talk with one another and share our experiences with each other. The online event is free-of-charge. You can sign up for the event at the following link: [SPF50 Parents Event](#). Signing up is quick and easy.

If you haven't joined SPF50 yet, the new year is a great time to start! Make a commitment to reading Scripture and praying together with your family. Even the busiest of families can make a commitment to read from the Bible and pray together for 50 minutes a month. Don't forget to fill out the Commitment Card which is available in the SPF50 Section of the Diocesan Website, and then return the Card to your parish priest.

To access this material or to find out more about how SPF50 can help your family grow in Christ, visit the Diocesan Website at acrod.org and look for the SPF50 logo.

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Diocesan Website: <http://www.acrod.org>

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In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri & Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Presbyteria Katie Baker & family, Santiago Alzugaray, Patty Blaydoe, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana & Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Luke & Marlena Cooper, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Ron Dominiecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Howl family, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Tucker Karl & family, Robert & Pam Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, Luke & Mia Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Nicholas Pavlik, Westin Perry & Parents,

John Reece, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore & Christina Ristas, Robinson Family, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Bernie Takabayashi & family, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Joe & Darlene Waters, Christine, Jo, Marshall, Nathaniel, Dcn. Nectarios & Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie & the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)