



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



Fr. Michael Brunner  
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Saint Antony of Egypt

Reading 1

Heb 4:12-16

The word of God is living and effective,  
sharper than any two-edged sword,  
penetrating even between soul and spirit,  
joints and marrow,  
and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart.  
No creature is concealed from him,  
but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of him  
to whom we must render an account.

Since we have a great high priest who has passed through the  
heavens,  
Jesus, the Son of God,  
let us hold fast to our confession.  
For we do not have a high priest  
who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses,  
but one who has similarly been tested in every way,  
yet without sin.  
So let us confidently approach the throne of grace  
to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.

Gospel

Mk 2:13-17

Jesus went out along the sea.  
All the crowd came to him and he taught them.  
As he passed by, he saw Levi, son of Alphaeus,  
sitting at the customs post.  
Jesus said to him, "Follow me."  
And he got up and followed Jesus.  
While he was at table in his house,  
many tax collectors and sinners sat with Jesus and his disciples;  
for there were many who followed him.



Some scribes who were Pharisees saw that Jesus was eating with sinners and tax collectors and said to his disciples,  
“Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?”  
Jesus heard this and said to them,  
“Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do.  
I did not come to call the righteous but sinners.”

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The readings today are appropriate for the memoria of Saint Anthony of Egypt, known as father of monks, but is more appropriately the paragon of monks

The Letter to Hebrews tells us that the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart.

Just as Matthew in today’s Gospel immediately responded to the word of Jesus, so Antony did just as readily. In that he is a model for all Christians.

The Word of God penetrated Saint Antony & moved him to separate himself from the world.

He is a model in other ways.

There is a story about Saint Anthony traveling in the desert, when he found a plate of silver coins in his path. He wondered why a plate of silver coins would be out in the desert where no one else travels. Then he realized the devil must have laid it out there to tempt him.

To the devil he said, “You try to tempt me and deceive me, but you lose.” Once he said this, the plate of silver vanished.

He continued walking along and saw a pile of gold in his path which the devil also had laid there to deceive him. Saint Anthony threw the pile of gold into a fire, and it vanished just like the silver coins did. After these events,



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Afterwards St. Anthony had a vision with the whole world full of snares & traps. He prayed, "Oh good Lord, who can escape from these snares?" A voice said back to him, "Only humility shall escape them without more."

Certainly nothing in this world inflates egos like wealth & success. Perhaps today's economy presents a great spiritual opportunity.

When we read the life of Saint Anthony, the hyperbolic image given sometimes smacks of spiritual arrogance or pride, at least to me.

The humility of his life is written between the lines, which I suppose is where true humility always must be.

Jesus says in the gospel this morning  
"Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners."

Saint Antony knew well if Jesus called him, if Jesus has called us, then we must be pretty obvious sinners. That should make us humble.

St Antony's life teaches us something else about humility. We have to fight with ourselves to achieve it, or rather that it is in the process of fighting with ourselves it comes about. But of course if we think we've achieved it, we can be sure we haven't.

Perhaps that's why St Antony lived 105 years. He couldn't give up the fight.