

Dear Parishioners, Friends, and Visitors to the Cathedral,

When most people think of Saint Anthony, they think of Saint Anthony of Padua, the person to whom they pray for help in finding their lost car keys or some other misplaced object. However, Anthony of Padua is not the only Saint Anthony in the history of the Church. On January 17th, the Church celebrates another very holy man named Anthony – Saint Anthony the Abbot, or Saint Anthony of the Desert.

Saint Anthony was born in Egypt around AD 251 to a rather wealthy, landowning family near Cairo. He was born into an empire that, while officially pagan and often engaged in violent persecutions of Christians, none-the-less saw the faith spreading quickly throughout its borders. During his lifetime, he would see the Church go from being persecuted to being accepted, with the legalization of religious toleration in AD 313 by Emperor Constantine.

Around the age of 18, Anthony lost both of his parents and inherited their several hundred acres of land, as well as responsibility for his younger sister. This dramatic change in his life prompted him to do a great deal of reflection, and through a personal encounter with the Word of God, the course of his life was changed. One day, while at Mass, Saint Anthony heard the words of Matthew's Gospel: "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." He said that these words stuck him as if God Himself were speaking directly to him, and so heeded their meaning. Anthony went out and sold all that he had and gave away his possessions and money to the poor, keeping only what was needed to take care of his sister and to see to her education.

From there, he initially went to live among the tombs, and then eventually out into the desert in order to become a hermit (these were individuals who went out into deserted places in order to withdraw from society and live a life of asceticism, wholly dedicated to Christ through prayer and penance). Saint Anthony would spend about the next 14 years living in seclusion in the desert and surviving off of the charity of others. There, he would battle all sorts of temptations and diabolical attacks (the devil would appear to him in horrid and grotesque forms) to induce him to leave his chosen path to holiness. However, he remained resolute, following the advice he would later give the those who came to learn to live as he did: "Believe me; the devil fears the vigils of pious souls, and their fastings, their voluntary poverty, their loving compassion, their humility, but most of all, their ardent love of Christ our Lord. As soon as he sees the sign of the Cross, he flees in terror."

Around the age of 33, Anthony's asceticism had taken a toll on his health and he was found in a serious condition. He was taken to a nearby Church to recover. After regaining his health, he moved to a mountain near the Nile river and took up residence in an abandoned fort, once again adopting the ascetic life of a hermit. His reputation for holiness spread and began to attract those who sought his advice or who wanted his intercession, as miraculous healings were attributed to his intercession. There were also those who wanted to imitate him, who began to establish their own hermitages in the wilderness around him. It was at this time that Anthony felt the call to become a spiritual father (abbot) to these fellow hermits and so, he would emerge from his solitude in order to offer them guidance on cultivating virtue and living a life of holiness. This move marked the beginning of monasticism. Saint Anthony would live out the rest of his life in this way, returning to society for a brief time to combat the Arian heresy, but then going back to the wilderness until his death at the age of 105.

Throughout the history of the Church, there are numerous men and women who share the same name, who are canonized Saints. Anthony is only one such example. Maybe there is already a Saint with your name, but that doesn't mean that there isn't room for you to become a Saint as well.

*Father Sean Ralph*



## The Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist

1007 Superior Ave. E

Cleveland OH 44114-2582

<http://SaintJohnCathedral.com>

216-771-6666

**Mass for Life** - The U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has declared Monday, 22 January 2018, a National Day of Prayer and Penance for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children. Our Diocesan Mass for Life will take place Monday, 22 January 2018, at 10:00 am, at the Cathedral of Saint John the Evangelist, with Retired Bishop of Davenport, Iowa, The Most Rev. Martin J. Amos as celebrant. A Rosary for Life will follow the Mass. Please contact Peggy Gerovac at 216-334-2965 or <pmgerovac@ccdocle.org> with any questions.

**Immigration Celebration** - This Sunday, January 14, is the World Day for Migrants and Refugees. Pope Francis has chosen the theme: **To Welcome To Protect To Promote To Integrate: We Share the Journey.** The Diocese will be celebrating this day on **Jan. 14** with a special liturgy celebrated by Bishop Nelson Perez at St. Michael the Archangel Church, 3114 Scranton Road, Cleveland. Mass will begin at noon. A buffet follows the liturgy; please plan to attend and celebrate all those who have come from many different parts of this world to join our Community. All are very welcome!

**Answer the Call!** Men, hold the date: On Saturday, Feb. 24th, the Catholic Men's Fellowship of Northeast Ohio is holding its 18th annual "**Answer the Call**" conference at the Holiday Inn, Independence. The theme is "Developing Your Relationship with Christ" with speakers Peter Herbeck, Eric Mahl, and Greg Wasinski. For more information: <cmfneo.com>.

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