

Reflection Monday Week 2 - St Anthony 2022

St Antony is the originator of monastic life. Born in Egypt (251), after his parents died, in response to the Gospel he gave all his possessions to the poor. Going into the wilderness he began a life of penitence, living in absolute poverty, praying, meditating, and supporting himself by manual work. He suffered many physical and spiritual temptations but overcame them. Disciples gathered round him, attracted by his wisdom, moderation, and holiness. He supported the victims of the Diocletian persecutions and helped St Athanasius fight against the Arians. He died in 356.

One of the great insights of the synodal pathway is *listening*. If we really listened to Jesus, he does not command us to do anything, Jesus **INVITES** us to make choices and explains what is the best possible choice. He says to the rich young man **IF** you wish to be perfect then you will choose to give up everything. Recognising human weakness and failings, Jesus adds that in making the difficult choice I, Jesus, will help you fulfil it. We make choices not because we can complete them on our own but because we trust that Jesus will help us. We know we are unable to fulfil the promise without the help of Jesus, the Father and the Holy Spirit.

St Anthony has shown us the way.

A Desert Father, John the Dwarf, asked God to take his passions away from him so that he might become free from care. He then said: *'I find myself in peace, without an enemy.'* A wise Desert Father told him, *'Go, beseech God to stir up warfare so that you regain the affliction and humility you used to have, for it is by warfare that the soul makes progress.'* So, John besought God and when warfare came, he no longer prayed that it might be taken away, but said, *'Lord, give me strength for the fight!'*