

## Reflection Tuesday Week 2 St Anthony of the Desert 2023

St Antony is the originator of the monastic life. He was born in Egypt (251): when his parents died, responding to the Gospel he gave all his belongings to the poor. He went into the wilderness to begin a life of penitence, living in absolute poverty, praying, meditating, and supporting himself by manual work. He suffered many temptations, both physical and spiritual, but overcame them. Disciples gathered round him, attracted by his wisdom, moderation, and holiness. He supported the victims of the persecutions of Diocletian and helped St Athanasius fight the Arians. He lived to be over a hundred and died in 356.

The Gospels are full of Jesus' wisdom too often ignored, especially Jesus' meeting with that young man who asked, "What must I do to have eternal life?". When Jesus told him that to be *perfect*, he would have to sell all that he had and give the money to the poor, the young man went away, sorrowing; because he was very rich. 250 years later, St Antony hears the story, and gives away all that he has and becomes the founder of monasticism. Over 1,000 years later, St Francis of Assisi hears the story, and gives away his possessions (and some of his father's) and revolutionises Christianity again.

Anthony would have found courage, perseverance and commitment from Paul's letter to the Ephesians. . . *you must rely on God's armour, or you will not be able to put up any resistance when the worst happens, or have enough resources to hold your ground. Pray all the time, asking for what you need, praying in the Spirit on every possible occasion.*

Anthony did just that!