



MARYMOUNT HERMITAGE NEWSLETTER

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HERMITS IN A TIME OF CRISIS

By Sister M. Beverly, HSM

I would like to tell you the story of my friend, Tony. When he was eighteen years old, he lost his parents. They had been wealthy land-owners and farmers in Upper Egypt, the fertile Nile delta. He was left with the care of his family estate and his younger sister. While walking to Mass one day, he was thinking about how the Apostles left everything to follow Jesus; how Christians in Acts brought their money and laid it at the feet of the Apostles as alms for the poor, and how great a hope was laid up for them in heaven. As he walked into church, he found that the Gospel of the day's Mass was Jesus saying to the rich young man: "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell all that you have, give the money to the poor, and then come follow me. You will have treasure in heaven." My friend took this to mean that Jesus was asking him to do the same, so he went home and sold his family home, land and animals. He gave the money to the poor, but he retained a small sum for the future care of his sister. The next time he went to church, he heard the Lord saying in the Gospel not to worry about tomorrow, so he went home and gave away the last of their money.

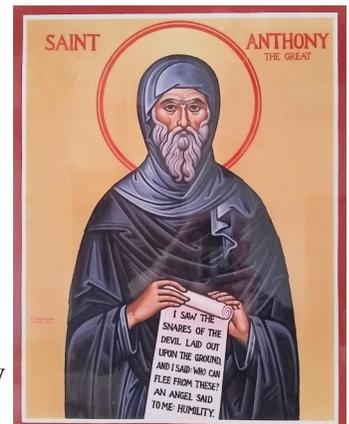
Tony then put his sister in the care of Christian women who lived holy lives of prayer and who would raise and educate her. He took up his own residence outside his village and devoted himself to prayer, work, fasting and other bodily penances. In order to learn how to live the virtues and to pray more deeply, he would visit older holy men, who lived in caves nearby and ask their advice. Tony was so good and kindly that the people of the area called him "a friend of God" and many considered him like a son or a brother, so beloved was he to them.

If you have read St. Athanasius' Life of St. Anthony, you will recognize this description of Abba Anthony the Great of Egypt, often called the first Christian hermit. He is the father and patron of all hermits and lived from about 251-356 A.D., which means he lived to be well over one hundred years old! His feast day is celebrated on January 17, the day traditionally given for his death.

Abba Anthony was not actually the *first* Christian hermit, as the story of his life reveals. However, Anthony was apparently the first one to decide, for the sake of greater solitude for prayer, to go to the Utter Desert on the east side of the Nile River, a wilderness walk of many days away from civilization. He lived there in an abandoned fort for over twenty years before young men started coming to him to ask his advice, to imitate his way of life, and to become his disciples in the eremitical life.

So if this article is about my spiritual friend, Saint Anthony, why the title "Hermits in a Time of Crisis"?

I believe the life of Abba Anthony has relevance for our day, like that of all saints, who are a "lived Gospel". Anthony withdrew from the world of his day when it was at peace and Christians could practice their religion freely. Human nature being what it is, Christians were not as fervent as they should have been, living in leisure and luxury, often and easily taken up with the ways of the surrounding pagan world. Fleeing this, Anthony sought



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HERMITS (Cont. from page one)

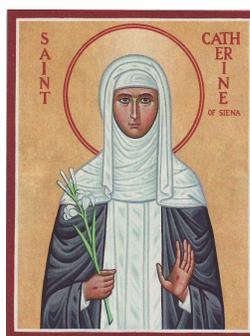
to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ with greater focus and fidelity, intensity and asceticism.

However, when the persecution of Christians by the Roman Emperor Diocletian began in 302 A.D. and raged for eight years, Anthony, on fire with the love of Christ, left the desert and went to Alexandria, where, declaring himself to be a Christian, he hoped to be arrested and martyred, and thus go straight to heaven. As it turned out, just the presence of the hermit Anthony, clothed in his distinctive animal skin tunic and girded with a rope belt, was enough to inspire the arrested Christians to stand firm in their faith and prefer death to apostasy. The Roman judges would not even allow Anthony in the imperial court. He himself was never arrested. His reputation for holiness had preceded him and the judges knew that they would incite a riot if they arrested him. They did not dare take the political risk of putting him to death, which would cause more Christians to die rather than return to the prescribed official Roman religion, which was the Emperor's goal of the persecution.

Disappointed not to have been able to die for Christ, Anthony returned to the Egyptian desert to live out a "bloodless martyrdom" of a very long ascetical life of prayer for the sake of the Church. Thus we have the traditional saying: "The hermit is the little brother of the martyr."

As a modern hermit, I take my cues from Abba Anthony. An icon of our patron saint is in the chapel. He is holding a scroll with one of his sayings: "I saw the snares of the devil laid out upon the ground, and I said: Who can flee from these? An angel said to me: Humility." In this current crisis in the Church, I say: How can I tell a bishop or the Pope what to do? Only he has the grace of his vocation not me. So what *can* I do? That is the real question. I can live my own vocation more faithfully, repent of my own sins, pray more, offer greater fasting and sacrifices for the salvation of souls and the good of the Church.

The Church has had these same challenges before. Read the life of St. Catherine of Siena* and see how hard she worked and prayed for the Pope of her day (a very weak and cowardly man) to be the man of God he was called to be: to return from a chosen escape in



France, to take up his proper bishop's residence in his diocese of Rome, and to exercise his true authority over corrupt cardinals, bishops and priests. St. Catherine, who was an Italian Dominican tertiary (not a hermit), lived in the late 1300's. Reading the lives of the saints shows us that the devil's tactics to entice us to sin are al-

ways the same. Our spiritual weapons are always the same too: faith and fidelity, humility and holiness.

May I, your Hermit Sister, make some suggestions for our troubled times?

- Do you attend Sunday Mass regularly? Can you go to daily Mass also?
- Make an examination of conscience daily. If you go to confession once or twice a year, begin going monthly. The fruit of frequent confession is more grace to strengthen our spiritual life.
- Consider making one holy hour a week in an adoration chapel. You already do? Then make a second one. Jesus is waiting for you.
- Read and pray with Scripture for at least 15 minutes a day. Have an on-going dialogue with Jesus, the Word of the Father, that you may know how to be a cell which is more alive in the Body of Christ that the Church may be "the Bride of Christ without wrinkle or stain or anything of that sort," as She is meant to be. You already do? Then make it 20-30 minutes daily.
- Can you fast? Then begin a new fervent regime. If you cannot fast from food, fast from something. Be more silent. Use social media or TV more sparingly or not at all. Fast from foolish fears. Fast from negative thoughts and emotions and root out any unforgiveness from your heart.

We can each do something to build up the Body of Christ, so necessary at this time. Let us stay close to Jesus, Mary and Joseph in this time of suffering and purification of the Church in our day. Please pray for me that I may do as well as say! I pray for you too.

*Recommended reading: *Lay Siege to Heaven* by Louis DeWohl. Even though this book is billed as a novel, it is based on the definitive biography of St. Catherine of Siena written by her confessor, St. Raymond of Capua.

Icons of St. Anthony of Egypt and St. Catherine of Siena from Monastery Icons.

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The MARYMOUNT HERMITAGE NEWSLETTER is published by Marymount Hermitage, Inc., a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation in the State of Idaho. The Hermit Sisters of Mary are a canonically approved, Catholic community of women hermits, following the Rule of St. Benedict. The newsletter is published each month by the 15th on our website only. The purpose of the newsletter is to share the spirituality and material progress of Marymount Hermitage. Please pray that we may be faithful to our way of life in prayer and penance, solitude and silence for the sake of the Church and the world. Any donations are sincerely appreciated and are tax-deductible. Thank you in advance to those who have remembered Marymount Hermitage in their wills. God bless you!

A PRAYER FOR PRIESTS

O Jesus, Eternal Priest, keep all thy priests within the shelter of thy Sacred Heart, where none may harm them. Keep unstained their anointed hands which daily touch thy Sacred Body. Keep unsullied their lips purpled with thy Precious Blood. Keep pure and unearthly their hearts sealed with the sublime marks of thy glorious priesthood. Let thy holy love surround them and shield them from the world's contagion. Bless their labors with abundant fruit, and may the souls to whom they have ministered be here below their joy and consolation and in heaven their beautiful and everlasting crown.

O Mary, Queen of the clergy, pray for us and obtain for us a great number of holy priests.
Amen.

COMMUNITY NEWS

By Sister Mary Beverly, HSM

Prayer: I pray this with Midday Prayer after the noon Angelus. Please join me in praying fervently for all our priests, bishops and the Holy Father, Pope Francis.

July 13, 2018 was the Day of Pilgrimage with presentations on sacred icons by iconographer, Nancy VanDyken from Bozeman, MT. About 20 people attended and 6 people decided to extend the mini-retreat by staying

in hermitages overnight the day before. Thanks to Sherry Kerner and Sharon Grant, we had a delicious meal which was a sit-down dinner rather than just a lunch. The day was spiritually complete with Mass at noon celebrated by a visiting priest, Father Philip Wells, from CA. Nancy spoke so humbly, knowledgeably, and movingly that we felt very blessed and enlightened. I received lovely comments in writing at the time and verbally even these days when teaching assignments



take me to Boise. Here is one sample taken from a hermitage guest book:

July 13, 2018

On Holy Ground, Marymount, where the heavens kiss earth in the stillness of night. The peacefulness was exactly what I needed...next visit will be longer! The Icon presentation was beautiful and leaves me with much to study, think about, and practice. I pray for the humbleness, faith, and obedience of an iconographer that I may become the perfection of the true Iconographer...made in His likeness and image.

Mary, the Mystical Rose, Theotokos, pray for me.

Lesley M.

Meridian, ID

Summer Classes: The Holy Trinity was the subject of the three sets of classes offered at Mercy House during June, July and August. I advertised widely in the local papers and parish bulletins throughout the Treasure Valley. I wanted to spread out a wide net

to invite non-Catholics as well as Catholics. One local man came faithfully with his wife and is interested in starting RCIA to become Catholic. One Mesa man wanted to know more what his Catholic wife believes and participated vigorously in the classes, listening attentively, reading Scripture for the group, and asking questions. One local Protestant pastor brought his twelve-year-old daughter (whom they are home-schooling with her five siblings) so that "she would hear about the faith from another Christian woman." It was such a privilege and a joy. I anticipate a series next year on the Bible as the Word of God.

October 23, 2018 is the last Day of Pilgrimage for this year at Marymount Hermitage. Father Tom Loucks will offer Mass and be the presenter for the three conferences on the theme: "Praying with Our Lady of Fatima". See details in the Calendar of Events.

Summer & Fall Work: Many people are still asking if the Mesa Fire is completely out and if it had any impact on Marymount Hermitage. The fire is still burning in small, inaccessible areas of Mt. Council, but we are not in any danger and there was no damage done, thanks be to God and due to the prayers of many.

I have several local workmen lined up to do necessary maintenance and repair jobs before winter sets in. There will be a new roof over the heat pump outside Mercy House. A new storm door and back door were installed in my house. The originals were almost 20 years old and had gotten ruined...a strange story, too long to tell. Each of the 5 hermitages has needed some work. The old library is slowly being cleaned for the archive file cabinets. The crawl space access hole for the old common house has been enlarged and new concrete edges have been poured to improve regular maintenance to that building. It houses the pressure tank for the water system for the entire campus.



Photos by Mike Nourse; Verl Cate shown at right.

I am happy to pay the workers, but there have also been volunteers. Midvale Sand & Gravel donated the concrete for the common house job today, 9/20.

September: Lastly, this newsletter is later than the usual deadline of the 15th of the month, but it was a necessary delay.

God bless you! Let's pray for each other daily.