

[Back to list](#)[Next](#)[Previous](#)

## THE FIFTH MONTH

TIR 22

(January 30)

### IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT, ONE GOD. AMEN.

On this day died the great and holy father Abba Anthony, the father of all the monks. This holy father Abba Anthony was a man of the city of Keman, in the land of Egypt, to the south of Mesr (Cairo). His parents were Christians, and from his youth up there was no impiety in him. He went, without hesitation, to the church with his parents, and they partook of the Holy Mysteries, and he did not laugh and play with the [other] boys, and he never danced; and when he was a little older, he bowed before his parents, and obeyed them, and when he was seven years old he learned the Books of the Church. Now at that time the office of Archbishop of Alexandria was held by Abba Theonas, and when he heard the report of Abba Anthony's childhood, he sent a messenger and had him brought to him, and he blessed him and prophesied concerning him, saying, "This child shall become great before God, and the report of him shall go up into all countries"; and he laid his hand upon him and made him a deacon. Then his parents died and they left him a little sister. Six months after his parents died he went to the church according to his custom, and the love of the Holy Spirit entered his heart, and he said, "Consider how the Apostles forsook their business and followed our Lord and Redeemer Christ. They sold their possessions, even as it is written in the Acts of the Apostles, and they brought the price thereof and placed it at the feet of the Apostles, so that they might give it to those who were needy, and that the hoped-for things which God had prepared for them in the heavens might be doubled." And he was always meditating upon this in his heart. And then he went to the church and heard our Lord saying to the rich man in the Holy Gospel, "If thou wishest to be perfect, go and sell all thy possessions, and give [their price] to the poor, and lay up for thyself treasure in heaven, and come, follow Me." And Anthony derived his holy mind from the Lord, for he thought that those words had gone forth for him; and forthwith he went out from the church. Now his father possessed good broad lands, and these he gave to the men of the city, and the goods which his parents had left him he gave to the poor and needy, and he took his sister and deposited her with the virgins. And he loved fasting and prayer, and the life of self-abnegation, and the spiritual fight. Now the word "monasticism" had not appeared in those days, and if any man desired to devote himself to God he went a little way outside the city, and dwelt by himself, and lived an ascetic life. Even thus did the great saint Abba Anthony. And Satan, who fighteth by means of the [sinful] impulse of the flesh, and the committal of sin, used to bring a woman's person to Anthony in a dream, in such a way that she seemed to be sleeping with him; but he overcame all these things by the help of God, which was with him. Then he departed to a tomb on the seashore, and he dwelt therein and closed the doors of the tomb on himself, and fought a great fight [therein]. And his kinsfolk and acquaintances used to visit him and bring him food. When the Satans saw Saint Anthony fighting in this way, they were jealous of him, and they came to him and beat him with very severe beatings, which caused him great pain, and then they would leave him prostrate. When his kinsfolk came to visit him they would find him lying on the ground like a dead man, and they would lift him up and carry him to the church, and God would heal him of his sickness. When his soul awoke he would command them to lift him up, and take him to his own place, and they would do so. And when Abba Anthony had conquered the Satans there came to him from below a multitude [of fiends] in the form of wild beasts, and lions, and wolves, and serpents, and scorpions, and each one of them would rear itself up against him to terrify

him. But Abba Anthony would laugh at them, and say unto them, "If there be any among you that hath dominion over me, let him conquer me"; and straightway they would be scattered before him like smoke. And God gave him victory over the Satans, and He gave him rest from the suffering and temptations, which they caused him. Twice a year he made bread for their (i.e. the monks') food, and the sun dried it. He allowed no one to come into his cell to him, but [his visitors] stood outside, and he hearkened to their words; and he continued to devote himself to the ascetic life and the spiritual fight for a period of twenty years. Then God commanded him to comfort the people, and to teach them the perfect fear of God and His holiness. And he departed to the district of the Fayyum, and made monks of many of the brethren who were there, and he confirmed them in the Law of God (now there were there many religious houses that were [full of] monks and spiritual fighters), and then he returned to his mountain. At that time the days of persecution came, and many men received crowns of martyrdom. And he wished to become [a martyr], and he forsook his mountain and departed to the city of Alexandria, and confessed the Lord Christ; but no man seized him; and he used to visit the believers who were in prison for the Name of Christ, and comfort them. When the governor saw that Anthony was not afraid of him, he commanded that no monk should ever be allowed to approach the governor's tribunal. But Anthony appeared there continually, and spoke to him often so that he might exasperate him, and make him angry, and cause him to beat him and torture him, so that he (i.e. Anthony) might become a martyr. But the governor would not talk to him, and he did no harm to him whatsoever, for God preserved Anthony for the benefit of many. And when the time of persecution was ended, the blessed Peter, Archbishop of the city of Alexandria, the perfection of the martyr, became a martyr, and Abba Anthony returned to his mountain, according to the Will of God. Now the apparel, which he wore, was made of hairy sackcloth, and he never washed himself with water all the days of his life. And many sick folk came to him, and he prayed over them and healed them. And when the many people who came to him heard his doctrine, they would not let him live by himself as he wished, and he feared that he would become arrogant of heart because of what God performed through him. And he determined in his heart to go to Upper Egypt, and live in a place where none knew him; and he took a little bread from the brethren, and he sat down by the side of a stream of water to wait for a ship on which to embark and depart. And whilst he was thinking thus, a voice came to him from heaven, saying, "Anthony, whither wilt thou go? What dost thou wish for here?" And he answered and said, "Many people come here, and they prevent me from living in solitude, and therefore I wish to go to Upper Egypt." And the voice answered and said unto him, "If thou wishest to go to Upper Egypt, [go, and thou wilt find] that thy annoyance will be doubled. But if thou dost indeed wish to live alone, go a journey of three days into the Inner Desert." And having seen certain Arabs who themselves wanted to travel that road, Anthony went to them, and asked them that he might go with them into the desert, and they welcomed him with joy. And he journeyed with them for three days, until they came to a very high mountain, where there was clear, sweet, and very cold water, and palms, and date-palms, and fruit trees in abundance; and Anthony loved the place which God had prepared for him, and to which He had called him from the sea-shore. And he dwelt in that place, and the Arabs used to bring him bread. And there were in that place many noxious beasts, but through the prayer of Anthony God drove them away, and they returned not again to that desert. And he used to go to his mountain, which was beyond the seashore from time to time, and visit the brethren who were there, and comfort them, and then he would return to his mountain in the desert. And the report of Anthony was heard of by Constantine the righteous emperor, and he wrote to him a letter praising him, and asking him to remember him at the time of prayer; and the brethren rejoiced at the emperor's letter. Now Saint Anthony did not send back a written answer to the emperor's letter, but he said unto the brethren, "Behold, the letter of the King of kings is read to us

every day, but we neither submit to its commands nor hearken to it.” And the brethren answered and said unto him, “This righteous emperor is a lover of the Church, and it is meet for thee to comfort him.” And he wrote a letter to him, and comforted him, and blessed him, and his kingdom, and all his soldiers. And the report of Anthony was also heard by a Frankish king, namely the King of the country of Barkinon, which was situated at a distance of seven months’ journey from the country of Egypt. And the Frankish king sent unto Saint Abba Anthony, saying, “I beseech and entreat thee, by the Passion of our Lord Christ, to come to us, and bless us, and all our city, and our army.” When Anthony heard these words he was exceedingly sorry because the king said, “by the Passion of our Lord Christ.” And Anthony stood up and prayed, saying, “I beseech Thee, O my Lord Jesus Christ, to do Thy Will in me. If Thou wishest me to go to the Frankish country of Barkinon, give me a sign of Thy Will.” Whilst he was saying these words, behold a cloud of light appeared, and it carried him and brought him during the night to the Frankish country. And the king rejoiced in him with a great joy, and all his soldiers and people likewise rejoiced, and they brought to him those who were sick and the blind and the lame, and he healed them by his prayer forthwith. And he dwelt with them for seven months, teaching them the way of righteousness and life, and he arrayed many thousands in the garb of the monastic life. And each Sunday the cloud of light bore him away and brought him to his monastery, and he went among his sons and comforted them, for on the following day that cloud would bear him away, and take him back to the Frankish land. After this, by the Will of God, he returned to his monastery, riding upon the cloud. One day laziness (or inertness) came upon him and there came unto him a voice which said, “Get thee outside the city so that thou mayest see.” And he went outside [the city] and he found there the similitude of an angel who wore the garb of the monastic life, and the girdle, and the cord of the cross, and on his head was a skullcap like a helmet; and he was sitting down plaiting palm leaves. Then he rose up and prayed and sat down again, and continued to plait palm leaves. And a voice came unto Anthony, saying, “O Anthony, act in this wise, and thou shalt have rest from war against Satans.” And Anthony took the angel who was dressed as a monk as an example, and from that day neither inertness, nor the war of the Satans attacked him. And our Lord Christ appeared unto him many times, and comforted him and strengthened him, and said unto him, “Verily, I say unto thee, O My chosen one Anthony, because of thy labor, and thy fighting, and thy devotion to God alone by thyself in this desert, and because of thy love for Me, I will magnify thy name, and will exalt thy horn in all the ends of the earth. And I will make the desert places and the monasteries like the habitations of doves, and they shall be full of monks, especially thine own monasteries, which shall endure until the end of the world. Whosoever shall celebrate thy commemoration, and shall give alms or incense, or an offering in thy name, I will blot out all his sins and he shall never see punishment. And I will exalt exceedingly the monastery wherein thy body shall be buried, and I will place therein-righteous monks like angels. and they shall never lack a head until the end of the world. And I will make the kings, and judges, and rulers of the earth to bring gifts, and to give them to thy monastery, and to thy children the monks who shall keep thy commandments.” And when our Lord had said this He went up into heaven with great glory. And Abba Anthony rejoiced with great joy. And he prophesied concerning the spoliation of the Church, saying, “Those who doubt the Faith (i.e. heretics) shall have dominion over it, and then it shall return to its former state.” And he prophesied concerning the monks, how they would be many, and would become exceedingly numerous, and how they would abandon the houses and monasteries in the desert, and would dwell in the towns and villages among those who were in the world. It was Anthony who arrayed Abba Macarius in the garb of the monk, for he was his disciple and son, and he comforted him and confirmed him, and made him to know what would happen unto him. And he went to Abba Bula (Paule) the Great, the first of the dwellers in the desert, and it was he who buried him in the garment

of Athanasius the Apostle. When Saint Abba Anthony knew that the time of his death had drawn nigh, he commanded his sons to hide his body, and to give his staff to Abba Macarius his son, and his head cloth to Abba Athanasius, and his sheep-skin cloak to Abba Serapion the Bishop, his son. And he lay down on the ground and delivered up his soul into the hand of God. And all the companies of the holy angels came to it, and they met it with great joy, and they took it up to everlasting rest in the heavens. And Anthony's children hid his body as he commanded, for he used to rebuke those who showed the bodies of the holy martyrs with the object of getting much money and possessions thereby, and of keeping these possessions for themselves. This holy and blessed Anthony lived to a good old age and became very old indeed, but his body, and strength, and power remained unchanged, and nothing fell from his shoes(?). And he never washed in water all the days of his life. And he departed to Christ, Whom he loved, and all the days of his life were one hundred and twenty years. Salutation to Anthony the solitary.

Glory be to God Who is glorified in His Saints. Amen.