

Saint Anthony the Abbot

III-IV Century

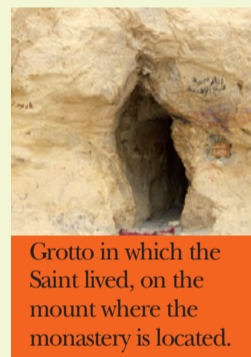
Anthony was born in Coma, Egypt, located off the shores of the Nile, around the year 250. He is considered one of the founders of eastern monasticism.

After the death of his parents he distributed all of his belongings to the poor and in 270 he retreated to the Theban desert where he began a life of penitence. There many disciples reached him and thus he founded various ascetic communities in Egypt. He sustained the martyrs in the persecution of Diocletian and he adopted many against the Arian heresy helping Saint Athanasius in his battles. This same Saint Athanasius wrote the biography of Saint Anthony. In spite of him leading a hard life full of deprivation, Anthony was

himself in a cave very far from the villagers ordering a friend to bring him bread at long intervals. The second phase began like this, the most difficult battle with the demon.

One night the devil entered into his cave with a multitude of demons and they beat him to the point of leaving him lying across the ground unable to speak. This time the suffering was very great so much so that not even an army of soldiers would have been able to create such a torment.

Thanks to the help of a friend he got back to his cave and returned to his life of prayer.



Grotto in which the Saint lived, on the mount where the monastery is located.



very long-lived: in fact death took him at the age of 105 years old, on January 17, 355, in his hermitage on Mount Qolzoum.

It was one of the most rigorous hermitages in all of ancient Christian history.

In his first year as a hermit the devil tried to displace him from the ascetics inspiring him with the memory of riches, the thought of reuniting with his sister, his love for his relatives, the pleasure of food, the love of money, the desire and glory and every joy of life. Then he tempted him with the sin of sloth. He suggested the bitterness of virtue and the work it requires and he put before him long periods of physical weakness trying to show him that he could not tolerate his whole life continuing on this path of ascetics. Satan tempted him assuming the appearance of a woman with the sole intent of seducing him.

In spite of these provocations Anthony began to dedicate himself always with more intensity to the ascetics. He kept

The devil did not give up and started to torment him again. However, he did not manage to tempt him not even when he surrounded him with dogs, lions, wolves, bulls, snakes and giant spiders.

During these attacks Anthony felt even more atrocious physical suffering: "If you have any strength and power, attack me still, but for us the faith in our Father is our seal and wall of defense": said Anthony and the beasts were grinding their teeth. But the Lord did not leave him. Anthony saw the ceiling open and a ray of light came down to him. The demons suddenly disappeared and immediately his physical pain ceased.