

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT 2023

*Listen!*

Lord, help us to listen to your Beloved One, your Son.

Reflection and Prayer for Lent with Sunday readings and a spiritual teacher  
from our Catholic tradition - St Anthony ('Antony').

# SIGN OF THE CROSS.

Lord, help us to listen to your Beloved One, your Son.

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## FROM THE READINGS

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**First Reading:** The Lord said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your family and your father's house, for the land I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name so famous that it will be used as a blessing.

*Genesis 12:1-2*

**Gospel:** Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There in their presence he was transfigured: his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as dazzling as light. And suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared to them; they were talking with him. Then Peter spoke to Jesus. 'Lord,' he said, 'it is wonderful for us to be here; if you want me to, I will make three shelters here, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' He was still speaking when suddenly a bright cloud covered them with shadow, and suddenly from the cloud there came a voice which said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour. Listen to him.' When they heard this, the disciples fell on their faces, overcome with fear. But Jesus came up and touched them, saying, 'Stand up, do not be afraid.' And when they raised their eyes they saw no one but Jesus. As they came down from the mountain Jesus gave them this order, 'Tell no one about this vision until the Son of Man has risen from the dead'.

*Matthew 17:1-9*

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## FROM SAINT ANTHONY ('ANTONY')

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**Anthony** was born in Nile Valley to Coptic Christian parents. At around 20 years of age, he lost both parents and inherited a rich estate. However, after reflecting on the words, "*If you would be perfect, go and sell all that you have and give the money to the poor, and then you will have treasure in heaven; then come and follow me*" (Matt 19:21), Anthony sold everything, gave it all away and went to live in the desert. At age 55 he found a rocky place near the Red Sea where he stayed until his death at age 105.

Anthony spent his days in simplicity, tranquility, prayer, fasting, reading and memorising Scripture passages. Disciples often visited, bringing food, and asking for advice and for assistance in interpreting the Scriptures. Anthony

was also asked to help mediate disputes. Many hermits who came to live nearby were advised to live “a just life and trust in God.” Anthony had a down-to-earth, commonsense approach to life, focusing very much on self-knowledge and good use of God’s gift of reason. He was reclusive, humble, non-judgemental and disciplined. With other ‘desert fathers and mothers’, he valued silence. Saint Athanasius’ *Life of Antony* presents many of his teachings, and different versions of a collection of ‘Sayings of the Desert Fathers’, also include stories about Anthony and his sayings.

## ANTHONY’S WORDS

**Let no one among us yearn to possess things.** What is the point of possessing things we cannot take with us? Is it not better to have things we can take with us – things like prudence, righteousness, temperance, courage, understanding, love, compassion for the poor, faith in Christ, freedom from anger, and hospitality?

*St Athanasius, Life of Antony, 17.*

**None of us is judged for what he does not know,** any more than he is considered blessed on account of his learning and knowledge. Judgement is rendered, rather, on whether someone has sincerely kept the faith and obeyed the commandments.

*St Athanasius, Life of Antony, 33.*

**No one who has not been tempted** can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

*Sayings of the Desert Fathers.*

**A hunter in the desert was shocked to see Abba Antony enjoying himself** with the brothers. To show the hunter that it was sometimes necessary to attend to the need of the brothers, the old man said to him, “Put an arrow into your bow and shoot it.” He did so. The old man then said, “Shoot another one,” and the hunter did so. Then the old man said, “Shoot again,” and the hunter replied, “If I bend my bow too much, I will break it.” The old man then said to him, “So it is with the work of God. If we stretch the brothers beyond their limit, they will soon break. Sometimes it is necessary for them to relax their efforts.” When he heard this, the hunter was pierced with compunction and, greatly edified by the old man, went away. The brothers returned home strengthened.

*Sayings of the Desert Fathers.*

———— PRAYER AND REFLECTION ————

- **Ask** for God's guidance.
- **Read** the scripture passages and words of St Anthony, aloud or silently.
- **Reflect and pray**, stopping to ponder any 'stand out' words or phrases. 10 mins
- **Respond** 10-15 mins

Individuals: Write or sit quietly with your reflections.

Groups: Share your responses and listen to others. 2-3 mins each

- o What stands out for you?
- o What do you want to take with you?

- **Express a hope for the future.**

## PRAYER

*Lord God,  
you love innocence of heart,  
and when it is lost  
you alone can restore it.  
Turn then our hearts to you,  
and kindle in them  
the fire of your Spirit,  
so that we may be steadfast in faith  
and unwearied in good works. Amen.*

*Daily Prayer from the Divine Office, Sydney: E.J.Dwyer, 1974, 224*

