



St Peter's Church, Surry Hills

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Most Reverend Danny J Meagher: Bishop in Residence, Episcopal Vicar for the Northern Region

Fr. John A Macdonald: Administrator

Fr. Nicola Falzun OP: Priest in Residence for the *Missio ad gentes* of the Neocatechumenal Way

Feast Days for the week (Year A)

Tues 17 Jan Saint Anthony, abbot

Sat 21 Jan Saint Agnes, virgin, martyr

For the remaining Sundays in January, i.e. 15, 22 and 29 Jan: there will be ONLY ONE Mass at St Peter's at 10:00am

We Pray For:

Our sick and injured: Josephine Finneran, Anna Seow, Ricardo Francisco, Catherine Murphy, Adi Soediarlo, Gerry Cassar, Makram Nammour, Camilla Pascoe, Ana Teresa Rodrigues, Mafalda Triolo, Aimi McEwen, Louise McCann, Marija Barclay, Dan Southee.

Our deceased: Maria Helena Trujillo, Joachim Kerowa, Newton McMahon, Lydia Garrone (4/12 death anniversary, (Patrizia O'Brien's mother)), Mackenzie Lamb, Henrietta Pham, Frederick, Edward & Margaret M Hailwood & Margaret D Hailwood.

Recently deceased: George Cardinal Pell (11/1/23)

Our house bound elderly: Bernadette Hailwood, Robert Pearce, Joyce Regoski, June Holt, Shirley Kennedy, Anna Maria, Patricia Wells.

Partaking in the Eucharist commits us to others, especially the poor, teaching us to pass from the flesh of Christ to the flesh of our brothers and sisters, in whom he waits to be recognised, served, honoured and loved by us.

Pope Francis

Catechesis on the Mass 2018

Saint Anthony of Egypt (Feast day 17 Jan)

The life of Anthony will remind many people of Saint Francis of Assisi. At 20, Anthony was so moved by the Gospel message, "Go, sell what you have, and give to [the] poor" (Mark 10:21b), that he actually did just that with his large inheritance. He is different from Francis in that most of Anthony's life was spent in solitude. He saw the world completely covered with snares, and gave the Church and the world the witness of solitary asceticism, great personal mortification and prayer. But no saint is antisocial, and Anthony drew many people to himself for spiritual healing and guidance.

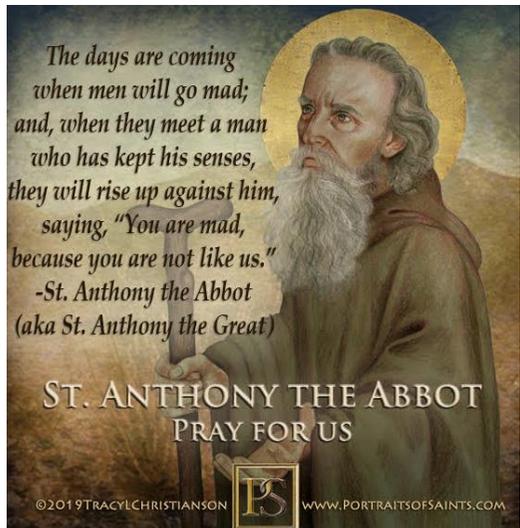
At 54, he responded to many requests and founded a sort of monastery of scattered cells. Again, like Francis, he had great fear of "stately buildings and well-laden tables."

At 60, he hoped to be a martyr in the renewed Roman persecution of 311, fearlessly exposing himself to danger while giving moral and material support to those in prison. At 88, he was fighting the Arian heresy, that massive trauma from which it took the Church centuries to recover. "The mule kicking over the altar" denied the divinity of Christ.

Anthony is associated in art with a T-shaped cross, a pig and a book. The pig and the cross are symbols of his valiant warfare with the devil—the cross his constant means of power over evil spirits, the pig a symbol of the devil himself. The book recalls his preference for "the book of nature" over the printed word. Anthony died in solitude at age 105.

Reflection: In an age that smiles at the notion of devils and angels, a person known for having power over evil spirits must at least make us pause. And in a day when people speak of life as a "rat race," one who devotes a whole life to solitude and prayer points to an essential of the Christian life in all ages.

Anthony's hermit life reminds us of the absoluteness of our break with sin and the totality of our commitment to Christ. Even in God's good world, there is another world whose false values constantly tempt us.



Saint Agnes (Feast day 21 Jan) —The Little Lamb, Early Church History, *Sandra Sweeny Silver*



The word "saint" from the Latin word *sanctus* meaning "holy, consecrated." In the New Testament, "saint" only denotes "a believer in Christ." According to the Bible, anyone who has accepted Jesus as Saviour is a Christian saint:

"As Peter travelled the country, he went to see the saints in Lydda." Acts 9:32

"To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints." Romans 1:7

"Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints send their greetings." II Corinthians 13:13

"To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi... Grace and peace

to you." Philippians 1:1

Pope John XV declared the first official Roman Catholic saint with a capital "S" on January 3, 993. He canonized Bishop Ulrich of Augsburg.

The Church in Rome incrementally appropriated the word "saint" (abbreviated to St./Ste.) to denote only those who had lived lives of uncommon virtue and "whom the Church honours as saints...by a solemn definition called canonization. The Church's official recognition of sanctity implies that the persons are now in heavenly glory (have been beatified), that they may be

publicly invoked everywhere, and that their virtues during life or martyr's death are a witness and example to the Christian faithful." *Modern Catholic Dictionary*

The Biblical use of the word "saint" and the Roman Catholic use of the word "saint" are not congruous. However, there were, are and will be men and women dedicated to the Lord who live



saintly lives or who serve as examples of sanctity and holiness or who were/are/will be killed because they are Christians. There are about 12,000 men and women who have over the last 1,000 years been declared Catholic Saints.

St. Agnes as a girl—Charles d'Agar, 1669-1723

One of these examples for us of holiness and dedication to the Lord was a little 12 to 13-year-old girl named Agnes who lived in Rome. She was a widely revered martyr in the early Church. After her martyrdom, probably under the persecution of Diocletian (c. 304), Agnes became a heroine and an intercessor to God for some believers.

Pope Damasus (c. 304-384) who encouraged the worship of saints (hagiolatry) composed a panegyric to her. The visitor to the Catacomb of Agnes on the Via Nomentana can see his poem engraved on a marble slab at the foot of the stairs leading into the catacombs:

"It is told that one day the holy parents recounted that Agnes, when the trumpet sounded its sad tunes, suddenly left the lap of her nurse while still a little girl and willingly trod upon the rage and threats of the cruel tyrant (Emperor Diocletian). Though he desired to burn the noble body in flames, with her little forces she overcame immense fear and gave her loosened hair to cover her naked limbs lest mortal eyes might see the temple of the Lord."

Agnes was tortured, set on fire and finally beheaded under the last great persecution under Emperor Diocletian in 303-311. She was martyred in Rome in the Circus of Hadrian, now the Piazza Novana. St. Ambrose (c. 340-397) was the first to write of her in *De virginibus* 1.2.5-9. He says only that she was a young virgin who was beheaded. Prudentius in c. 405 further



embellished Agnes' story in a hymn extolling her. *Peristephanon 14*. He states that she was taken to a brothel to be violated. A young man who lusted her was struck blind. The Early Church rightly venerated young Agnes for her valour, her virginity and her boldness. Agnus is the Latin word meaning "lamb, sheep." Her sacrifice as a young "lamb" and the holiness of the Lamb of God for whom she died resonated. She is frequently pictured and sculpted with a little lamb in her arms or by her feet. Constantina's Mausoleum next to Catacomb of Agnes. Built by her father Constantine the Great. Agnes was the first person to be buried in the Catacomb that bears her name on the Via Nomentana. Perhaps it was on her parent's property. There are only about 7,000 people buried in her humble, cramped and neglected Catacomb. Outside her Catacomb is an imposing dome-shaped mausoleum built by the Emperor Constantine for his daughter Constantina. She was devoted to Agnes, wanted to be and was buried there in c. 360. During the excavations at the 16th century Baroque Church of St. Agnes in the Piazza Navona in 1901, a silver sarcophagus was found. It contained the headless bones of a young girl. The Church dedicated to her had been built in the Piazza Navona where Agnes died. Today those bones rest in a 17"-18" silver sarcophagus under the altar of the church at her Catacomb. Over her tomb there had been a slab with the inscription Agne Sanctissima, "Agnes the Holiest." In about 1652 her head was supposedly found and given to the church that bears her name in the Piazza Navona, the modern site of the ancient Roman Circus of Hadrian where Agnes was martyred. An examination of the skull has determined it is that of a 12 to 13-year-old girl.



**Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
I give you, my heart and my soul.
Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
assist me in my last agony.
Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
may I breathe forth my soul in peace with
you.
Amen**