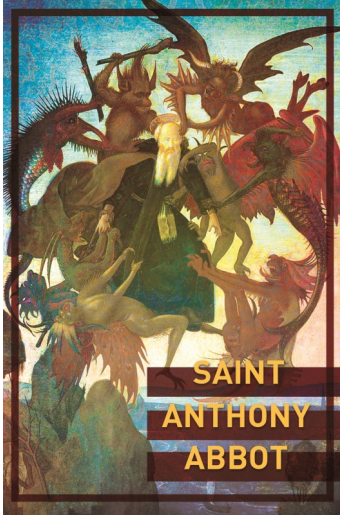


## FROM FR. JASON



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we conclude the Christmas season, I would like to thank all who have given their cards, cookies, donations, and time. Thank you for supporting OLMC in so many ways. I thank all those who made our liturgies special, from music, readers, Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist, servers, flower arrangers, decorators, and so many others, who in so many hidden and humble ways helped us these days to make all these celebrations truly divine.

Today's Feast of the Baptism of the Lord reveals the purpose for Christ's coming into our world: to take away our sins. Today, He goes to the lowest geographical depression of earth, the Jordan River, to show us that He will go however low to get us out of sin. Let us never forget our Baptism. It is the day that, cleansed from sins, we became children of God. The two Sacraments of Baptism and Confession are linked. Let us therefore never tire or give up Confession; Christ is there waiting to take away our sins. However low we have fallen, He is ready to come down to us and take us out.

On Friday this week, January 17, we will celebrate the Memorial of Saint Anthony, Abbot. The following is an excerpt of the Second Reading, 'From the Life of Saint Anthony by Saint Athanasius, Bishop' from the Office of Readings for this Memorial.

"When Anthony was about eighteen or twenty years old, his parents died, leaving him with an only sister. He cared for her as she was very young, and also looked after their home.

Not six months after his parents' death, as he was on his way to church for his usual visit, he began to think of how the apostles had left everything and followed the Savior, and also of those mentioned in the book of Acts who had sold their possessions and brought the apostles the money for distribution to the needy. He reflected too on the great hope stored up in heaven for such as these. This was all in his mind when, entering the church just as the Gospel was being read, he heard the Lord's words to the rich man: *If you want to be perfect, go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor – you will have riches in heaven. Then come and follow me.*

It seemed to Anthony that it was God who had brought the saints to his mind and that the words of the Gospel had been spoken directly to him. Immediately he left the church and gave away to the villagers all the property he had inherited, about 200 acres of very beautiful and fertile land, so that it would cause no distraction to his sister and himself. He sold all his other possessions as well, giving to the poor the considerable sum of money he collected. However, to care for his sister he retained a few things.

The next time he went to church he heard the Lord say in the Gospel: *Do not be anxious about tomorrow.* Without a moment's hesitation he went out and gave the poor all that he had left. He placed his sister in the care of some well-known and trustworthy virgins and arranged for her to be brought up in the convent. Then he gave himself up to the ascetic life, not far from his own home. He kept a careful watch over himself and practiced great austerity. He did manual work because he had heard the words: *If anyone will not work, do not let him eat.* He spent some of his earnings on bread and the rest he gave to the poor.

Having learned that we should always be praying, even when we are by ourselves, he prayed without ceasing. Indeed, he was so attentive when Scripture was read that nothing escaped him and because he retained all he heard, his memory served him in place of books.

Seeing the kind of life he lived, the villagers and all the good men he knew called him the friend of God, and they loved him as both son and brother."

Peace,

Handwritten signature of Fr. Jason.