

SUNDAY, JANUARY 15, 2023
VENERABLE PAUL OF THEBES
JOHN CALABYTES (“the Hut-dweller”)

Saint Paul of Thebes was born in Egypt around 227 in the Thebaid of Egypt. Left orphaned, he suffered many things from a greedy relative over his inheritance. During the persecution against Christians under the emperor Decius (249-251), St. Paul learned of his brother-in-law's insidious plan to deliver him into the hands of the persecutors, and so he fled the city and fled into the wilderness. Settling into a mountain cave, St. Paul dwelt there for ninety-one years, praying incessantly to God both day and night. He sustained himself on dates and bread, which a raven brought him, and he clothed himself with palm leaves. St. Anthony the Great (January 17), who also lived as an ascetic in the Thebaid desert, had a revelation from God concerning St. Paul. St. Anthony thought that there was no other desert dweller such as he. Then God said to him, "Anthony, there is a servant of God more excellent than you, and you should go and see him." Anthony went into the desert and came to St. Paul's cave. Falling to the ground before the entrance to the cave, he asked to be admitted. The Elders introduced themselves, and then embraced one another. They conversed through the night, and St. Anthony revealed how he had been led there by God. St. Paul disclosed to St. Anthony that for sixty years a bird had brought him half a loaf of bread each day. Now the Lord had sent a double portion in honor of St. Paul's visit. The next morning, St. Paul spoke to Anthony of his approaching death, and instructed him to bury him. He also asked St. Anthony to return to his monastery and bring back the cloak he had received from St. Athanasius. He did not really need a garment, but wished to depart from his body while St. Anthony was absent. As he was returning with the cloak, St. Anthony beheld the soul of St. Paul surrounded by angels, prophets, and apostles, shining like the sun and ascending to God. He entered the cave and found Abba Paul on his knees with his arms outstretched. St. Anthony mourned for him, and wrapped him in the cloak. He wondered how he would bury the body, for he had not remembered to bring a shovel. Two lions came running from the wilderness and dug a grave with their claws. St. Anthony buried the holy Elder, and took his garment of palm leaves, then he returned to his own monastery. St. Anthony kept this garb as a precious

inheritance, and wore it only twice a year, on Pascha and Pentecost. St. Paul of Thebes died in the year 341, when he was 113 years old. He did not establish a single monastery, but soon after his end there were many imitators of his life, and they filled the desert with monasteries. St. Paul is honored as the first desert-dweller and hermit. In the twelfth century St. Paul's relics were transferred to Constantinople and placed in the Peribleptos monastery of the Mother of God, on orders of the emperor Manuel (1143-1180). Later, they were taken to Venice, and finally to Hungary, at Ofa. Part of his head is in Rome.

Saint John the Hut-Dweller was the son of rich and illustrious parents, and was born in Constantinople the early fifth century. He received a fine education, and he mastered rhetoric and philosophy by the age of twelve. He also loved to read spiritual books. Perceiving the vanity of worldly life, he chose the path that was narrow and extremely difficult. Filled with longing to enter a monastery, he confided his intention to a passing monk. John made him promise to come back for him when he returned from his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and take him to his monastery. He asked his parents for a Gospel so that he might study the words of Christ. John's parents hired a calligrapher to copy the text, and had the volume bound in a golden cover studded with gems. John read the Gospel constantly, delighting in the Savior's words. The monk kept his promise to come back for John, and they went secretly to Bithynia. At the monastery of the "Unsleping" (Akoimitoi), he received monastic tonsure. The young monk began his ascetical labors with zeal, astonishing the brethren with his unceasing prayer, humble obedience, strict abstinence, and perseverance at work. After six years, he began to undergo temptations. He remembered his parents, how much they loved him, and what sorrow he caused them. He regretted leaving them, and was filled with a burning desire to see them again. St. John explained his situation to the igumen St. Marcellus (December 29) and he asked to be released from the monastery. He begged the igumen for his blessing and prayers to return home. He bid farewell to the brethren, hoping that by their prayers and with the help of God, he would both see his parents and overcome the snares of the devil. The igumen then blessed him for his journey. St. John returned to Constantinople, not to resume his former life of luxury, but dressed as a beggar, and unknown to anyone. He settled in a corner by the gates of his parents' home. His

father noticed the "pauper," and began to send him food from his table, for the sake of Christ. John lived in a small hut for three years, oppressed and insulted by the servants, enduring cold and frost, unceasingly conversing with the Lord and the holy angels.

Before his death, the Lord appeared to the monk in a vision, revealing that the end of his sorrows was approaching, and that in three days he would be taken into the Heavenly Kingdom. Therefore, he asked the steward to give his mother a message to come to him, for he had something to say to her. At first, she did not wish to go, but she was curious to know what this beggar had to say to her. Then he sent her another message, saying that he would die in three days. John thanked her for the charity he had received, and told her that God would reward her for it. He then made her promise to bury him beneath his hut, dressed in his rags. Only then did the saint give her his Gospel, which he always carried with him, saying, "May this console you in this life, and guide you to the next life." She showed the Gospel to her husband, saying that it was similar to the one they had given their son. He realized that it was, in fact, the very Gospel they had commissioned for John. They went back to the gates, intending to ask the pauper where he got the Gospel, and if he knew anything about their son. Unable to restrain himself any longer, he admitted that he was their child. With tears of joy they embraced him, weeping because he had endured privation for so long at the very gates of his parental home. The saint died in the mid-fifth century, when he was not quite twenty-five years old. On the place of his burial the parents built a church, and beside it a hostel for strangers. When they died, they were buried in the church they had built. In the twelfth century the head of the saint was taken by Crusaders to Besançon (in France), and other relics of the saint were taken to Rome.

GREAT VESPERS

LORD I CALL: *Four stikhera of the Resurrection in tone 6 (spiral bound Vespers book) followed by three for Saint Paul and three for Saint John*

Saint Paul, tone 2:

When at the command of God, with wisdom,
you forsook the cares of life, O Father,
and advanced to the toils of ascetic labors,
then, rejoicing, you came to the virgin wilderness,

being kindled by the desire of love for the Lord;
as a result, you laid waste the passions by persevering in the better
things, //

after which you lived on earth like an angel.

From your youth, O Father Paul,
having removed yourself from human society,
you were the first to arrive in the barren wilderness.
There you lived in a greater solitude than all others,
being unknown throughout your entire life.
Whereupon Anthony, by divine inspiration,
found you as a hidden treasure //
and revealed you to the inhabited world.

You led a wondrous life on earth, O most-righteous Paul,
dwelling in the midst of wild beasts,
and most strangely ministered to by a bird that served you by the
inspiration of God.

When the great Anthony found you, he saw this,
and was stricken with amazement;
he glorified without ceasing Him Who is our God and Master, //
Who cares for the whole world in His providence.

Saint John, tone 2:

When at the command of God, with rejoicing,
you fled the beauties of the world, O Father John,
then, instead of the broader way,
you elected the path that was narrow, difficult and filled with grave
afflictions.

Therefore, having been clothed in the image of God
by your avoidance and denial of all pleasures, //
you took on the care of souls, O divinely blessed one.

You conceived and adopted a strange way of life,
having been pierced with the fervent love of Christ,
Whose unspeakable poverty you came to cherish,
and which you endured while homeless at your parents' gates,
O Father,
suffering oppression and humiliation.

As a result you were filled with gifts, //
and in the heavens you inherited the riches that cannot be taken away.

You ever held the holy Gospel in your hands
and became its fulfiller, O Father John.
You turned from the possessions of your parents
and perfected your whole life through tears and poverty.
Therefore, O venerable John,
you delight in the consolation of God, //
and in never-ending gladness!

GLORY...for Saint John, tone 2:

Rejecting the world and all that is in it,
you took up the Gospel, O venerable one,
and followed Christ evangelically;
living mystically in a hut as in paradise,
and subjecting your body to utter deprivation,
you choked the serpent, the slayer of man.
Therefore, as you dwell in the heavens, O blessed John, //
pray that our souls be granted great mercy!

***NOW AND EVER...the Dogmatikon of the Resurrection in
tone 6 (spiral bound Vespers book)***

***APOSTIKHA: All stikhera of the Resurrection in tone 6 (spiral
bound Vespers book)***

GLORY... for Saint Paul, tone 6:

The sound of your teachings has gone out into all the earth,
O venerable Father!
Therefore you have found the reward of your labors in the heavens.
You destroyed the hosts of demons
and reached the ranks of angels whose life you blamelessly followed!
Since you have boldness before Christ our God, //
entreat peace for our souls!

NOW AND EVER...the Resurrectional Theotokion in tone 6:

My Maker and Redeemer, Christ the Lord,
was born of you, O most pure Virgin.
By accepting my nature, He freed Adam from his ancient curse.
Unceasingly we magnify you as the Mother of God!
Rejoice, O celestial Joy!

Rejoice, O Lady: //
the Protection, Intercession and Salvation of our souls!

TROPARIA

Resurrection, tone 6

The Angelic Powers were at Your tomb;
the guards became as dead men.
Mary stood by Your grave,
seeking Your most pure body.
You captured hell, not being tempted by it.
You came to the Virgin, granting life.
O Lord, Who rose from the dead, //
glory to You.

Sts. Paul & John, tone 4:

O God of our Fathers,
always act with kindness towards us;
take not Your mercy from us,
but guide our lives in peace //
through the prayers of the venerable Paul and John!

Resurrectional Dismissal Theotokion, tone 4

The mystery of all eternity,
unknown even by Angels,
through you, Theotokos, is revealed to those on earth:
God incarnate by union without confusion.
He voluntarily accepted the Cross for us,
by which He resurrected the first-created man, //
saving our souls from death.

John of Damascus Orthodox Church

Rector: Father Michael Anderson

16903 Espola Rd

Poway, CA 92064

Email: powaypadre@stjohnofdamascus.org

Office: 858-674-1931