

conversing at length on spiritual matters, the raven that had always brought Saint Paul half a loaf of bread, came with a whole loaf. As the raven flew away, Paul said: "See, the Lord, who is truly good and merciful, has sent us food. Everyday for sixty years I have received half a loaf, but with your arrival Christ sent His servants a double ration." Giving thanks, they ate by a spring.

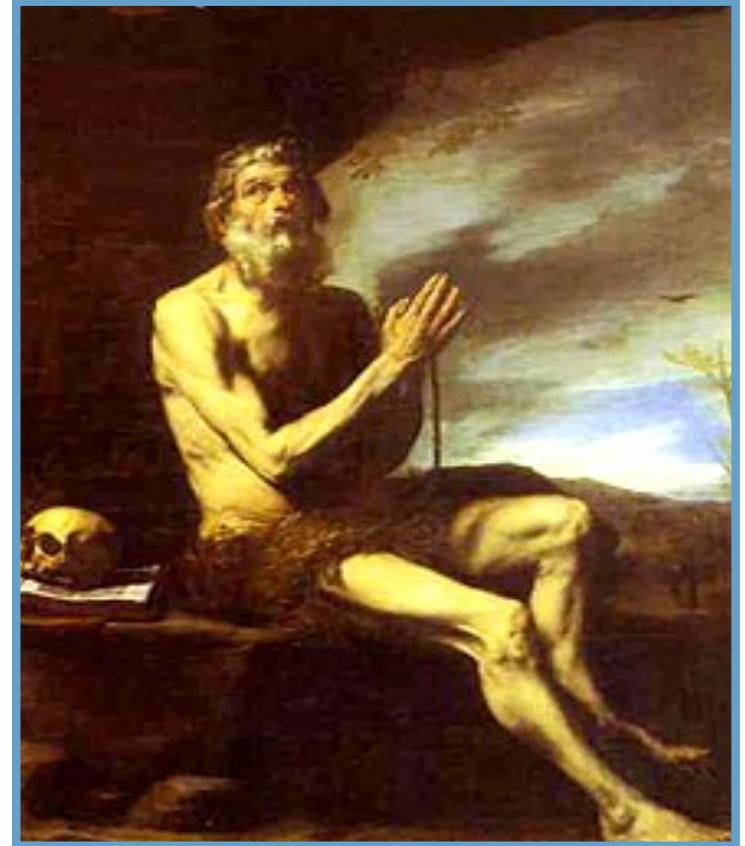
After a brief rest, they gave thanks, as was their custom, and spent the whole night praising God. At daybreak, Paul informed Anthony of his approaching death and asked him to fetch the cloak he had received from Saint Athanasius, that he might wrap himself in it. Later, as Anthony was returning from his visit, he saw Paul's soul ascending to heaven escorted by choirs of angels and surrounded by prophets and apostles. Further traditional matter may be found in *The Life of Paul the Hermit*, written by Saint Jerome about the year 376.

\*(excerpted from: [www.catholicculture.org](http://www.catholicculture.org); [www.traditioninaction.org](http://www.traditioninaction.org); [www.copticchurch.net](http://www.copticchurch.net))

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## ***Saint Paul the First Hermit***

**Feast Day: January 15**



**The hermitic life is sublime,  
but not easy.  
It is the fight between Good and Evil.**

## Saint Paul, the First Hermit

\*Saint Paul (229-342) was born in Lower Thebaid, Egypt. He is called "the first hermit" in the Missal and Breviary, a rare distinction, for such titles are seldom appended. Saint Paul was the standard-bearer of those courageous men who for the love of Christ left the world and entered the wilderness to dedicate themselves wholly to contemplation amid all the privations of desert life. The hermits were the great men of prayer in those difficult times when the Church was locked in fierce struggle with heresy after heresy. For centuries the example of their lives served as the school of Christian perfection. Their action set the background for the rise of monasticism and religious orders in the Church.

At the age of twenty-two, during the persecution of Emperor Decius, Saint Paul learned that his brother-in-law, who wanted to confiscate his estate, was planning to report him as a Christian to the pagan authorities. Paul fled, taking refuge in the desert. After the danger abated, he decided to remain a hermit.

His life in the desert, however, should not lead us to think that the contemplation of God left him uninterested in the glorious battles of the Church. No one walks securely on the road leading to God if he is not united to the Spouse whom Christ chose and established as the column and fundament of Truth. Among the children of the Church, those called to be most closely united to her are the contemplatives, since they traverse the sublime, arduous roads where many dangers lurk. From the depths of his cave, Saint Paul, enlightened by divine inspiration, followed the battles of the Church against Arianism. He was an admirer of Saint Athanasius and united to those who defended that the Word was co-substantial with the Father.

The Breviary retains an edifying legend concerning Saint Paul. One day Saint Anthony, Abbot, and, Patriarch of Monks, then ninety years old, was divinely inspired to visit the hermit Paul who found in Saint Paul an exemplar of what a holy man should be. Although they had never met previously, each greeted the other correctly by name. While they were