

## **SAINT AMMONAS**

**—Commemorated January 26th—**

Saint Ammonas lived during the 4th century. He was a contemporary of Saint Anthony the Great, and lived as a hermit in the Egyptian desert. With God's grace, he acquired an exceptional degree of love—especially for sinful people—, and an extraordinary measure of gentleness and tolerance.

Saint Ammonas once said: "I spent fourteen years in the desert, asking God night and day to help me overcome anger."

Saint Anthony prophesied the following to Saint Ammonas: "You will advance in the fear of God." Then Saint Anthony took him outside, and pointing to a boulder he said, "Curse and strike this boulder." After Saint Ammonas did so, Saint Anthony asked him, "Did the boulder speak?" "No," replied Saint Ammonas. Then Saint Anthony said, "You will also attain to this measure." This is indeed what happened. Because in following Saint Ammonas acquired such virtue and innocence that he no longer recognized evil. Thus, after he became a bishop, some people brought to him a young girl who had become pregnant outside of wedlock, and they told him, "So and so is responsible for this. Punish them." The Saint, however made the sign of the cross over the girl's belly and ordered these people to give her six sets of clean sheets, "lest," he said, "she or the baby passes away during the delivery, and there is a need to use these for the funeral." The accusers then objected, "What are you saying?... Punish them!" The Saint, however, replied, "My brothers, you see that this lady is at risk of passing away. What else am I to do?" And he sent her off with his blessing. And he never dared to condemn anyone.

Once, some people came to Saint Ammonas to resolve their conflict. The elder, however, began to act as if he was not in his right mind. Then, one of the ladies whispered to her companion: "This elder is not in his right mind." Saint Ammonas heard this, and he shouted at her, "Do you know how much I toiled in

the dessert in order to acquire this foolishness!?” And because of you, I am in danger of losing it today.”

Once, as Saint Ammonas was traveling, he stopped at a certain area to eat. In that region there dwelled a monk who had a bad reputation, and it just so happened that the lady he was involved with had come then and entered this monk’s house. When the brothers of that monastic community learned of this, they became unsettled. They called a meeting and decided to expel this monk from the home. When the brothers heard that Bishop Ammonas was close by, they went to see him, and asked him to come with them. In the meantime, the monk known for his impropriety realized what was about to happen, and he quickly hid the lady in a large earthenware container. As Saint Ammonas approached the hut with all the brothers, he realized through divine enlightenment what had happened, and he covered this monk in the following manner. Upon entering the hut, Saint Ammonas straightaway went and sat on the container; then ordered everyone to search the home. After the monks searched everywhere without discovering the lady, Saint Ammonas said to them: “What happened?... May God forgive you.” He then said a prayer and sent everyone out. When he remained alone with this monk, he held his hand and said to him, “Be careful, my brother.” And having said this, he left.

Through his holy prayers, may we all strive to achieve such love and virtue. Amen.