

On Saturday, November 13, our Sacred Sites group visited St Anthony's Greek Orthodox Monastery, located South of Florence, Arizona in the Sonoran desert. This Monastery was established in Arizona in 1955, and embodies the sacred heritage of Holy Mountain, Atos, in Greece. Today the monastery consists of a church and four chapels, along with a vegetable garden, a small vineyard, citrus orchards and an olive grove as well as housing for the monks and visitors. In the monastery there are over fifty monks and novices who live and work under their abbot, and observe a daily program of prayer and work on the buildings and grounds.

We were required to be appropriately and modestly dressed, men wearing long pants and long-sleeved shirts and women wearing loose blouses and long dresses and headscarves.

The various chapels are in traditional Byzantine or Russian style, named for various saints, and are spectacular inside with ornate wood and metalwork. Many of the icons and other artifacts came directly from Greece. The grounds are beautifully landscaped with desert plants, fountains and stone walkways. The place is truly an oasis in the desert. Many in our group described it as "peaceful."

St Anthony's Greek Orthodox Monastery is truly a Sacred Site for the monks that live there as well as the many visitors who are Orthodox Christians.

--Doug Davis