



IDAHO KNIGHTLY NEWS

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Upcoming 2022 Events:

Grand York Rite of OregonApril 7-9
Easter..... April 17
Grand York Rite of IdahoApril 21-23

What is Monasticism: Part 3

By Barry E. Newell

Development into Communal Life

With this development of communities, cenobitic monasticism was born. Cenobitic is rooted in the Greek words "koinos" meaning "common" and "bios" meaning "life." The development of this form of monasticism is given to Pachomius of the Thebaid (290 AD to 346 AD), a follower of St. Anthony. Aside from the greater protection, it gave the monks, this form was considered superior to eremitic monasticism as there was more obedience practiced and as a group, a hermit was less likely to stray from doctrine and practice anything considered heretical by the church.

Cenobitic monks lived in individual huts or rooms, but worked, ate, and

worshipped in a shared place. These communities were often a collection of buildings surrounded by a wall. Some of these monasteries would contain up to 30 houses that could each hold up to 40 monks. These houses were often divided according to the work the monks would perform for the monastery (carpentry, farming, etc.). This form made monasticism very industrious and thereby reduced the reliance monks had on the charity of the public.

Basic guidelines or "Rules" began to emerge that dictated a monk's daily life and even established communities for women. It was during this time that the term Abba was first used to describe the head of the monastery. Abba comes from the Syriac meaning "Father" and where we get the English "Abbot."

Pachomius's model became so successful that he began establishing them all over Egypt and by the time of his death in 346 AD, there were said to be around 3,000 communities in Egypt. From Egypt, cenobitic monasticism spread to the Levant, North Africa, Mesopotamia, Persia, the Roman Empire, and even as far East as India and China. Within a generation of Pachomius's death, the number of communities had grown

to 7,000. St. Jerome, known for the Latin translation of the Bible, later translated the rule of Pachomius into Latin.

East vs West

Before going into the spread of monasticism to Western Europe, I want to briefly touch upon monasticism as practiced in Greek and Russian Orthodox churches. Both Eastern and Western monasticism traces their origins back to St. Anthony the Great and Pachomius of the Thebaid, but just as there are differences between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox churches, so too are their difference between their forms of monasticism.

While most Western Christian monasticism utilized the cenobitic monasticism, a third form was created called skete which combined the best aspects of both eremitic and cenobitic monasticism. Within skete monasticism, the practitioners would pray privately for the week, and then on Sunday (as well as on Feast Days), they would assemble together. St. Theodore of Egypt, a follower of Pachomius, is considered the father of skete monasticism, but St. Basil of Caesarea is considered the founder of monasticism within the Eastern Orthodox churches.

St. Basil traveled throughout the Holy Land and Egypt where he visited several monasteries. He was impressed by the rules laid down by Pachomius. St. Basil wrote his own regulations which emphasized a unified community and strong central leadership. St. Basil's Rule was strict but not severe (in comparison to the Desert Fathers).

While in the West, monks were not always clergy, in the East monasticism

became inextricably linked to the clergy and in most Orthodox churches it became law that all bishops must be monks.

Spread to Europe

Monasticism grew out of the Middle East and to the rest of the Roman Empire through its existent infrastructure. The most well-known figures of monasticism in Western Europe were Martin of Tours, John Cassian, and Honoratus of Marseilles. Some date the introduction of monasticism to the West to a visit to Rome by St. Athanasius in 340 AD who was accompanied by two monks who were followers of St. Anthony the Great. Others believe that monasticism came to the West through John Cassian. Martin of Tours was a pagan convert to Christianity and established monasteries in Milan, Liguge, Poitiers, and Marmoutiers near Tours. Honoratus would establish monasteries in Lérins (an island near the city of Cannes). John Cassian started as a monk in the Middle East, but moved to Gaul (now France) and established monasteries in Marseilles. John published his "Institute and Conferences" which had influenced the Rule of St. Benedict. To be continued...

Editor's Note

If anyone would like to submit an article for the Idaho Knightly News, please email me your article using Microsoft Word. Keep it between 1 page and 1.5 pages.