



IDAHO KNIGHTLY NEWS

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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.

Upcoming 2022 Events:

Colorado York Rite..... Sep. 8-10
Wyoming York Rite..... Sep. 15-17
Northwest York Rite Oct. 14-15

What is Monasticism: Part 7

By Barry E. Newell

The Decline of Monasticism, the Renaissance, and the Reformation

Up to the 14th century, Europe was starting to climb out of the darkness left in the wake of the fall of the ancient Roman Empire, but then economic downturn, political instability, and disease started occurring. Between the 11th and 14th centuries, the population had grown around

250%, and finding good land to farm was hard and only the elite, the nobility and church, owned the land. The climate started to cool off as well and it got wetter which shortened the harvesting season and decreased food production. Starvation became an issue, particularly for the peasants who became malnourished, and which stunted their growth. People begin moving to cities and urban centers looking for work and food. The cities become overcrowded with malnourished and weakened people, and Europe is about to be ravaged by the Black Death.

If the plague wasn't bad enough, you saw a great amount of political violence occurring during the same time. You see the arrest and dissolution of the Knights Templar and its properties. The Hundred Years War surrounded the elites fighting over the crown of France. With this war, you see the decline of the mounted knight and the rise of the use of archers and canons on the battlefield. The common people were getting sick of war as they often suffered no matter who won, and uprisings started happening in England, France, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Italian city-states.

The Roman Papacy is both a religious and global power, but is facing criticism from within and without because of some glaring corruption and big bureaucracy that ran the church throughout all of Christendom. Bribery was commonplace and nobility could impact even papal elections. In 1305, the Avignon Papacies began with Clement V who was, in my opinion, a puppet of King Philip of France. Clement didn't want to move to Rome and his successor John XXII decided to stay in France as well. This leads to other nations denouncing the French Papacy. This leads to the Great Schism where Cardinals in Rome elect a new Pope and now there are two Popes then a third Pope is elected. They excommunicate each other and cause a great deal of confusion within the church. No one truly knows which Pope is valid and Bishops don't know who to follow.

Some may not see this as a positive, but wealth became concentrated in fewer hands. This allowed the wealthy to patronize the arts. Trade was also improved and opened to new areas which then exposed the West to new advancements such as in math (the use of Arabic numerals instead of Roman). Both the increase in art and trade helped launch the Renaissance.

As seen with the Templars, nations, and monarchies were being threatened by the changing environment and by the wealth and power of religious orders. The depopulation caused by the Black Death couldn't support the monasticism that existed before the plague. Less population to pull from, competition with mendicant orders, relaxation of monastic rules, and poor leader, it was inevitable that monasticism declined in both membership and appeal.

In 1517, Martin Luther, a former Augustinian monk, published his 95 Theses on October 31st in Wittenberg, Saxony, which sparked the Protestant Reformation. Protestantism emphasized active engagement in the world rather than seclusion. In most Protestant nations, monasteries were closed, their members mistreated, and their lands and assets seized by the state. The closure of so many monasteries disrupted parish activity. In response, the Council of Trent was convened in 1545 which reformed, centralized, and attempted to revitalize monasticism and save Catholicism against the rise of Protestantism. Monasticism continued to play a role in Catholic-controlled nations, but in Protestant and Anglican states, they were only a memory.

Monasticism would face possible extinction again with the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars ravaged France and Europe, but monasticism would also see a revival in the 19th century among Protestants and Anglicans. Surprisingly, the first Anglican monastic movement was started by women.

