

# THE PLETERJE CARTHUSIAN MONASTERY

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## The Spiritual Life

The Carthusian worship is strongly rooted in the beginnings of redemptive history. The monk and the monastic community illustrate and participate in the rooted nature of this day in and day out in the act of worship (liturgy). The Biblical Fathers and their vocation have an important role in liturgy. They represent an example for the man, who must leave his homeland, seek his vocation outside his familiar surroundings and follow it. This vocation is an important starting point for the development of European belief and culture. The monk is included in this historic current in the very heart of his life, in everyday liturgy.

The patriarch Abraham also listened to the Call of God and his inner voice. He left his homeland as a clan leader and went to the west, which was foreign to him. Thus, he became the founding father for the believers of the three revelationist religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. He became the founder of that multi-faceted development, which gained a European face over the course of history. Europe is essentially an idea, which extended geographically, culturally and in a religious sense in the Greco-Roman period as far as the Mediterranean, including Asia Minor and North Africa. It extended still further to the north and east in the period of the Germanic and Slavic migrations. The Judaeo-Christian religion acclimatised to this area and transformed it in its own way.

Monasticism largely developed in Asia Minor and in North Africa (Egypt). It spread from here to the west in the form of anchoritic life, as well in the form of organised coenobite life, communal life (Pachomius □ AD 347, Basilus □ AD 379). It exercised fundamental influence in a religious, cultural, economic and social sense on the formation of Europe. Benedictine and Irish monasticism played a decisive role from this point of view. The adaptation of eastern monasticism to

the spirit and character of the "North", particularly in Provence, reaches back as far as John Cassianus (□ AD 435), lived with Palestinian and Egyptian anchorites for many years. Monks constantly recalled these varied religious and cultural roots in their rejuvenation attempts and movements, as well as during their fundamental forms of inculcation.

There was a very agitated period in the religious field towards the end of the 11th century. The Carthusian Order was also founded in this period in one of the many attempts to renew Eastern Monasticism and its spirituality in the West. Bruno of Cologne (□ 1101) and his comrades attempted through the Love of God to realise the early monastic ideals of peace (Hesychia, quies) in the isolated mountain massif of Chartreuse (Isere). Unlike other similar attempts, they did not merely seek temporary habitation in total isolation, but also sought a lasting solution in communal life. The harshness of conditions led to specific living conditions, similar to the Greek Laura (anchorite cottages), linked by a Great Cloister and a special Lesser Cloister, as a link between communal spaces, such as the church, the Chapter House and the Refectory. The various tasks of monastic life demand in the Carthusian monastery as in "the Church in miniature" a different share in monastic life, but all are monks with the same goal, the "propositum". Thus, it is possible to differentiate the representatives, the monks in seclusion, the lay brothers or conversi and the donatori.

The Carthusian external way of life is barely distinguishable from that of other non-Christian monks. The difference lies in theological interpretation. The Abrahamic religious obedience found in Jesus of Nazareth its final fulfilment and form of Biblical, that is also monastic vocation, or as St. Paul said: (Isto mišljenje naj bo v vas, ki je tudi v Kristusu Jezusu. Čeprav je bil namreč Božje narave, se ni ljubosumno oklepjal svoje enakosti z Bogom, ampak samega sebe izničil tako, da je prevzel vlogo hlapca in postal podoben ljudem. Po zunanosti je bil kakor človek in je samega sebe ponižal tako, da je postal pokoren vse do smrti, in sicer na križu □") (Philippians 2, 5-11). The monastic vocation is thus a form of expropriation (expropriacia, Kenosis) for the salvation of all; it is a presentation to God, to include us in his beatific design. In this, monastic life, therefore, differs from egocentric seeking after salvation and self-

fulfilment, linking it to the Church and the entire community of mankind, as well as connecting it to the salvation plan of History. The monk lives for others, for the concrete world. His spirituality is rooted in today, in modern social structures. His life must not be flight, but solidarity, compassion for others. His spirituality must also be rooted in the earth, which means that it is empty in itself, being fulfilled only in human possibilities and in the activities of the individual monk and his monastic community. He is linked in the specific monastic dwelling culture, where he must compete with each member in terms of authenticity and quality. The areas, in which the monastic community can confirm and demonstrate, are those of religious life, culture, ecology, sociality and economy. These elements must not be separate, but connected in genuine living relations; otherwise these areas nullify each other.

The Pleterje Carthusian Monastery, its religious and social meaning must be judged against this spiritual and historical background. The modern Carthusian Monastery was founded as a "refugee monastery" in the period of the exile of the French Carthusians (1904). From its beginnings as a double community with great land holdings, the Pleterje monastery gradually changed into a "normal" Carthusian monastery with a limited number of monks. The Carthusians do not perform pastoral activities, but live according to precisely defined time frames within the monastery in prayer (liturgy and meditation) and in work (study and manual labour) in co-operation with smaller groups of employees.

[Source](#)



A monk in the west wing of the Lesser Cloister



A Carthusian monk in the Pleterje Monastery Church



Monks praying at midnight mass

Quies

