

This Rule remains an unsurpassed example of monastic organization and is used by all Orthodox monastic communities today.

St. Theodore's Rule was carefully studied and copied in Constantinople by **St. Ephraim**, a monk of the Kyivan Lavra Monastery of the Caves and taken to Ukraine in 1062. From this Monastery, thanks to the tireless work of **St. Theodosius of the Caves**, it was disseminated to other Orthodox monastic communities in Ukraine and throughout other Slavic lands.

Historical events and foreign invasions of the 10th century led to the rise and flourishing of another great centre of monastic civilization located on the Athos peninsula in Greece. Currently, Mt. Athos, or the Holy Mountain, remains an active and strong centre of Orthodox monasticism. The same type of Christianity can still be found there today — a place for those who strive to live with the gifts of the Holy Spirit and by those qualities described by the Apostle Paul in his Epistles (1 Cor 12).



Monasteries have always played an important role in the Orthodox Church. Most of the Church Fathers, the Theologians who compiled the Holy Doctrine of the Church, were monks. Today, as in the past, the Church still selects bishops exclusively from monastic ranks of the clergy.

Presently, every Orthodox Church has monastics. Ukraine has countless monasteries dotting the country where the children of the devoted faithful serve God. Innumerable monasteries can be found throughout Europe. Several Orthodox Churches here in North America also have monastic communities.

— Sister Danyila (Bakay)

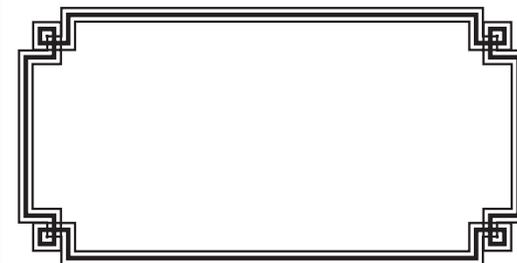


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MONASTICISM

PAST AND PRESENT



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A MONASTERY

Most Orthodox monasteries follow the *coenobitic* rule of monastic life. This is a community of monastics holding all things in common and following a daily schedule of prayer and work in obedience to their spiritual father or mother.

The daily program of monks or nuns begins early in the morning with personal prayer time, followed by the cycle of morning prayers and the Divine Liturgy. After breakfast, the monastics begin their workday, attending to prayer and their tasks until evening.

Tasks may include, among others:

- ⌘ grounds-keeping,
- ⌘ gardening,
- ⌘ iconography,
- ⌘ charitable work with children, the elderly and the sick,
- ⌘ teaching,
- ⌘ sewing,
- ⌘ embroidery,
- ⌘ woodworking,
- ⌘ publishing,
- ⌘ food preparation and
- ⌘ offering hospitality.

The day ends with **Evening Vespers** followed by supper and **Compline**. At the end of the day, every monk and nun has his or her own personal prayer rule. That is the time when a person can be alone in silence with God, and enjoy the sweet fruits of peace and the sweetness of union with God through the Jesus Prayer.



The exact hours when the daily schedule begins and ends vary.

A typical daily routine is as follows:

- ⌘ 5:30 a.m. Midnight Service, Matins, First, Third, Sixth Hours, Divine Liturgy
- ⌘ 9:00 a.m. Breakfast and tasks
- ⌘ 12:00 p.m. (noon) lunch
- ⌘ 6:00 p.m. Ninth Hour, Vespers and supper
- ⌘ 8:30 p.m. Small Compline, personal prayer time

In monasteries with the *coenobitic* rule (which means “*common way*”) of monastic life, everyone follows the same daily schedule under the direction of the abbot or abbess. Meals are eaten together. Work, rest periods and services are conducted together according to the monastery's schedule. Every monastery is a Holy Monastery of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a place of prayer and redemption for those people leading a monastic life and for pious pilgrims.

HISTORY OF MONASTICISM

Christianity was persecuted during the first centuries. Often Christians fled from these persecutions and were able to find shelter in vast deserts where they could live undetected and worship God in peace. An example of this is the life of **St. Paul of Thebes**.

This lifestyle suited those individuals who desired to strive to perfect themselves living according to the Biblical teachings. It inspired **St. Anthony the Great** in the third century to found the *hermitic* style of monasticism in the Egyptian deserts, where monks lived mostly in isolation.

Around the year 318, **St. Pachomius** in Egypt began to organize his many followers into what was to become the first Christian monastery. This style of monasticism is called *coenobitic*, whereby monks lived together.

The Egyptian monks of the first centuries were abundantly graced with spiritual gifts: hope, faith, prayer, prophecy, healing, languages and theology. These gifts of the Holy Spirit are common to every Christian (1 Cor. 12). The monastics cultivated them to a higher degree.

When the practice of Christianity came to be permitted under the law promulgated by the Emperor Constantine, another monastic centre appeared in Constantinople. One of its greatest achievements was the *coenobitic* Rule written by **St. Theodore the Studite** for his monastery the Studion.