

## Orthodox Monasticism

“Although monasticism as a specific eremitic lifestyle mainly developed in the 4th century, it existed as a way of life from the beginning of the Church. The whole Bible describes the life of the righteous and the Christians as a monastic life...

The Old Testament Prophets actually lived as monks live today. The companies of Prophets described in the Old Testament were groups that gathered around a divinely enlightened person and learnt how to live a life dedicated to God...

The life of Christ’s Disciples was monastic and communal. The Disciples left everything in order to follow Christ. First they renounced material possessions and left their families, as did Abraham, then came obedience. For three years they were purified from the passions and received healing from Christ through His word...

Monks continue to bear witness to the new life that Christ brought into the world. Through their struggle against the devil, death and sin they receive the same grace as the Martyrs, so when circumstances require, they can bear witness to the faith and undergo martyrdom.”

*Monasticism as the Way of Life of Prophets, Apostles and Martyrs*

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“The monastic life is called ‘a noble vocation’ and ‘an angelic way of life’. It is a venerable, hallowed life that promises participation in eternal life. It is also an angelic way of life, because the monk is called, starting from this life, to live as the angels do: in purity of soul and body, but also in continuous, uninterrupted prayer.”

*The Spirit of Orthodox Monasticism*

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“Every great work starts with obedience. Obedience is... not just a matter of bending the will, although it starts from there. The purpose

of obedience is to enable us to be born into another world, to go beyond our individuality and become deified.”

*The Monk's Spiritual Reference Points*

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“The monk is a soldier of Jesus Christ. St Basil makes a detailed comparison between the image and life of a soldier in the army and the monk. A soldier does not entangle himself in worldly occupations, does not have a permanent home, trains every day, and so on, and the true monk should be the same. He should not be comfortable. ‘Forget all earthly comfort.’ He should be free of worldly concerns, ‘homeless, stateless and without possessions.’ He must fight against thoughts. He should set Christ before his eyes and endure as He did in order to share in His victory.”

*The Hesychastic Monasticism of St Basil the Great*

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“St Symeon the New Theologian says that, if someone does not heed the divinely inspired words, nor set a door before his lips, nor avert his ears from vanity, nor remember the future Judgment, ‘even if he has lived more than a hundred years in the monastic habit, how will he find a tear that he may fervently mourn over himself?’ Neither the monastic schema nor the number of years a monk spends in the monastery are of any benefit unless he conducts himself inwardly like a monk, as set out by the holy Fathers.”

*Monasticism According to St Symeon the New Theologian*

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“During the Service of the Great and Angelic Schema the angels are present recording the profession made by the prospective monk, and he will have to account for how well he kept it...

From the day he receives the great and angelic schema he must

prepare himself for spiritual struggles, which are both negative and positive. On the negative side, he has to shun comfort, care, pleasure, and everything delightful and enjoyable in life. The positive struggles are the effort he must make for physical self-control, purification of the soul, extreme poverty, godly mourning, and everything distressing and painful in the joyful life according to God. In striving to observe God's will to the utmost, the monk will be hungry, thirsty, naked, insulted, mocked, reviled and persecuted and will pass through many distressing trials.

In spite of these difficulties, the monk ought to rejoice because God has granted him the great honour of belonging to the army of 'those who live like angels', at the height of 'the heavenly way of life'. Keeping this in mind he must work wholeheartedly and seek the citizenship of heaven. His attention ought not to be directed towards the earthly way of life but towards the heavenly regime. If this is – as it should be – the true distinguishing characteristic and genuine aspiration of every Christian, it ought even more to be the goal of every monk, as monks strive to live Christ's commandments and the whole Gospel of life to the utmost.”

*Orthodox Monasticism According to the Service  
of the Great and Angelic Schema*