

MONKS IN THE CITY*

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Monasticism has always been one of the essential elements of Christianity. The urban explosion has become one of the major realities of contemporary society. How is it that a monastic presence remains so scattered and tenuous in the heart of our great cities - where evangelization is so clearly a priority for Christians? These are the sorts of questions that arise for those called to become "monks in the city." What are the reasons for this *absence*? What arguments could justify such a *presence*? And how could one live this *presence in such an absence*, when the monastic ideal is defined as much by a need for distance as by a desire for communion?

Why such an absence?

We have all inherited a classic – if not idealized – image of the typical monk in his woollen cowl and medieval cloister, with walled enclosure and Gregorian chant, living either in the open countryside or deep woodlands. We are at the point where speaking of a monastic presence in an urban environment has become an unusual event.¹

Contrary to these generally accepted ideas, urban monasticism is not a recent development.² One could even say, in a sense, that monasticism is as old as Christianity, for it first appeared in the heart of the urban environment.³ The example of the Essenes, the emblematic figure of John the Baptist, Jesus' sojourn in the desert, his life entirely given over to the Father in the prophetic stance of consecrated celibacy, Mary's way of life at Nazareth, "keeping and meditating on all these things in her heart" (Lk 2, 51) – all this could not be without sequel.

1 Cf. for example, the conference by Fr. Atti I.O. Prêta in the bulletin *AIM*, 57 (1994) concerning the monastery of Benedictine sisters at Vanves, in the immediate suburbs of Paris.

2 Cf. Dom Jacques Dubois, "Le monachisme urbain," in *La Lettre de Ligugé*, 143 (1970).

3 Adalbert-Gautier Hamman, "Les origines du monachisme chrétien," in *Etudes de patristique* (Beauchesne 1991); Jean-Miguel Garrigues et Jean Legrez, *Moines dans l'assemblée des fidèles à l'époque des Pères* (Beauchesne 1992).

And Christianity flourished first in the urban environment. With the mention of the “virgins” and “ascetics,” even of the first Christian communities in the Acts of the Apostles, “devoted to prayer” and “holding everything in common,”⁴ one already has a first glimpse of the beginnings of a monastic presence in Jerusalem. Egeria and the Pilgrim of Bordeaux describe this monastic presence in their early pilgrimages to the Holy City. What obliges us to believe that this presence did not come into being before the fourth century in cities like Jerusalem, Samaria, Antioch, Alexandria, or even Ephesus, Corinth and Rome? If St. Anthony is the first monk we know of, thanks to his biography by St. Athanasius, he is far from being the first monk to exist. In Gaul, St. Martin, the first hermit known by name in the West, brought monasticism to flower first of all in the city of Tours (371). Soon afterwards, St. John Cassian (+ 432) founded a double monastery of brothers and sisters in the heart of Marseilles. St. Basil (+ 379), father of Eastern monasticism, with great felicity established urban monasticism in the city of Caesarea. St. Ambrose (+ 397) did likewise in Milan, St. Augustin (+430) in Hippo, St. Caesarius (+ 542) in Arles, St. Ephrem (+ 379) in Edessa, etc. St. Benedict himself (+ 583) spent time in Rome. And what should one say about Constantinople where, in St. John Chrysostom’s (+ 407) day, monks numbered in the thousands!

Throughout the Middle Ages, Benedictines, Colombans, Cistercians and occasionally even Carthusians did not hesitate to settle in the city.⁵ At one time Paris was full of monks, from the monasteries of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Saint-Martin des Champs, les Blancs-Manteaux and les Bernardins to the Charterhouse at the Luxembourg and the numerous monastic houses in the immediate vicinity of St. Gervais Church. Let us not forget the important role played in northern Europe during the 14th and 15th centuries by the convents of Beguines. And, down to our own times, the role played in Latin Europe by the Carmelite and Visitation convents, almost always city monasteries.

Nonetheless, especially in France after the Revolution of 1789, urban monasticism, which was already on the decline, disappeared from the urban fabric. And now at the end of the 20th century, monasticism remains almost entirely cut off from the majority of great cities. In former days, in a society 80% rural, monasticism was present everywhere. Today, in a society now urbanized in the same proportion, monasticism is absent almost everywhere. How can this not be

4 V. Acts 1, 14; 2, 42-44; 4, 32-35; 17, 11; 1 Cor 7, 25-28; 2 Cor 11, 1-2; Phil 2, 15-16.

5 V. Ivan Gobry, *Les Moines d'Occident*, 3 vols. (Fayard; Paris 1985-87) passim.

considered extremely unfortunate and how can this be explained?

A long series of historical, sociological, pastoral, theological and even psychological or spiritual reasons could be brought into account. Here, we will limit ourselves to a few questions that may suggest the beginnings of a few explanations.

The imposition of the *Rule of St. Benedict* to the entire Western Christian world,⁶ supported by the power of the Carolingian Empire, was perhaps a wise thing and certainly created unity. But did it respect the creativity the early Middle Ages might have left us in this sphere? One wonders.... In Eastern Christianity, monasticism developed under different circumstances – and remained largely urban.⁷

Did the rise of the great mendicant orders, especially the Dominicans and Franciscans in the 13th century, preceded by the Carmelites, Premonstratensians and the various forms of Canons Regular, by introducing a new religious presence into the heart of the city, supplant a more specifically monastic presence? Once again, one wonders.... Perhaps also the striking example of the Carthusians, with their strong emphasis on desert spirituality (St. Bruno, + 1101), followed by Rome's decision to impose a more and more strict enclosure, led monasticism to become more and more rural?

Later, the ebb of the great Benedictine, Cluniac and Cistercian expansion of the 11th and 12th centuries, the problems caused by commendatory abbots, internal disorder, material ease, and vast possessions led many monasteries towards dispersion and decline. Then Western Christendom was confronted with the difficulties of the Renaissance, the Reformation, Gallicanism, Jansenism and finally the rationalism of the Enlightenment, and the monastic world, lacking strong dogmatic foundations, was too weak to remain in the urban environment. With the French Revolution, the last walls collapsed. At least in France, the only monks left were the Trappists, confined to their rural retreat and agricultural lifestyle, far from the cities and the exchange of ideas.

6 Essentially because of the reforms of St. Benedict of Aniane (750-821).

7 One thinks immediately, of course, of the monasteries of Studios and of St. Mamas in Constantinople, the Percherska Lavra of Kiev and of the monastic presence within the Kremlin at Moscow.

Monasticism returned⁸ in the climate of 19th-century Restoration and Christian Romanticism, with of course a strong emphasis on a rural environment, enclosure and abbatial authority. Religious institutes flourished, new congregations were founded, seminaries and charities multiplied, the missions expanded.... How could the city pavements not be left to them? For better or for worse, the urban environment, confronted with positivism, scientism, ideological and practical materialism, in a climate of German 19th-century philosophy, gradually took on the coloration of the modern city as we know it today - and where a monastic presence remains dramatically, almost totally, absent.

Given the extent and suddenness of the urban explosion, the gap could only grow larger. Urbanism and monasticism came to be seen as incompatible-incomprehensible or even condescending to each other. The gap is still far from being bridged. Today town and monastery keep their distance, although from the beginnings and throughout much of their history, they had so felicitously shared so many things.

At this stage one can only express a double desire: that rural monasticism continue and prosper! It fulfils a vital need for our era. But also that urban monasticism be reborn and flourish! Today's world thirsts for it. Here a void cries out to be filled.

Why such a presence?

When one considers the implications of the urban explosion – certainly one of the most universal and decisive characteristics of today's world – how can one not hope to see the metropolis regain this monastic presence, which could only serve to expand its spiritual horizons? To see monks in the city once again, be they to a degree a new sort of monks, since we are talking about a new sort of urban environment?

But just what is a monk? and for what city? One could discuss at great length the nature of the monk. But it would be in vain.... The new code of canon law itself

8 Due, in France, notably to Dom Guéranger for the Congrégation de Solesmes and Fr. Muard for the Congrégation de Subiaco.

gives no definition, since the monk remains undefinable. He bears a secret we will never cease to fathom. At the end of an in-depth study, Antoine Guillaumont, the eminent patristics scholar, concludes simply, "The monk is a man who has no wife," for, in this sense, he is "*monos*" or "alone."⁹ To which we can add "for the sake of the Kingdom of God." In short, the monk is a consecrated celibate, living - if he is Christian - in intimacy with Jesus Christ.

From there follow the characteristics of monastic life: a fraternal existence, most often lived out in community; simplicity and unity of life; the liturgy of the hours, said either personally or liturgically; a balance of silence and sharing, work and study, hospitality and solitude; the pursuit of an ideal of chastity, poverty, obedience and humility, in a climate of joy and peace - the whole in a spirit of eschatological anticipation (Col 3, 1-3). On this foundation a great diversity of styles of living can be established. In this sense, the monk is both "*monos*" (alone) and "*unus*" (at one). Alone with the One, and at one with himself in rectitude, at one with others in love.

If, from this common foundation which seems generally accepted,¹⁰ we seek the model of the perfect monk, surprising as it may seem, we could most certainly say it is Jesus himself. He is perfectly "*monos*,"¹¹ in his intimacy with the Father (Jn 10, 30; 16, 32). He is perfectly "*unus*," in the bond of friendship and peace he lived with all men (14, 27; 17, 23). He is truly "separated from all so as to be united to all."¹¹ He truly is consecrated (Lk 3, 22; 4, 18), prays (5, 16; 6, 12; 9, 18; 11, 1), is a brother (5, 11, 28; 6, 13; 8, 1), celebrates the liturgy (4, 16; 6, 6; 20:1; 22:53). He truly is poor (2 Cor 8:7), perfectly obedient (Phil 2:8), perfectly pure and innocent (Jn 8:46). In this deepest sense, it is clear that the first, the perfect, the truest of all monks (and perhaps the only true monk) is Jesus Christ.

Now Jesus was also a city dweller. From "his own city Nazareth" (Lk 2, 39 ["*polis*"], 51; 4, 16) to the "city of Jerusalem," where he comes and goes constantly (2, 4; 4, 9; 9, 51; 13, 33; 18, 31; 19, 28), by way of "his city" of Capernaum (Mt 4, 13; 9, 1 ["*polis*"]), his journey takes him "from town to town" (Lk 5, 12; 9, 6; 10,

9 "Monachisme et éthique judéo-chrétienne," *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, 60 (1972).

10 Cf. Notably the well-known "definitions" by Evagrius Ponticus, Augustine, and Theodore of Studios.

11 Evagrius Ponticus, *Treatise on Prayer*, 124.

8...) to the ultimate encounter in the heart of Jerusalem where he says, "Stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high." (Lk 24, 49).¹²

Only on this first model can we found a genuinely "monastic" ideal - an ideal straight as the Gospel, directed towards the one true goal: to meet God; to proclaim and become God, by the pure grace of God. This, in any case, is the triple goal which we constantly strive to keep in sight in our Monastic Communities of Jerusalem, which are by definition essentially urban. Our goal in this urban environment is, as we like to say, to live "in the heart of the city in the heart of God," in the long line of our forbears, the earliest Christian communities.

If we attempt to be city monks and nuns, it is first of all in order to meet God there. If, after the monk, we were to try to define the city, I would say simply that it is the most beautiful image of God of earth, since it gathers together the very children of God. Before the desert, the mountain or the temple, the city is therefore the first meeting-place with God. Since God put the breath of his own life in man, it is in the heart of man that we must first seek the mark of his Spirit. In what is most human we will discover what is the most divine.

If we want to meet the Father, let us look at his children! If we want to meet the Son, let us open our hearts to his brothers! If we want to meet the Spirit, let us turn toward those who are his holy Temple! The fulness of the Trinity lives now on this earth.¹³ We are made in the image of the Father who created us, in the likeness of the Son who lived among us, and in communion with the Spirit who dwells in us. Living and praying in the heart of the human city, we can truly live and pray in the heart of God - for he is the first to dwell in our cities, "he who dwells in Jerusalem."¹⁴

Consequently, if we want to contemplate the Lord and live in the joy and truth of this encounter, it is not a question of fleeing the presence of men but of finding in them the presence of God. For, as Madeleine Delbr el put it so well, solitude is not first an "absence from the world" but a "presence to God."¹⁵ Scripture is categorical on this point: "He who does not love his brother whom he has seen,

12 Seeking the model of the perfect contemplative nun, we could say the same of the Virgin Mary, who, following in the footsteps of Jesus, is also a city dweller.

13 Cf. Jn 14, 23; 20, 22; Rom 5, 5; 8, 16; Gal 4, 6; 5, 25; Eph 1, 13.

14 Ps 135, 21. Cf. Pss 2, 6; 48, 3; 50, 2; 68, 17; 76, 3; 87, 3; 132, 13; 135, 21, to mention only the Psalms.

15 *Nous autres, gens des rues*, (Seuil; Paris, 1976).

cannot love God whom he has not seen." (1 Jn 4, 20) In loving all men and women in the heart of the city where they are gathered together, we encounter God in this first place of his Presence among us, the urban environment. And our prayer, rising in this struggle to love, will attain the true heights of contemplation (1 Jn 4:20). Since the human heart of is the most beautiful tabernacle of God, we can best encounter the true God in the midst of the human city. For our great God is indeed "the lover of mankind"!

Certainly, one cannot seek God and fulfil our being without keeping our distance from "this world which is passing away" and "dealing with the world as though we had no dealings with it" (1 Cor 7, 31). We cannot love two worlds at the same time. But Jesus does not ask us first and foremost to "take ourselves out of the world" but to "keep ourselves from the evil one" (Jn 7, 15). The necessary distance, therefore, does not hinder communion. As Christians - and therefore, as monks - we are required to "keep ourselves" from the urban world, without cutting ourselves off from it, to be present to it without losing ourselves in it. We will be judged on this "double commandment" of love both of neighbour and of God (Mt 22, 34-40). Our presence to God does not therefore depend on our distance from the children of God, but on the openness of our heart to the Lord who remains pre-eminently present in the urban world.

Of course, the city always offers something of the fascination of Babel. Innumerable diversions, innumerable temptations can constantly turn us away from the Lord. But one can be tempted in the desert also. One can find diversion in the heart of a monastery. In deepest solitude, one can become garrulous. Might not the largest, the most prayer-filled church in Paris be the Métro, the underground? It is up to us to learn to pray in the city and through the city - to lift up its groanings and echo its cries. And perhaps to found a new spirituality there.... For living and praying are inextricably linked together. And so, here too, we need to learn to unite action and contemplation, work and prayer, chapel and workshop, oratory and office. In a word, the church and the street. And this effort at unification is eminently monastic.

We will doubtless need to pray differently, "constantly" (Lk 18, 1; Eph 5, 20; 1 Th 5, 16): during breakfast or in the lift; answering the telephone or typing on the computer; waiting for an appointment, for the end of work or of a meeting; crossing the street to the post office and waiting for the underground to return to the liturgy. So what if we no longer say the angelus in the fields, as in Millet's painting. It still

rings morning, noon and evening in all the churches of the city. And Mary of Nazareth can still teach us to say three times a day the same "*fiat*" to God's unending will. For truly, all is grace, even today, in the heart of our towns, icons of God in their thousands of faces, each made in his image.

We are also in the city in order to proclaim God there. Monasticism is not "mutism." One cannot meet the Lord without announcing him. The One whom God sent sends witnesses of God. From his first visit to us in 1975, the Archbishop of Paris, Cardinal François Marty, asked us to be "watchers and wakers." All was said in two words. Keep watch before God, day after day, so as to waken to city to God, day after day. But how can one "proclaim God" in the city today and still give silence and solitude priority in our life?

To start with, by the *silent witness of our life*. For words count less than deeds. God is announced more by what we are for him than by whatever declarations we make about him. Being has always had priority over talk or mere acts. In the heart of the city, God calls us all first and foremost to be saints! (Mt 5, 48; 1 Th 4, 3) Not heroes of asceticism or prayer, but signs of God's forgiving love, living signs of his presence, witnesses of his goodness, reflections of his light, despite our weakness. The city needs these witnesses to the Absolute of God, who strive to consecrate their lives to him, today and forever, radically and visibly, in poverty but not paltriness (Lc 6, 37-38). At a time when so much that is relative is made imperative, constantly misleading city dwellers away from the essential, the radicality of the Gospel will proclaim the true God.

Next, by the *witness of love in action*. Today's cities cry out more than ever their thirst for love "in deed and in truth." In the indifference, anonymity, tensions and competitiveness of the urban environment, in this absence or invisibility of love, God himself is made distant or unknown. The tragic logic of unlove is that it engenders unfaith. The atheism of the modern city is brought about first of all by its lack of charity - for as Hans Urs von Balthasar puts it so well, "love alone is worthy of faith." If the world is to believe in the God we preach, it must be able to recognize the love our lives bear in him. "See how they love each other" - this is what converted the first pagans to Christianity.¹⁶ *Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est* (cf. 1 Jn 4:7-16). More than ever, today's atheistic world needs the visible witness of fraternal communities in its midst.

¹⁶ Tertullian, *Apologetics*, 39,7.

Finally, by the *witness of shared prayer* - especially liturgical prayer. To go running after those who have strayed furthest from the Lord's Church in those places where they are now dispersed is not always the best way to bring them back. We must also, and perhaps firstly, gather together those who believe and who pray, before the face of God who waits expectantly for us and draws us to himself (Jn 6, 44. 65). No fear of missing the boat of "the apostolate" - if our prayer is real, it will be eloquent; if it is faithful, it will be provocative; if it is fervent, it will be attractive; if it is regular, people will come regularly. And if it truly puts us in the presence of God together, he will himself transform it into witness. Since we started at St. Gervais, the church, which was becoming deserted, has never emptied.

Only the verticality of prayer can lift us above the skyscrapers and advertisements which hedge in the urban sky. Only the strength of prayer, the most effective of all forms of apostolate, can move the mountain of apathy that has overwhelmed our cities. A praying community exerts a powerful attraction! And in this sense, liturgy is most certainly a forceful means of evangelization. This is how Cyril in Jerusalem, Athanasius in Alexandria, Ambrose in Milan, Augustine in Hippo, Basil in Caesarea, John Chrysostom in Constantinople, Irenæus in Lyons, Hilary in Poitiers, Martin in Tours, Cesarius in Arles, and Denis, Germain and Marcel in Paris converted an entire Christian people.

If God is God, ultimately he alone can speak of God. Liturgy lets God speak. It reveals the Father in the gathering of brothers and sisters; it shows forth the Son in the formation of the Body of Christ; it announces the Spirit by bringing together living stones to build a holy Temple. Liturgy gives form, light and energy to our lives, especially in the Eucharist, source, centre and summit of each day. This is how we can proclaim God in monastic life, where our first labour is the office of the liturgy (*opus Dei*).

Finally, let us not fear to say that we are also monks in the city to become God there. This is the goal of every Christian life, in the footsteps of a God "become man so man can become God."¹⁷ The way of this new life, however, leads through death; our "old nature" must die if we are to "put on the new nature." Now the city is most certainly a place where we can exercise asceticism Renouncing country air and silence is a real sacrifice. In former days, monks fled to the desert to do

17 St. Irenæus, *Adversus haereses*, III.

battle against themselves and against the devil. We can count on today's urban environment to help us move forward in the paths of asceticism on our way to the dwellings of the mystical life!

If we look at the history of the Church, we will be surprised to see how many men and women have been sanctified by the city, even in monastic life. It is up to us, not the city, to let ourselves be seized by Christ, taught by God, and transformed by his grace. As beautiful as the city built by men may be, it will never captivate us like "the city whose builder and maker is God." (Heb 11, 10) Even today's cities can hone our deepest desires. Today's cities will push us onward, following Jesus and Mary, the pre-eminent city dwellers, to live "alone before the One," without which there can be no true prayer. But in communion with all humankind¹⁸, without which we have no true charity. Since Jesus and Mary lived there in this way, "the name of the city henceforth" is "the Lord is there." (Ez 48, 35)

Living this presence in such an absence

Whatever form monastic life may take, it will always be torn by a certain struggle. "One of the most difficult tasks for monks," writes Pope Paul VI, "is to reach a harmonious balance between presence in the world and detachment from the world, both being necessary if they are to act as a sign of the Kingdom, which is what the Church and the world itself expect of them."¹⁹

I will attempt therefore to describe as concretely as possible how we try to live both this "presence" and this "detachment" in our Monastic Communities of Jerusalem, most especially at St. Gervais Church in Paris.

First of all, we must be quite clear how we anchor our minds and hearts on the ridge that leads us between these paradoxes and ambivalencies. Clearly, the city represents both the best and the worst. Everything is brought together there; the evil one and the good Lord: real villains and true saints; hunger for the "fruits of this world" and thirst for "living water." One could go on and on. . . . First observation: the city deserves neither absolute confidence nor a bad reputation. There is no

18 Cf. Jn 2, 1-5; Lk 8, 19; Jn 10, 16.

19 Paul VI, *Exhortation on the Contemplative life*.

more need to flee it in scorn than to embrace it without discernment. In the end, the demarcation line passes through the middle of each one of us, between flesh and spirit, old nature and new nature, sin and grace. Living “in the heart of the city in the heart of God”, then, requires being neither gullible nor timorous, neither taking fright nor being seduced. In sum, it requires being realistic-making this life choice, more than elsewhere perhaps, in a “holy indifference” that can become a wise “abandonment to Divine Providence.” (Mt 6, 25-34).

Saying therefore, in all good faith, that one can meet, announce and even become God in the city - to the point of calling it “City Adonai” with the prophet (Is 60, 14) - means also remembering that “here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come.” (Heb 13, 14). However much grace they may bear, our “earthly Jerusalems” only foretell the “heavenly Jerusalem.” But in the midst of their neighbourliness and promiscuity, solidarity and solitude, what possibilities they offer for the joy of prayer and for living love!

More concretely, we could briefly elaborate on the titles of the first five chapters of our Rule of Life²⁰

“*Love.*” We have opted to form *fraternities* - not abbeys (the abbot’s house) or monasteries (the place where, paradoxically, one lives alone together) - in order to regain something of the Gospel ideal proposed and lived by Jesus himself (Mt 23, 8-12; Lk 22, 24-27). In this sense, we are doubtless more Basilian than Benedictine.

“*Pray.*” We have opted for a “crossroads liturgy,” which draws on both the Eastern Christian heritage and our own Western Christian traditions. A liturgy celebrated by the brothers and sisters together (though they are completely autonomous in housing, government and finance), reflecting the equality of the sexes today in social, professional and cultural domains. Not a “chapel liturgy,” but a “church liturgy,” open onto the city streets and plazas, where everyone, lay and consecrated, can turn together towards God.²¹

20 P.-M. Delfieux, *Veilleurs sur la ville: Jerusalem - Livre de vie*, Fifth Edition (Cerf; Paris, 1995). Available in seventeen languages from Sources Vives de Jérusalem, 10 rue des Barres, 75004 Paris.

21 In many ways our liturgical choices resemble the “cathedral liturgy” of the urban, 4th-century Church.

“*Work.*” For us too, work is obligatory; we cannot live in leisure. However, without either fields or workshops, we are *salaried workers*, like the majority of men and women today – but accept only part-time work, manual if possible, and work inside the fraternity if it is feasible. We are not worker-priests however, and though work is important, it is neither first nor even second in priority, coming after community life, our essential imperative, and prayer, our first occupation.

Keep silence. “Though we have no walled enclosure, we keep strict times and places reserved for silence and solitude. Spending the afternoon in one’s cell remains sacred. No television in the fraternity; no entertainment outside. Every evening is spent in community; each Monday is a desert day,” spent in silence and sometimes in the country.²² A recollection weekend every trimester; a week of *lectio divina* each winter; in August, a long period alone with God on the plateaus of Auvergne. This alternating rhythm helps us to persevere; leaving the city occasionally leads us to love it more on returning.

“*Practice hospitality.*” We live what the monastic ideal has traditionally called *hospitality* essentially through, for and in prayer. Faced with so much social, economic and cultural poverty and isolation, which are addressed by a great number of charitable and parochial programs, we try to be attentive to the spiritual poverty of men and women thirsting for God and hungry for the truth. Our table, however, is always open to guests (in silence); in the church, a priest is always available for confession or spiritual direction; at the fraternity, the parlors are places for listening and advice. We have opted to receive guests gratuitously, as in a family. “You have received without pay, give without pay” (Mt 10, 8). So what if the budget is a little crazy; it is so liberating, and Divine Providence takes care of “all the rest.” (Mt 6, 31-34)

Of course, we make monastic profession according to the three vows of *chastity* (placed first in our *Rule of Life*), *poverty* and *obedience*, being recognized as a Religious Institute since 1991 by Cardinal Lustiger, Archbishop of Paris, in direct link with the local church, along the lines of Vatican II. Besides the chapter on *humility*, essential for the contemplative life, our *Rule of Life* includes an entire chapter on *joy*, which we consider indispensable as a means of returning to the

22 Did not the Cistercians have their “granges” in former days, sometimes several hours’ walk from the abbey?

heart of the Gospel and of announcing the Good News that the Kingdom of God is already "in our midst."

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In approving our foundation on All Saints' Day in 1975, Cardinal Marty spoke of "monks for the year 2000." We have never considered this a prophecy of a way of life to come, but a call to take all the time necessary truly to become what we are. In the year 2000, we will have reached the age of twenty-five - just twenty-five years, but twenty-five already. Others may then want to assess this first step. For now, experiencing day after day the grace of this way of life, I will simply express our great happiness that the Church allows us to live this way, "in the heart of the city in the heart of God."

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