

Objectives

By the end of this lesson, the students should be able to

- refer to Scripture that tells us one way we can enter God's Kingdom.
- explain how the lifestyle of monks and nuns proclaim God is in our midst.
- state that God wants us to live in a way that announces His Kingdom.

For the Catechist

Of all the ministries and gifts in the Church, one of the least known and understood is the prophetic. The prophets are the ones who struggled to announce the message that God must come first in people's lives. We are familiar with the Old Testament prophets and their warnings to the people who began worshiping idols and relying on themselves rather than God. In the New Testament, we look to John the Baptist to learn about the prophet's simplicity in dress and food and their time spent in prayer. Saint John's lifestyle announced his message as effectively as did his words.

In the Church today this aspect of the prophet's vocation is present in the monastic life. Those who are called to this lifestyle are led to proclaim by their every action that the Lord is the source of their joy. Like Saint John the Baptist, monks and nuns adopt a simple lifestyle and spend their time in prayer. Their ordinary daily activities proclaim God is in our midst.

In the Eastern Churches everyone is called to show that the Kingdom of God is most important in their daily lives. Through prayer, fasting, spiritual direction, and simplicity of life, they learn to live their life centered on God. Both lay people and monastics are asked to live according to the words of St. Paul: "Do not conform yourself to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Romans 12:2); the difference in the two lifestyles is in the intensity of the commitment.

Materials Needed

Opening and Closing Prayers: Prayer in student book

Introduction: Note cards and/or magazines and scissors

The Message: New Testament, note cards, pens, markers

Application: Materials needed for the projects, note cards with the following words—one per note card: *nuns, monks, monasteries, hermits, and prayer-simplicity-service*

Icons and Pictures

Come Bless the Lord: Saint John the Baptist

Websites to learn more about the religious life:

www.basiliansfoxchase.org

www.hagiaeucharistia.com

www.vocations.com

<http://www.byzcath.org/ssb/>

<http://www.angelfire.com/me2/byzantinelinks/easternvocations.html>

Connections

1. Opening Prayer (1 minute)

Have the students gather before the icon and stand silently for a few seconds. Then make the sign of the cross and pray:

- Troparion to a Monk—prayer in student book.

2. Review (*Missionaries*) (2 minutes)

Have the students define the word missionary. Ask them to identify what they would take with them as a missionary.

3. Introduction (4 minutes)

Give each student a note card. Tell them that they are at home when they discover that their house is on fire. All lives are saved, and they have time to rescue eight of their most valued belongings. Tell them to write on the note card the items.

Next tell them that they must leave four of the eight items behind. Cross those items off the list.

Have the students share what items they find most valuable and the reason for their choice. Ask them if they knew that they could buy something better than what they saved, would they have saved the items?

Connect this discussion to the idea that we think some of our personal possessions are necessary, but do we really need them?

Alternate

Materials: Magazines with a lot of pictures, scissors

Have the students go through magazines and cut out pictures of things that everybody thinks they need to have. Have them share their pictures and give the reason why this item has become necessary in life. Have them identify how often this item is bought.

Notes for the lesson:

(Use this space to write helpful hints to use each year)

The Message

4. Jesus Calls (2 minutes)

- a) Begin the reading. Have all the students read the Scripture aloud.
- b) After they read the final question on this page, ask for a moment a silence. Tell them to think about what would they do. Ask if anyone wants to share what they thought.

Supplementary Activity:

Have the students read Matthew 4:18-22. Ask them if they think people would be surprised by what just happened. Let them share and help them realize how focused we must be on Jesus to be His follower.

Supplementary Activity:

Write the question for this lesson on the board or on a poster board: *How does the monastic way of life proclaim God's Kingdom?* Write the following answers when you read them in the text:

1. It shows God is most important.
2. They are in prayer, in God's presence, often.
3. They live simply as did Jesus.
4. They share their possessions, time, and talent with those who have less.

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Those Who Announce God's Kingdom

How does the monastic way of life proclaim God's Kingdom?

Jesus Calls
In the New Testament, we read many stories that tell us how Jesus called people to follow Him. Read the following Scripture that tells what Peter and Andrew did after Jesus called them:

"Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.' At once they left their nets and followed him."
(Matthew 4:19-20)



We also read how some followers left behind their family and friends. Read the Scripture that tells what happened when Jesus called James and his brother John:

"He called them, and immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him."
(Matthew 4:22)

What would you have done if you heard a call like this from Jesus?

We Are God's People Grade 5 Unit 3: Many Gifts, One Giver 95

Background Reading:

(Monks and Nuns)

"After all these descriptions of prayer one might say: 'That is not for me! It is only for monks or nuns!' There is no distinction between lay spirituality and the spirituality of the monk or nun. All of the baptized are called to the same love, to the highest and most intense level of love. According to St. John Chrysostom, 'everyone is called to be a monk because a monk is supposed to be a perfect Christian.' . . .

"Solitude (where monks are supposed to dwell) is not a place but rather a state of being, of living constantly within the new reality of the Resurrection . . .

"The monk, the man of solitude, has also been called 'equal to the apostles.' Just as the apostles were witnesses to 'what they had seen with their eyes and touched with their hands of the Word of Life' so every monk, every baptized person is to be a living witness to the God he has encountered and experienced in the solitude of this heart in prayer." (FG 207-208).

4. Jesus Calls (continued)

(3 minutes)

d) Read the first two paragraphs aloud and have the students find the scriptural passage. Have one student read the words of the young man, another the words of Jesus, and another the narration part. Then have all the students write in the words as you reread the necessary verse.

Complete the reading. Read Matthew 19:23-30 aloud. Ask: *What does it mean that they "will inherit eternal life"?* (They will live with God forever.)

5. Let us remember that...

(3 minutes)

Divide the students into groups of three. Have one person from each group read a paragraph. Then give them time to teach the details to the people in their group.

Supplementary Activity: Have the students make note cards for the words to be used to review the words in the section.

Background Reading:

(The Monastic Life)

"Some Christians are invited to a life-style that witnesses to the loving, fruitful relationship of Christ with His Bride, the Church, in a different way: monastic life. In this life, the monastic is set aside to witness to the longing of the Bride (the Church) for the Bridegroom (Christ), who is to come again in glory. It is a witnessing to fidelity and watchfulness for the coming of the Bridegroom. All Christians are called to witness to the world the mystery of Christ. Monastics are called in a special way to witness to the members of the Church, to serve as living, constant reminders to all Christians of the radicalness of everyone's call to repentance and the Kingdom. . . ." (LLIII 23).

6. Our Church Memories

(3 minutes)

Read these paragraphs aloud or silently. Have three students come to the board to list the three ways identified that show how monks and nuns announce God's Kingdom:

1. Through their prayer life.
2. Through their simple life.
3. By their sharing.

Have the other students tell them the facts to list under each category.

Ask: *Did anyone ever think about becoming a monk or nun?* [This question might encourage some young people to think about the religious life.] "

Let us remember that . . .
Monastics are people who live a lifestyle completely centered on God. The men are called **monks**, and the women are called **nuns**. To help them remain closer to God, they usually live with others who have the same high ideals. **Monasteries** are places where monks or nuns live in a community life.

Monastics devote themselves to prayer, usually attending liturgical services several times daily. Nuns and monks strive to do without personal property and share whatever they have with others. They look to God to find joy rather than to material possessions and worldly activities.

Hermits are monks or nuns who leave their monastery with the permission of the superior to live alone in a remote place. Hermits want to spend all their time alone with God and grow in prayer and the love of the Lord.

They often say the "Jesus Prayer" throughout the day: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner."

Most monastics live in a community called a monastery. They help each other and support each other like a family. The clothing of monks and nuns is not fancy; some usually wear only one style called a habit. What little monks or nuns have is shared with those who have less. They live simply and poorly as Jesus lived. They may give their possessions, time, and talents to others.

Monks and nuns do not simply live as they wish. They follow a Rule, often written by their founder.

Our Church Monastics
In our Church, there are men and women who have done what the rich young man in the Bible story would not do. They are the monks and nuns who live simply to show that God's love is most important to them. They have given up their homes and families to live in a way that proclaims they chose God above all else.

Prayer is the most important part of the monastic life. Monks and nuns go to church several times each day to worship God. They also spend time in private prayer, Bible reading, and other devotions.

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7. Blessed are they...

(6 minutes)

This story is about a monk. It helps us understand the way Jesus wants us to live out the Beatitudes.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" and "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land" provide the theme for this week's lesson

a) Read the story as a group or silently. Also, consider reading the story aloud to the students as they follow—children are never too old to listen to a good story.

b) Ask: *Do you think you would be able to live the way Brother Ellas did?*

c) Ask the students to look at the daily schedule. Ask them if they are surprised by any of the details.

Catechists: At the end of this lesson are two pages that present more facts about the monastic life. Photocopy them for students who seem interested or just have them on your desk and suggest students look at them. Help the students learn more about serving God.

Blessed are they...

The Story of Brother Elias
When George Morad was growing up in Saint Elias Parish in Cleveland, Ohio, he was one of the best liked kids in the community. He helped in the family store and was well known. Then he entered the Marine Corps and spent three years in the Pacific. When he came back to Cleveland, George had different jobs. He first bought a grocery store, and then worked in the advertising department of a large meat company.

George enjoyed life as a young man, who loved to travel, party, and have a good time. But God had other plans for George. At 29 this big healthy 240-pound hulk of a man was stricken with a heart attack that almost killed him. For several months he could only lie in bed, or at most sit in a chair and read. It was the reading which first started him thinking about how he could offer his "second life" to God. At first he thought of becoming a priest and entered a seminary. But he soon realized that this was not where God wanted him. He was called to live the life of a monk.

In 1972, after eighteen years in a monastery, George—now the Monk Elias—was called still further by God. He left the monastery for a life of solitude. He lived a hermit's life in a small hut he built himself. One of its two rooms was a chapel; the other was his living room, bedroom, and kitchen. His day was spent in prayer. Often while he prayed, Brother Elias cared for the small garden which supplied his table. Brother Elias fasted long and often and never ate meat, eggs, cheese, or milk. Often he did not eat anything at all for long periods of time. More than once he had gone several weeks without eating anything.

How had this strict life affected his poor health? Brother Elias, once 240 pounds, now

A Daily Schedule
Prayer is the chief work of monks and nuns. They pray together or in private several times each day. At Holy Resurrection Monastery in Newberry Springs, California, an average day goes like this:

5 A.M. to 8 A.M.: The monks pray the Night Office, Matins and the Divine Liturgy as well as their own private rules of prayer.

8 A.M. to 11:30 A.M.: After breakfast, each one goes to his tasks. One shops and cooks, another takes care of the gardens and the buildings, a third is in charge of the office, another receives all the guests who come to visit and the poor who come for help.

11:30 A.M. to 2:30 P.M.: The monks pray the Third and Sixth Hours. After lunch they have time for rest, reading or private prayer.

3:30 P.M. to 6 P.M.: The monks return to their tasks.

6 to 7 P.M.: The monks pray the Ninth Hour and Vespers.

7 to 9 P.M.: After supper and some free time, the monks pray Compline and go to bed.

weighed 110 pounds, but he could lift twice his weight.

When he began living the hermit's life, Brother Elias threw away the heart pills he had taken every day for twenty years. He put his trust completely in God to take care of him. The result? "I feel 'mit' ma'af' (like a king)." Since Brother Elias gave over his whole life to the Lord, God had become his doctor, his medicine, and his health. Although Brother Elias rarely left his hut, many people came to seek him out. Priests, nuns, and laypeople often came to him for advice or to ask him to pray for a special need. People saw this hermit as one who was especially close to God to whom he had given his whole life.

From the Beatitudes
*Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

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Background Reading

(Monastic Lifestyle)

"All Christians must repent and seek the values of the Kingdom that is to come. However, most do it while in the world, yet not of it. Monastics 'renounce' attachment to the world and attempt to live out the full reality of repentance and the life of the Kingdom in its fullness here and now. Thus the essential practices of monastic life are prayer, ascetic effort and charity, the same fundamental principles which all Christians are called to live. By the intensity of their commitment to this way of life, monastics become—again in the words of John Paul II—'a reference point for all the baptized.' In this way, they constantly remind their brothers and sisters not to become too comfortable in this world and not to forget the vigilance and longing for the fullness of the Kingdom which is to come; the beginnings of which we already experience in our Christian life and especially in the Mysteries as the Church gathers. For this reason, the monastics live lives of chaste celibacy and strict repentance constantly turning to the Bridegroom in everything" (LLIII 24).

Application

11. Heroes of Eastern Christianity

(15 minutes)

This section includes stories about many courageous Christians. The student book has two of the stories, and the teacher's manual has other stories. Photocopy the additional stories if you need them.

The information from these pages may be used for the "Action Plan" page. Also, the details may be used to create a presentation to be shown at the end of the class or during a final project that is part of Lesson 22.

First, have the students read one story. If there are enough students, have all the stories read by someone or by groups. The following are suggestions on ways to present the information:

1. Have the students present a summary of the details while another student displays the icon of the saint.
2. Have the students complete a biographical sketch of the saint and read that to the students.
3. Act out a short skit that shows one aspect of the saint's life.
4. Write a newspaper article that reports one story about the saint.
5. Write a television newscast story complete with details about the scenes and dialogue.
6. Have the students keep a journal of saints. After they have read the information, let them write answers for the following in the journal (one student can write all the answers or it can be passed around the group for responses):

- For what do you think this saint would want to be remembered?
- What would you ask him or her if you had the chance? What do you think would be the answer?
- If you could join this saint for a few years, what part of his or her life would you pick? Why did you make that choice?

[Turn to page 222 for a worksheet that can be used for the journal.]

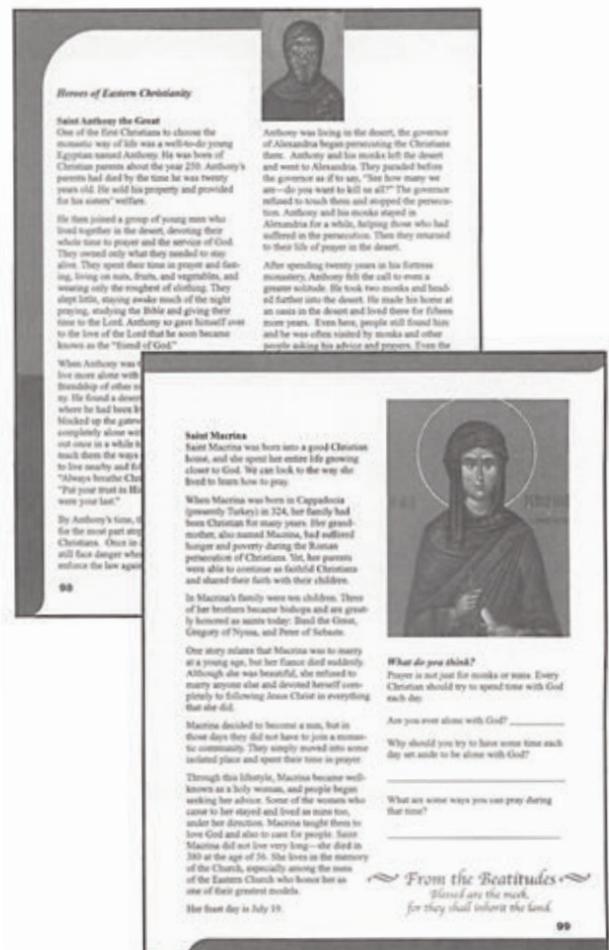
Optional Activities

Have the students read all the saints' information. Have them work in groups and write a script for a "Who Am I?" program. Present the program at the end of this lesson or the end of the unit.

or

List four facts about one saint and write them on a note card. Write the name of the saint on the other side. Complete cards for all the saints in this lesson. Collect these cards to be used as review for future lessons

“What do you think?” This section is on the page with the story about Saint Macrina. Encourage the students to think about ways to pray: praying the traditional prayers, talking to God personally, reading the Bible, listening to Church music.



9. Action Plan

(15 minutes)

Materials: Pens, markers, paint and brushes, poster board, construction paper, and any other materials that the students have told you that they need. (Ask parents to help supply materials you cannot get.)

For this lesson, the students are working on the project for the final presentation in Lesson 22.

10. Summary

(4 minutes)

Have the students gather in teams to play "Jeopardy!" with the words you have on note cards—they have to ask the question.

1. Nuns—What are women who live a lifestyle completely centered on God called?
2. Monks—What are men who live a lifestyle completely centered on God called?
3. Monasteries—What is the name of the place where monks or nuns live in community?
4. Hermits—What do we call monks or nuns who leave their monastery with the permission of the superior to live alone in a remote place?
5. Prayer, simplicity, and service—What are three ways monastics announce God's Kingdom?

11. Closing Prayer

(2 minutes)

Remain silent for a short time.

Invite the students to think about all the bishops, priests, nuns,

and monastics that they have met in their lifetime. Tell them we are going to pray to thank God for giving them to us to help us realize we must always put God first in our lives.

Pray the Lord's Prayer or the hymn to one of the saints studied in the lesson.

Action Plan

Heroes of Eastern Christianity

Read the story about one of the monastics, and complete the outline on this page. As you write the details about this courageous Christian, think about his or her choices that show us how to live our life for Jesus Christ.

_____, Monastic

A. He or she lived in the _____ century.

B. Three important facts about his or her life:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

C. What do you think was the most difficult part of his or her life? _____

D. Why was being alone so important to him or her? _____

E. This monastic is best known for _____

Now continue to work on the final project that will be presented in Lesson 22. Remember—your project will introduce the Heroes of Eastern Christianity to many people!

The following are some suggestions to help your project:

1. To make a mosaic, cut-up colored construction paper to fill in the outline
2. To make a stained glass window, use colored cellophane held together with electrical tape in a cardboard outline
3. For a banner use contrasting scraps of material to make the design; thin wire from a craft store can be formed into different shapes.
4. Make a montage by using an icon print placed onto poster board and add various items associated with the person's ministry, countries, or other activities.

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Heroes of Eastern Christianity

(Part 2)

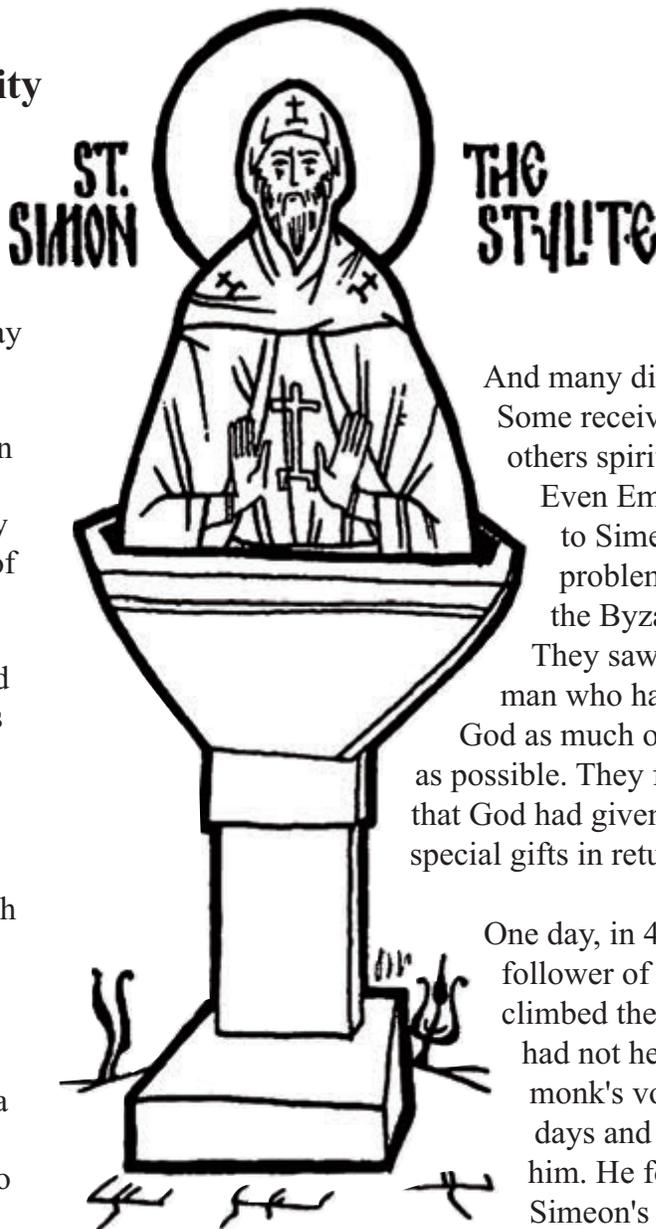
Saint Simeon the Stylite

(pronounced: Sty-lite)

Have you ever been sick and had to stay in bed for a long time? You were probably very restless and wished you could get up and go outside or go down to the living room for a while. Staying in one spot, you discovered, is not very pleasant. Yet there was a certain kind of monk in the past who deliberately stayed in a tiny area for years. He offered this physical discomfort to God to show how much he loved Him. This kind of monk was called a stylite or pillar-dweller, and Saint Simeon is the most famous of them.

Simeon was a Syrian, born in the fourth century. As a boy he felt called to be a monk. At the age of thirteen he left home and tried to enter a monastery near Antioch. At first, the head of the monastery did not want to allow such a young boy to enter, but Simeon would not go home. Finally he was allowed to enter.

Even as a teenager Simeon gave most of his time to prayer. He slept little and spent much of the night in church. He ate little, and gave most of his food to the poor who waited for him outside the monastery gate. Finally in the year 422 he gave up to God the ability to move around freely by becoming a stylite. In this way he tried to show how much he was willing to sacrifice to God. Simeon climbed one of the columns which is still standing in the ruins of an old pagan temple. He stayed there for more than thirty years on a platform only forty inches wide and sixty feet above the ground. People brought him food and he would pull it up with a rope. Through the night Simeon would pray. During the day he would preach and give advice to the people who came to see him.



And many did come!
Some received healing,
others spiritual help.

Even Emperors wrote
to Simeon about their
problems of governing
the Byzantine Empire.
They saw in Simeon a
man who had given
God as much of himself
as possible. They felt
that God had given him
special gifts in return.

One day, in 459, a
follower of Simeon
climbed the pillar. He
had not heard the old
monk's voice for several
days and worried about
him. He found
Simeon's dead body

still kneeling in prayer as if he were still alive.
His body was brought down from the pillar for
the first time in thirty-seven years and taken to
Antioch for burial.

His feast day is September 1st.

Kontakion of Saint Simeon

You became a pillar of endurance, and
rivalled the forefathers, O Holy One,
becoming like Job in your sufferings, like
Joseph in your trials, like the bodiless
Angels though you lived in the flesh. O
Simeon, our holy father, intercede with
Christ God that He may save our souls

Heroes of Eastern Christianity

(Part 2)

Saint Theodosius of Kiev

(pronounced: Kyiv)

As the Church spread to different countries, the monks went with it. Missionary monks attracted followers and were able to start native monasteries. One of the first Slavs drawn to monastic life was Saint Theodosius of Kiev.

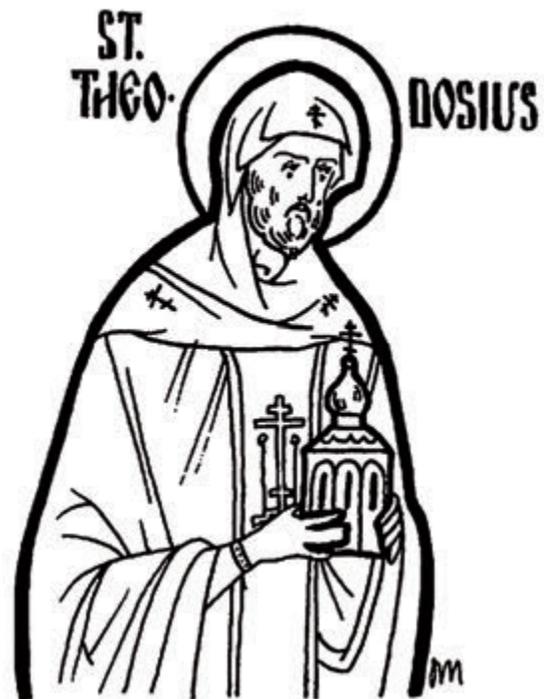
Theodosius was born in eleventh century Ukraine into a well-to-do family. As Theodosius grew up, his devotion to Christ became stronger. Many of his dedicated actions brought him great criticism from his family. He wanted to give to the poor, but his mother would not let him have anything to give. So Theodosius went to work as a baker. Whatever he earned, he gave away. His mother was furious; she thought that his actions were degrading her.

She was even angrier when her son decided to live as a monk. She followed him to the monastery and tried to force him to come home with her. It was a long time before she was able to accept his decision to be a monk.

Theodosius entered the Monastery of the Caves, near Kiev. The monks who first lived there did not even have a house—they lived in the mountainside caves. Only later did they build a church and other buildings.

After many years, Theodosius became head of the monastery. He still had his desire to help the poor. He built a hospital and a home for the homeless on the monastery grounds. He shared the monastery food with those who came to the door. Every Saturday he sent a cartload of food to the Kiev jail. "Remember the good Lord's words," he would say. "It is good for us to feed the hungry and the tramps with the fruits of our labor. What good would all that labor be if God did not send us the poor to make it worthwhile?"

Even though he was head of the monastery, Theodosius still did a share of the work of the



house or farm. For two years he took care of an old, bed-ridden monk who could not care for himself. Theodosius washed and fed him, changed his clothes, and did everything for the monk that he was unable to do for himself. "Christ washed His disciples' feet," he said: "We must do the same."

Saint Theodosius died in 1074 and was buried in one of the caves. His monastery still exists in Kiev and is one of the most honored shrines in the Slav Church.

His feast day is May 3rd.

Sticheron (Tone 8)

Come, let us all gather today and extol our Father, Theodosius! Already in his youth he received a call from above and was given the name Theodosius, which means "God's gift." To Christ-loving princes, he was a teacher of the Orthodox faith; to the nobles, an unwavering intercessor; to orphans, a merciful father; to widows, an unwearied defender; to the afflicted, a consolation; to the poor, a treasure; to the monastics, a ladder leading to the heights of heaven; and to those who directly go to him, a spring of ever-flowing water. He prays unceasingly for our souls.

The Life of a Member of a Religious Community

Did you ever wonder what do priests, sisters, and brothers do all day? The following interview might help you understand more about their life.

Q - What do you do all day?

What a priest, brother or sister does with his or her day is so varied and complex that only a sampling can be given here. Prayer, work and a balance of all these, but we don't always succeed.

Many of us have one main occupation, such as teaching, parish ministry, social work, or hospital work, all of which have somewhat regular hours and predictable demands.

The unpredictables are also interesting and challenging. They center around meeting the needs of people: the sick, old, angry, hurt, hungry, imprisoned, excited, happy. We share with them our understanding, encouragement and support. We rejoice, cry, feel with them.

Those of us who are monastics spend our day at prayer and some kind of labor to sustain us.

Q - How important is prayer in your life?

Because we have chosen a way of life which says by its very nature that God is most important, prayer has a central role in our lives. Prayer is communication with the Lord whom we love and is as necessary for us as communication is for any two persons who expect their relationship to continue. Can you imagine having a best friend (or husband or wife) to whom you never spoke?

Since prayer is so important, most priests and religious spend approximately two hours a day in prayer; part of that time with others, at the Liturgy or other services, part alone, in reading and quiet attentiveness. Probably the main benefit of prayer is that it makes us more sensitive to God's activity in the people, events and circumstances of daily life.

Q - Is prayer always easy for you?

Definitely not! There are lots of times when we don't feel like doing other things that are basically important to us; for example, the athlete doesn't always feel like practicing, a student doesn't always feel like studying, the wage earner doesn't always feel like working, etc. However, in all the cases mentioned, because the activity in which we participate is important, we act on motives deeper than feelings, and do what we know needs to be done.

Q - Do you get time off, and what do you do in that time?

We have approximately the same amount of leisure time as most adults. In this time, we are free to do whatever is legal, moral and reasonable for adults in our situation. Obviously, because priests, brothers and sisters are unique individuals, we won't all choose the same types of recreation, and none of us chooses the same activity every time. Some of the more common choices are sports, movies, TV, reading, sharing with friends and enjoying the outdoors.

Q - What is the difference between a monk and a priest?

A monk is a layman who commits himself to Christ by the vows of poverty, celibacy, and obedience, who lives in a monastery, and who may work in nearly any job: teacher, cook, lawyer, etc. Most monks are not ordained clergy like priests or deacons.

Q - How long does it take to become a priest?

It takes four years after college or eight years after high school, the same as for many professions.

Q - How old do you have to be before you enter the seminary?

There is no certain age to start preparing for the priesthood. Some people go to high school seminaries, others enter the seminary after high school, after college, or after they have been working for years.

Q - How does one become a member of a religious community?

The formation program involves several stages. Some communities allow people to live with them for one or two years and see their life from within. Then a person may ask to be admitted as a novice (learner).

Novices spend time in study and prayer, learning more about themselves, the community, and their relationship with the Lord. At the end of the novitiate, they prepare for temporary promises or vows.

Adapted from materials published by The National Coalition for Church Vocations and National Religious Vocation Conference, 15420 S Cornell Ave., #105, Chicago, IL 60615-5604.

**If you would like to learn more about vocations,
check out the following websites:**

<http://www.angelfire.com/me2/byzantinelinks/easternvocations.html>

www.basiliansfoxchase.org

www.hagiaeucharistia.com

www.vocations.com

<http://www.byzcath.org/ssb/>