

Final Week

Opening Prayer

O God, to show us where innocence leads, you made the soul of your virgin Saint Scholastica soar to heaven like a dove in flight. Grant through her merits and her prayers that we may so live in innocence as to attain to joys everlasting. This we ask through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever. Amen

Week Eight

St. Benedict of Nursia
St. Scholastica
St. Gregory the Great
St. John Damascus

5th. c.

- Roman empire began to crumble
- Division began to be more visible in the East/West churches
- New heresies springing up, reactions to new challenges inspire great works and councils
 - Council of Ephesus
 - Council of Chalcedon

6th. c.

- Rapid decline/collapse of the Roman empire
 - West breaks into German/French territories
 - Eastern Roman Empire continues
- Rise of western monasticism
- Rise of liturgical music
- Close of Antiquity, beginning of the middle ages

St. Benedict of Nursia

Founder of Western monasticism

From northern Italy – wealthy family

Disgusted with Rome – left for the hills

Lived in a cave near Subiaco for 3 years

- Early miracles – broken plate, drowning boy
- Briefly led a nearby group of monks

St. Benedict of Nursia

Returned to the cave after 'the incident' and invited others to join him

-Established a new monastery-
order, obedience, study, silence, service

Wrote 'The Rule'

-synthesized Eastern monastic rules-

“Ora et labora”

St. Benedict of Nursia



St. Scholastica

Twin sister of St. Benedict, consecrated at a young age

Established women's monastery nearby

Each year, they met at Monte Cassino to discuss life and spiritual challenges in the monasteries

Once, she prayed for St. Benedict to stay all night – a great storm kept him from returning.

She died a few days later.

Benedict looked toward the convent

and saw a white dove going to heaven.

She was buried in the tomb Benedict has prepared for himself.

Discussion

How can we bring some parts of monastic life into our own lives/vocations/careers?

Do you think miracles happen today?
In your own life/experience?

St. Gregory the Great

When Rome needed a leader – Gregory stepped up

- The Church offered social structure
- Father was a senator, he was prefect of Rome
- Turned his home into a monastery – then founded six more
- One of the pope's seven deacons, diplomat in Constantinople
- At 50, became Pope and brought monasticism to the papacy:

St. Gregory the Great

- Strengthened central authority
- Defended bishops against civil leaders
- Reforms of the clergy and liturgy
- Focused on mission fields (north and west) – sending 40 monks from his own monasteries to England
- Rule for pastors – ‘Pastoral Care’ described bishops as physicians who should preach and enforce discipline
- Converted pagan temples and rituals instead of destroying them
- Used the papal treasury to ransom prisoners of the Lombards, to care for persecuted Jews, care for plague and famine victims.

St. Gregory the Great

- Promoted chant – became known as Gregorian chant
- Focused on the poor and refugees
- Reprimanded clergy who did not see out the poor to assist them
- Used his business acumen to turn the Church farmlands into functioning farms to feed Rome
- Not much of a theologian or gifted writer, but he did write a bio of St. Benedict

He offered practical wisdom and his moral theology shaped medieval spirituality

St. John of Damascus

- Syrian accountant
 - worked for the Muslim caliph of Damascus
- Iconoclasm – Praying before images was akin to idolatry
- Started off writing tracts, eventually ended up in a monastery south of Jerusalem
- Established the difference between *latria* (worship due to God) and *proskinesis* (*honor given to creatures*)

St. John of Damascus

- Appealed to old and new testaments, church fathers
- God didn't have an image before Jesus, but now He does
 - “I do not worship matter, but the Creator of matter who became matter for my sake...”
- To deprive the poor of images is deprive them of the Gospel
- Saints share in the resurrection of Christ – they are not ‘dead’
- Because Christ became man, anything material can be made efficacious by invoking God's name

Considered the last of the Church Fathers

Discussion

How can we distinguish between worship and veneration?

How can material elements taken from nature become vehicles of grace by virtue of the invocation of the Holy Spirit?

What is the role of faith in all these?

Final Week – Thoughts?

What are your own takeaways from the last 8 weeks?

Have you learned anything you can apply in your own life?

Have you been inspired to read more?

What's next?

Questions?

Thank you!