

St. Pachomios **(Father of the Communal life)**

Objectives

To study the life of St. Pachomios, his monasticism, the communal life and other form of monasticism

References

- ✠ Christian Monasticism (Diocese of the Southern USA)
- ✠ Synaxarium of 14 Bashans
- ✠ Monasticism by father Daniel Al Antouny (Australia)

Scriptural Verse

“Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common” (Acts 4:32)

Lesson Outline

Life of St. Pachomios

St. Pachomios was born a pagan from a well to do peasant family in 292 AD. He was about 20 years old when he entered the military service. He took a ship with his companions on the Nile and went down to Thebes to take the conscripts to the prison in the town. Despite their fear, the Christians of the city offered them food and assistance. Pachomios, a pagan at that time, was moved by their charity and love, and it remained with him all his life.

When the war was over and Pachomios' time in the army had ended, he passionately desired to serve God and was baptized in about 313 AD. He helped the people around him in any way he could. He also became a disciple of an ascetic father called St. Palamon.

About the year 323 AD, St. Pachomios left St. Palamon with the intention of being a hermit. St. Pachomios saw a vision: the Angel of the Lord appeared to him and commanded him to establish a communal and holy monastic life.

St. Pachomios who had the gift of being able to gather people around him, established the new monastic discipline “Communal Life (Koinonia)” which was an organized way of life and service having its own laws and structures. The monasticism of St. Pachomios had a great influence on the church because of its spirituality and legislative system. His rules have been translated and adopted by many monasteries in the west.

He remained the father of the communal discipline for many years. He established 9 monasteries for monks and 3 others for nuns. All 12 monasteries were following the same rules and legislations and supervised by one Abbot General “St. Pachomios”. He departed in peace in 346 during a plague. He was only 54 years old.

Monastic structure set by St. Pachomios

Each of the 12 monasteries was organized as a small village, with 10 tribes per village. Each tribe was made up of 3 or 4 houses. In each house lived around 40 monks each exercising the

same craft and living under the authority of a housemaster (a superior assisted by a second). For each monastery there was an Abbot and one or two Stewards.

The monks from all of the monasteries gathered together twice a year once to celebrate Resurrection and once in the beginning of the Coptic year to check on their rules (Institution, Decisions, Principles and Laws, Worship and Manual work).

Spiritual Principles established by St. Pachomios

1. A Concern for the individual perfection
 - ✠ Holy Scripture: The monks have to study and memorize parts of the Holy Bible.
 - ✠ Ascetics: The monks have to renounce everything and possess nothing.
 - ✠ Prayers: The monks have to attend day and night prayers at the monastery's church and evening prayers in their house.
2. A Communal life where charity is expressed by deeds
3. The monks have to put themselves at each other's service:
 - ✠ Same rule of life observed by all even the superiors.
 - ✠ Poverty was not primarily deprivation but rather life in common.
 - ✠ Work intended to support the poor, thus sharing with the poor is not a virtue but the normal thing to do.
 - ✠ Obedience was not a school for the beginners but a way of love, a permanent and definitive state for all monks all their life.

Conclusion

With St. Pachomios, we have the birth of a true communal order right at the beginning of monasticism. The head of the order was a rich personality that was a mirror of God who wanted the Koinonia to be a mirror of all the facets of God.

Activities /Discussion Points

1. Describe the role of fellowship in the life of every Christian.
2. Find Scriptural verses that teach us to live in fellowship with one another.
3. Is there a relationship between our individual salvation and living a life of Christian fellowship?