

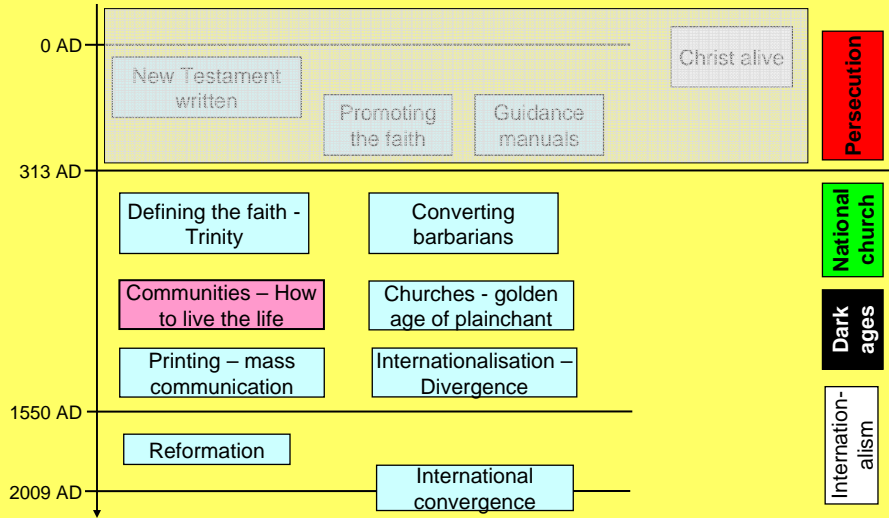
3



Living Life with the Early Church - 3
Communities and Living the Life

Communities and Living the Life

Rise of Communities - 315 AD onwards



Christian Communities

Where did they come from ?

- Christians had always wanted a place for quiet and prayer
- Under Constantine standards were felt by many to have fallen. Desire to get back to basics. Martyrdom no longer available.
- Away from main centres were arid regions, suited to prayer and reflection.
- Development of many major centres, especially in Egypt and Syria / Iraq.
- Training centres for Christian life – full of prayer, but generally frugal and austere (ascetical).

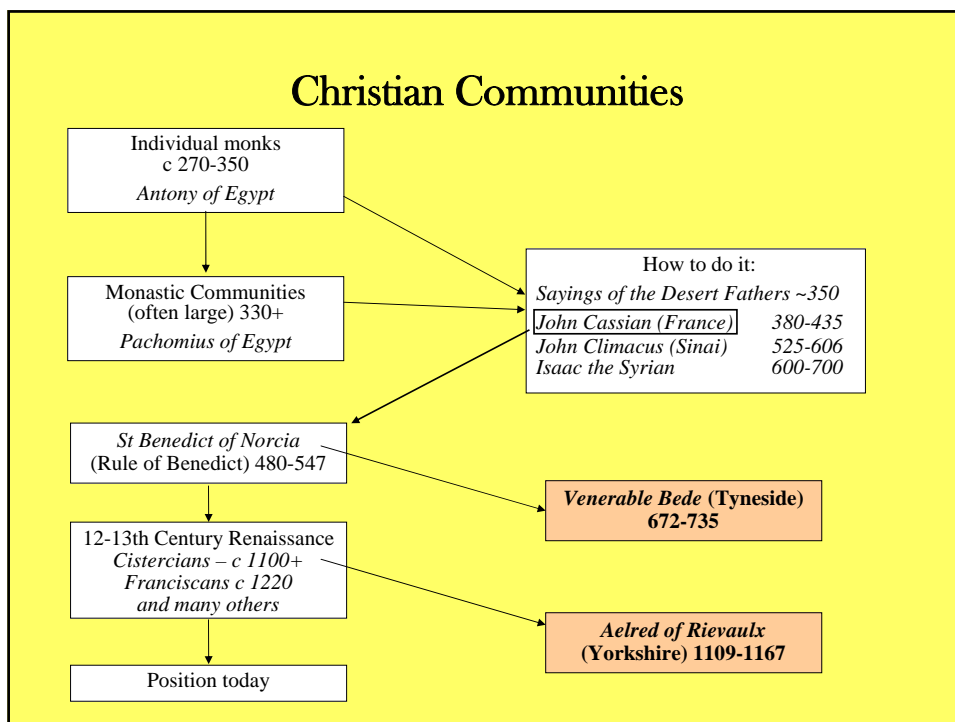
Still in existence worldwide.

Communities and Living the Life

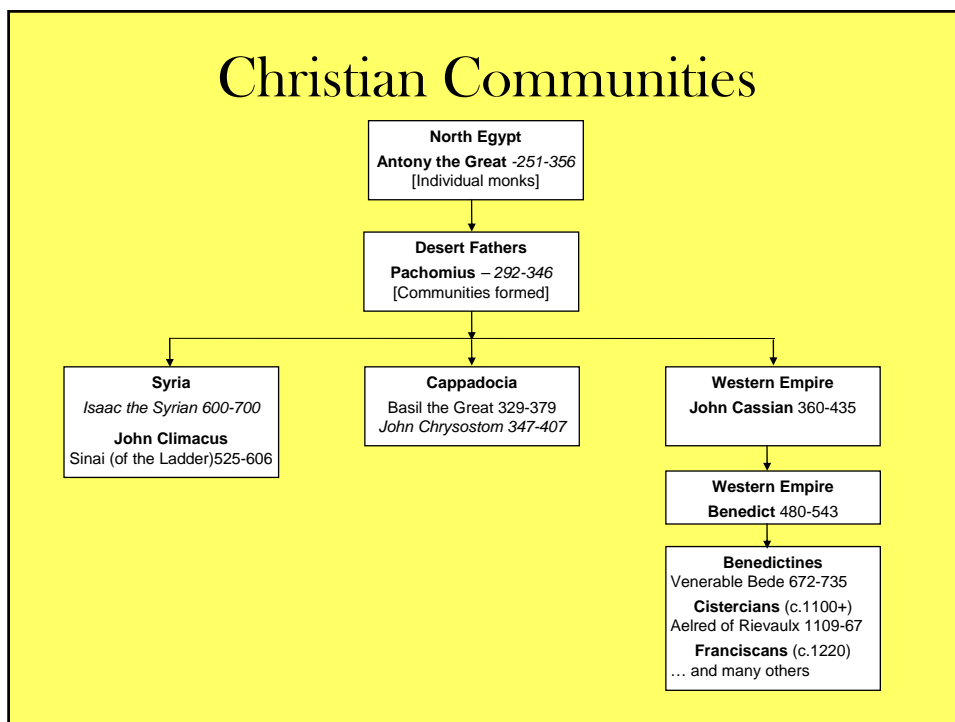
Europe & the Mediterranean



Christian Communities



Christian Communities



Christian Communities - Desert Fathers



Ladder of Divine Ascent

- Written by John Climacus of St. Catherine's, Mt. Sinai
- Guidance to another abbot who had asked about Egypt
- Virtues and Vices: 30 STEPS
 - On renunciation of the world
 - On detachment
 - On exile or pilgrimage; concerning dreams that beginners have
 - On blessed and memorable obedience
 - On true repentance which constitutes the life of the holy convicts; and about the Prison
 - On freedom from anger; on meekness

Christian Communities - John Cassian

Potted Summary

- Lived 360-430
- Born Romania, trained Bethlehem, visited Egypt 7+ years, ordained Constantinople, founded monasteries in Marseille.
- Wrote two key books:
 - *Institutes - how communities should be run. Dress, life, services; Vices and how to avoid them.*
 - *Conferences - discussions with monks in Egypt. Discussions and wisdom on how to live the Holy Life.*
- Major influence on Benedict.

Christian Communities – Benedict of Nursia

Potted Summary

- Lived 480-543
- Raised in Italy. Studied other monastic rules, especially John Cassian.
- Wrote one key book:
 - ***Rule of Benedict – how communities should be run.***
Practical advice and guidelines – how to do it, organise prayer, work, admissions, discipline. Very advanced for its time. Nothing on virtues or vices except indirectly.
- Adopted by many monasteries as a good baseline. Still in print. Promoted internationally in West by Charlemagne. Can be used for running monasteries, companies, organisations, families.
- Main theme: fair and just management and organisation.

Christian Communities Today

Traditional

- Poverty, Chastity, Obedience, Stability
- Roman Catholic; Orthodox; Anglican; Lutheran.
- Generally Work & Pray. May be in Enclosure or in the World
- Novitiate up to 9 years, then lifetime vows
- Usually separate Communities for men and women.
- Usually run Guest House
- Many Associates, Oblates, Friends, Tertiaries etc.

More Modern

- Many different Communities, not usually lifetime vows
- Often independent.

Christian Communities Today

Typical Features of a Rule of Life

- Pray regularly - normally a fixed service daily.
- Read the Bible regularly. Reflection and Lectio divina.
- Regular attendance at Holy Communion.
- Regular visits to Community. Pray for Community and each other.
- Spiritual Guidance. Sacramental confession as appropriate.
- Good use of time, talents and generosity.
- Regular reading of [Rule of Benedict], or Christian book.
- May have local meetings, groups, meetings for Holy Communion etc.



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Next week: Living Life with the Early Church - 4
Daily Worship and the Early Church