

hearts and minds are always turned toward Christ Crucified. For the monk to bar the door against people would be a sin against Christ Crucified. The luxury of the cloister in the desert is no longer quite as it was once upon a time. Therefore, much of the desert we speak of must be found within the heart of a good-willed, self sacrificing monk. In the last analysis, our concern as monks (after that of our own personal sanctification) is the Kingdom of Christ on Earth.

The monk chants the Divine Office as a major part of his interior, contemplative life of prayer. The contemplative monk (nun) in his desire to contemplate God can only do so from within the quiet – removed – solitude of his monastery. The members of the active religious orders and clergy must work in the noisy and busy world, but they too are bound to the extent possible for them, to live a contemplative life. The lives of these good men and women are dictated to by the needs of their activities, and the spirit of contemplation in them is determined by their activities. And this is as it should be. But in the monastery, however, if a monk feels compelled to answer the call of the active life, he falls short of his contemplative vocation. As a general rule, there is no such thing as an active contemplative. Some few very select souls have been able to do it, however.

Christ is the center of the monk's daily life, and his entire effort points in the direction of that Center. All the day long the monk looks to Christ. All the night long the monk looks to Christ. Therefore, every breath of the monk is – all of it – consecrated to God. Every step of the monk has a consecration about it. His life, because of his Profession freely professed – is no longer his. Nothing about him and around him is his. Everything in the life of the monk belongs to God. The monk reacts only to the Voice of God, and this Voice of God is heard by way of the voice of his abbot – his father. If the monk fails to understand this, he is doomed to a life of misery – a life of the bitterest slavery. For the monk, because of his singular love for his God and because of the Vow of Holy Obedience he pronounced, the voice of the abbot indicates the Will of God in everything he attempts to do. Any work undertaken by the monk which does not have the approval or the permission or blessing of the abbot, has no merit about it. Is this religious slavery? – Absolutely not! It is God's way, and God's way is not slavery – even if the man of the world evaluates it so.

Truly monastic souls flee from the world, and they enter the desert of the solitude of their monastery. There, as best he can in these days of the great Millenium, a monk lives and works – alone – in penance and recollection, in fasting and prayer. The conversation of the world is banished so that the monk's only conversation is between God and himself. In the monastery, the contemplation of the monk is nourished by the Sacred Liturgy. Through the Divine Office – The Opus Dei (The Work of God) – and through the daily Sacrifice of the Mass, the monk enters into the inner realization of the Mystery of Christ. Each day