

The Daily Life of Medieval Monks

The daily life of Medieval monks in the Middle Ages were based on the three main vows:

- The Vow of Poverty
- The Vow of Chastity
- The Vow of Obedience

Medieval Monks chose to renounce all worldly life and goods and spend their lives working under the strict routine and discipline of life in a Medieval Monastery. The reasons for becoming a monk, their clothes and the different orders are detailed in Medieval Monks. This section specifically applies to the daily life of the monks.

The Daily Life of Medieval Monks

The daily life of Medieval monks was dedicated to worship, reading, and manual labor. In addition to their attendance at church, the monks spent several hours in reading from the Bible, private prayer, and meditation. During the day the Medieval monks worked hard in the Monastery and on its lands. The life of medieval monks were filled with the following work and chores:

- Washing and cooking for the monastery
- Raising the necessary supplies of vegetables and grain
- Reaping, Sowing, Ploughing, Binding and Thatching, Haymaking and Threshing
- Producing wine, ale and honey
- Providing medical care for the community
- Providing education for boys and novices
- Copying the manuscripts of classical authors
- Providing hospitality for pilgrims

The Daily Life of Medieval Monks - Monastic Jobs and Occupations

The daily life of Medieval monks included many different jobs and occupations. The names and descriptions of many of these positions are detailed below:

- Abbot - the head of an abbey
- Almoner - an almoner was an officer of a monastery who dispensed alms to the poor and sick
- Barber Surgeon - the monk who shaved the faces and tonsures of the monks and performed light surgery
- Cantor - the cantor was the monk whose liturgical function is to lead the choir
- Cellarer - the cellarer was the monk who supervised the general provisioning of the monastery
- Infirmarian - the monk in charge of the infirmary
- Lector - a lector was a monk entrusted with reading the lessons in church or in the refectory.
- Sacrist - the sacrist was the monk responsible for the safekeeping of books, vestments and vessels, and for the maintenance of the monastery's buildings
- Prior - in an abbey the deputy of the abbot or the superior of a monastery that did not have the status of an abbey

Daily Life of a Monk in the Middle Ages - the Daily Routine

The daily life of a Medieval monk during the Middle Ages centred around the hours. The Book of Hours was the main prayer book and was divided into eight sections, or hours, that were meant to be read at specific times of the day. Each section contained prayers, psalms, hymns, and other readings intended to help the monks secure salvation for himself. Each day was divided into these eight sacred offices, beginning and ending with prayer services in the monastery church. These were the times specified for

the recitation of divine office which was the term used to describe the cycle of daily devotions. The times of these prayers were called by the following names - Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, Nones, Vespers and Compline:

- Lauds : the early morning service of divine office approx 5am
- Matins : the night office; the service recited at 2 am in the divine office
- Prime : The 6am service
- Sext : the third of the Little Hours of divine office, recited at the sixth hour (noon)
- Nones : the fourth of the Little Hours of the divine office, recited at the ninth hour (3 pm)
- Terce : the second of the Little Hours of divine office, recited at the third hour (9 am)
- Vespers : the evening service of divine office, recited before dark (4 - 5pm)
- Compline : the last of the day services of divine office, recited before retiring (6pm)

Any work was immediately ceased at these times of daily prayer. The monks were required to stop what they were doing and attend the services. The food of the monks was generally basic and the mainstay of which was bread and meat. The beds they slept on were pallets filled with straw.