

Article

Rediscovering Monasticism through Art

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Abstract: Looking at modern monasticism and its role in society one can see how traditional monastic concepts or values find their new forms. On the other hand, art and artists willingly, though not always consciously, use or refer to some monastic themes. In this paper, on the base of texts of some authors open to the dialogue between monasticism and art, a reading of monasticism in the key of art is proposed, exclusively in reference to the Christian monasticism. Given its present cultural and social context, the thesis of this paper is that through the rediscovering of monasticism through art, one can and should refresh and save it in a more and more secularized society, what may be also a perspective of a new role of monasticism in the modern world.

Keywords: monasticism; art; creativity; monk; artist

The phenomenon of monastic life, though it remains attractive in our times, seems to search for new forms in changed circumstances. The modern perspective gives a particular opportunity to see monasticism in its broad historical and cultural context from a vast distance. It stimulates ever new approaches to monasticism, sometimes resulting in attempts of updating monasticism or its ideals. A recent example is the bestselling book by Rod Dreher, *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation*, in which the author presents monasticism as a social proposal with a distinctive political import, particularly valid in a specific historical moment.

In modern approach to monasticism one notices a tendency to express monasticism in other terms. These authors, and theologians among them, use various non-monastic concepts to express monastic ideas today. We present two of them, because they open an interesting perspective for considering our vision of an affinity between monasticism and art. They are proposed by two theologians, Hans Urs Von Balthasar and Elmar Salmann. The first, in his article *Philosophy, Christianity, Monasticism* (Balthasar 1971; Meiatini 2012, pp. 95–126) shows, or rather reminds us of the closeness between monasticism and philosophy. The second, developing this juxtaposition, writes about symbolism, and sees the monk as a symbolic being (Salmann 2000, pp. 278–305). Such an approach to monasticism reflects its rich cultural meaning as one that is characterized by a constant openness towards an integral experience of wisdom, with the natural inclusion of beauty. Recent approaches in philosophy show the closeness of art to its activity as, for example, in Heidegger, who sees the thinker's closeness to poets (Heidegger 1997, p. 139) or in Merleau-Ponty, who does not hesitate to put philosophers among artists (Merleau-Ponty 1945, pp. 220, 248). Today, the mutual interaction between art, philosophy, and spirituality seems inevitable. Jaspers writes about the necessity of referring philosophy to religion, poetry, and art (Jaspers 1996, p. 121). Even Dreher, presenting his strategy of evangelization in the modern world, provides an alliance between goodness and beauty, indicating that they both have a common root—the human, inner desire. At the same time, he notices a need for integrity:

Art and the saints—material instantiations of beauty and goodness—prepare the way for propositional truth because they appeal to our inner desire. Not every act that pierces our heart and awakens our desire is truly beautiful or good. Reason helps us to rightly order those desires (Dreher 2017, p. 117).

Such integrity requires a right balance, a possibility of reconciliation between different usual oppositions characterizing human existence, such as reason and emotions, body and spirit, freedom and determination, individual growth and the good of community. In such cases the idea of the symbol fits very well. It may lead directly to the vision of a modern affinity of monasticism and art. The symbol appears as a potential connection between different possible levels of human existence. The configuration of such connections is a form of wisdom. Technically, however, the symbol is helped by metaphor.

The connection between symbol and wisdom, which is an essential feature of monasticism, is seen very clearly by William A. Dyrness. According to him, “a symbol better represents what we might call understanding rather than knowledge—reflecting a kind of wisdom about life and the world” (Dyrness 2010, pos. 718). In this way, the symbol may become one of the instruments in seeing, understanding, or even transforming the world. Dyrness sees it as one of the principal functions of art and the artists: “Surely one of the principal functions of art and the artist—at least as we have come to understand this in the modern period—is rendering another world in terms of this one—that is, seeing this world metaphorically” (Dyrness 2010, pos. 3529). This vision opens our eyes and minds to the theological meaning of the world. Therefore, it may be considered not only as a mission, but also as an existential duty, while, as Dyrness continues, “symbolism [. . .] involves discovering meaning in what is given in creation, which is the theological condition for this process, ascribing significance to objects and actions, and being moved to pursue these as in themselves” (Dyrness 2010, pos. 703). Artists, like monks, stay in between the world and its meaning, between reality and the ideas which make the reality livable. It is an approach of involvement, sometimes drastic and radical, but always challenging in a unique way. The history of monasticism knows radical examples of such forms of monastic life. The first monks described in the Apophthegmata, the behavior of Syrian Stylites are examples of such an active and humble mediation between the world and its sense, between people and the world. A monk is placed in between, sometimes in radically difficult circumstances, but is always determined to live their existential vocation honestly and deeply; so they become a sign, a symbol, and a metaphor. His or her life, health, or social position are to transmit the message about salvation of the world. Being visible, narrated, or described, they carry out and even become a message.

As we remember, etymologically “monos” means “alone”. It is a valid observation, which concerns the personal and existential involvement resulting explicitly from the fact of being a monk. This involvement is an existential sign, a symbol, or a metaphor of monasticism. It is a personal choice which sometimes may arrive to a sacrifice. Here we arrive at the very important concept of “performance”. We will develop it later. For the moment we can only say that the monk, like the real artist, performs the spectacle of their life radically, to the very end, sometimes at the highest cost. This readiness for an eventual sacrifice distinguishes them, but also sets an ethical barrier from others. As Diana Taylor, a professor of Performance Studies writes: “The ethical considerations of performance are essential. An artist/activist may cut, mutilate, or flagellate herself, but she cannot do it to another person without his consent. She can perform a work that risks her own employment or arrest, but she cannot put others at risk without their permission” (Taylor 2016, pos. 1734). This possibility of sacrifice may bring an artist closer to a radical religious experience and from this perspective it is not difficult to identify the monk with the artist. According to Joan Chittister, the famous Benedictine writer:

In truth, [. . .] the monk and the artist are one. Monasticism, in fact, cultivates the artistic spirit. Basic to monasticism are the very qualities art demands of the artist: silence, contemplation, discernment of spirits, community, and humility. Basic to art are the very qualities demanded of the monastic: single-mindedness, beauty, immersion, praise, and creativity. It is contemplation that leads an artist to preserve for us forever, the essence of a thing that takes us far beyond its accidents (quoted after Valters Paintner 2011, p. 161).

Quite often, also the artists emphasize their affinity with monks. Julia Cameron in her bestselling book *The Artist's Way* wrote directly about it and her words are also her personal confession:

Artists throughout the centuries have spoken of “inspiration”, confiding that God spoke to them or angels did. In our age, such notions of art as a spiritual experience are seldom mentioned. And yet, the central experience of creativity is mystical. Opening our souls to what must be made, we meet our Maker. Artists toil in cells all over Manhattan. We have a monk’s devotion to our work—and, like monks, some of us will be visited by visions and others will toil out our days knowing glory only at a distance, kneeling in the chapel but never receiving the visitation of a Tony, an Oscar, a National Book Award. And yet the still, small voice may speak as loud in us as in any. So we pray. Fame will come to some. Honor will visit all who work. As artists, we experience the fact that ‘God is in the details’. Making our art, we make artful lives. Making our art, we meet firsthand the hand of our Creator. (Cameron 2002, p. 231).

Following this direction, one can speak about “anonymous monasticism” characterized by a typical, and radical existential approach of artists living as monks, even not being aware of this (Sawicki 2005, pp. 537–51). As an example may serve different “radical” artists, like G. Gould, the world-renowned Canadian pianist, who at the age of 27 withdrew from the stage to focus on recording in studio (Sawicki 2013), Lubomyr Melnyk, an original Ukrainian pianist and composer, known from his intensively expressive improvisations and called the Prophet of Piano (Quartier 2017, pp. 91–95), or Konstantin Wecker, a German songwriter, who dedicated his songs to social and political problems (Quartier 2018).

This affinity between monasticism and art is the main inspiration of our proposal of rediscovering monasticism through the art, expressed in the title of this paper. It may help us to look again at the main monastic values in a new light, expressing them in a new language. Actually, it also is a matter of a special style of life characterized by a radical and involved relationship to the world. We will present this shortly on the basis of texts written by the authors more or less consciously referring art to monasticism.

The affinity between monasticism and art occurs on two basic levels:

1. Internal life;
2. Mission.

In both cases, the approach and practices are strikingly similar, indicating not only the importance of a personally authentic and deep spiritual life but also the simple necessity of the existence of God. In this context, God seems to be as essential for the monk as for the artist. Moreover, the internal, intimate experience inevitably leads to external action, which has its clear objective and is addressed to other people. Being a monk, as much as being an artist, is a deep internal experience and a service, both to other people and to the whole world. These two dimensions interweave and supplement one another. In each of them one can distinguish some separate themes which explicitly have a spiritual character. For internal life there are:

- (a) Necessity of wilderness;
- (b) Intimacy with God;
- (c) Deep exploration of one’s own soul;
- (d) Mystical experience;
- (e) Meditation;
- (f) Contemplation;
- (g) Conversion.

Mission may be presented in four fields:

- (a) Captivation of imagination;
- (b) Communication (also to create a community);

- (c) Formulation of message, namely: expression of God, call for contemplation, sacredness, glorification;
- (d) Style of humility and discretion.

In all these cases the internal attitude is transformed into activities focused on the transmission of internal, spiritual experience. Here, the analogy between artist and monk is very evident—both try to communicate the message resulting from their internal experience. Therefore, they necessarily turn to other people, not only for sharing with them their experience, but also to help them. So, at least in their own opinion, such mission is a service rendered to humankind and even to the world.

1. Internal Life

As classical history teaches, Christian monasticism was born in the desert, first in Egypt, then in Syria, Palestine, and in other countries where persons looking for a radical life according to the Gospel started to populate inhabited, sometimes wild places. It was to be the right environment for personal spiritual growth, protection from distraction, and unnecessary involvement. The motive of importance of the desert was introduced into literature in the fourth century by Saint Athanasius in his famous biography of Saint Anthony—the *Vita Antonii*. The desert offered to the monk the best conditions for his own spiritual work. No wonder then that a radically authentic understanding of an artist's mission must also refer to the desert. So says Geoff Hall, photographer, film maker, mentor, and writer, in his book, *Translating the invisible world*, which connects the experience of wilderness with the sense of sacredness of life and a need of transformation. He writes:

The Wilderness addresses the fundamental things which need healing in our lives—our fears. As we roam this dry and weary land, our false-consciousness is rectified and our vision re-oriented. We see that all of life is sacred, that our life with God is the one essential thing that will help us see the world correctly—to see ourselves correctly—as we navigate the cultural terrain as artists (Hall 2012b, pos. 943).

As the desert was a master and teacher for monks, so it can (and should) be for artists. Only in this way can we learn and experience what is most essential in our life: “who we are and what we are here for—our calling. The art we make—whether, word, image or performance art—will communicate incoherence if these things are not well-developed in our hearts” (Hall 2011b, pos. 130).

The objective of the experience of the desert is intimacy with God. Hall describes the life of the artist also in these categories. He writes: “The life of the artist is an intimate walk with God” (Hall 2011a, pos. 210). A similar opinion is expressed by Christine Valters Paintner, a Benedictine oblate, theologian, writer, and blogger. She makes the affinity between monks and artists the main inspiration of her writing and activity. She does not speak explicitly about God but about Mystery. Nevertheless, the perspectives, especially for human beings, are similar. For example, she writes that poetry slows us down, moves us into a different way of knowing, changes our breath and demands a more attentive presence, helps us to integrate sorrow and joy, horror and humor, with compassionate awareness. That is why perceiving poetry as a way of being with Mystery is the reason why Valters Paintner sees it as a potent form for spiritual direction (Cf. Valters Painter and Beckman 2010, p. 110).

Here, poetry, like each true spiritual experience, integrates the subject exercising it, authorizing him or her to help others. This is exactly what was mentioned above about the necessity of missions resulting from deep spiritual experience. Such a mission is possible because of the transforming power of poetry. The artist cannot just keep it only for him/herself: “*Poiesis*, the creative act, occurs as the death and re-birth of the soul” (Valters Painter and Beckman 2010, p. 157).

Speaking generally about the arts, Valters Paintner talks explicitly about God: “the arts help expand our ways of knowing God beyond the cognitive level” (Valters Painter and Beckman 2010, p. 143). She sees that creative acts of art have a deep existential and implicitly spiritual meaning: “When we create art, ceremony, or ritual, it is not for the practical purpose of accomplishing a task, but to reflect our deepest meaning and our core values” (Valters Painter and Beckman 2010, p. 180). The evident

theological character of such involvement is clear in the book of James Watkins, significantly titled *Creativity as Sacrifice*. To some extent, he confirms the intuition of other Valters Paintner's words: "When we engage in the arts, we dip into our soul to discover deep pools of wonder, breath-taking gifts of beauty, and quiet revelation. As we create, we are invited into playfulness, poignancy, and surprise—energies that renew us and revitalize our sense of purpose" (Valters Painter and Beckman 2010, p. 3). The thesis present in the title of his book shows the theological and even Christological perspectives of creative act.

An artist's deep internal experience has not only an existential character. It is often described in mystical categories. Matthew Fox, writer and the founder of the University of Creation Spirituality in California, when he writes about creativity and its intimate character, mentions mysticism very plainly. According to him, "the intimacy of creativity corresponds to the mystical experience itself. Mysticism bespeaks union, and there is an ongoing union of us and the Divine precisely during the process of giving birth in any form whatsoever" (Fox 2004, p. 9). The relationship between mysticism and art is well known. There were mystics who expressed their mystical experiences in poetic texts (Saint Ephrem of Syria, Saint John of the Cross), in music (Hildegard of Bingen), or in painting (Fra Angelico). Mystical experience as such was also very attractive and inspiring for many artists; it is enough to recall Lorenzo Bernini and his famous *Ecstasy* of Saint Theresa of Avila. The intensity of intimate personal contact with God, being a normal condition of mystical experience, finds its usual medium in meditation and contemplation. Valters Paintner sees a clear analogy between the art-making process and the practice of meditation. For her, the art-making process may become a container for our internal awareness, much as in meditation practice. So monks and artists "are teachers of slowness, of savoring, of seeing the world below surfaces" (Valters Paintner 2011, p. 10). As we can see here, this experience is tightly connected with the perception of the world. In this realm the artist admires, meditates, and contemplates the creature. Beverly Lanzetta (quoted by Valters Paintner) says: "True contemplation always overflows into creation—it becomes a creative act" (Valters Paintner 2011, p. 25).

The personal commitment to a relationship with God does not have merely a spiritual character. It transforms the person involved. Watkins, elaborating his theological model of creativity as Sacrifice, sees it as "a respectful transformation" (Watkins 2015, p. 11). In monastic vocabulary such process is called "conversion", and Valters Paintner finds it "central to creativity because it calls us to begin again and try new things" (Valters Paintner 2011, p. 73). The artist's continuous research and pursuit of ideals has the same dynamism as the spiritual search of monks. As Dyrness explains, "it is the motivation to pursue—the affective attraction—that constitutes the aesthetic element" (Dyrness 2010, pos. 704).

2. The Mission

The seriousness and intensity of the internal spiritual life must inevitably lead towards activity. It is a sign of responsibility which naturally grows from a deep, personal relationship with God. This responsibility, activated by the singularity of spiritual experience, leads towards mission. A monk and an artist cannot resist an imperative of sharing their experience with other people, transmitting to them a message of joy and hope. So they must confront their public (listeners, readers, or visitors in museums or galleries), capturing their attention and communicating a previously formulated message. Surely, the power of authenticity of testimony is unquestionable, but the mechanisms and dynamisms of transmission are everywhere the same and must be, more or less consciously, respected. All this happens in a certain style, marked by a spiritual quality. Even if the message is to be powerful, it is a style of humility and discretion.

The beautiful, as Watkins notes, "is not the product of our own fantasy, nor of our subjective perception, but has an objective existence, being itself the expression of a Divine perfection" (Watkins 2015, p. 51). Thus, the artistic activity is a service. It is a duty. So, it needs effort. Particularly today, in times of so many different proposals and market competition, the artist must make an effort to

capture the attention of their public. It is something more than just transmitting a message. First of all, it is a matter of creating bonds and constituting a space for community. Hall describes it very clearly:

The work of the storyteller, the artist, is not to convict people of error, nor convince people of truth, but to capture the imagination with the possibility of something new being born into the world; a change in the world-order, justice for the afflicted and the disenfranchised, a change in the materialistic concepts of life and the materialistic conceptions of art. Conviction isn't their job, it is something achieved in the heart, by the Spirit (Hall 2012b, pos. 451).

The theological background for this is obvious—monks and artists are messengers of God, they announce His presence and His Grace. Watkins inserts this activity in an important place of the Christian community: “The task of the theologian is to show how a theological model for human creativity in the arts can inform the life of the Christian community” (Watkins 2015, p. 43). A monk acts within the community of the Church. An artist, at least, acts in the community of their public. There may be also a community artist. Hall proposes here the spiritual community of artists—a place of support, solidarity, and mutual inspiration. It is especially important in a fragile social context of artistic activity: “The spiritual community of the artist is a place where the sharing of common brokenness occurs in the hospitality of equality” (Hall 2012a, pos. 434). The base of this community is care. It is a community of inclusion, against all social, economic, or cultural marginalization. Such a community expresses the coherence between internal life and mission, guaranteeing the successful transmission of the message. Hall calls it a prophetic lifestyle, appealing for its restitution:

We have lost the connection between prophetic communication and prophetic lifestyle. Such art cannot be conducted from the soft-centre of the institution along with its power-base. Prophetic art is always expressed from the margins where the pain, injustice and the angst of life are experienced, where the powerless live. It is subversive, not political or ideological. It is not armchair Prophetic! (Hall 2011a, pos. 373).

With the adjective “prophetic”, which often appears in this quotation and has explicitly Biblical origins, one can associate the monastic tradition which has always linked monastic life with prophecy. It is the matter of charismatic life in the Church, complementary to its hierarchical structures.

In such a way we arrive at the figure of the Biblical prophet, who may be regarded as a model for both monks and artist. Usually their task was to communicate something and doing this in an efficient way. This leads us for the second time to the very important, above-mentioned concept of modern art—*performance*, a theme also studied and explored by Thomas Quartier (Quartier 2013). A prophet was a performer, as well as a monk. His or her whole life, in all its gestures and actions, was a sign, a symbol, or a metaphor. In modern art, performance plays a key role. Diana Taylor, quoted above, sees it as a means of communication, as “a doing with and to”, as an act of imagination (cf. Taylor 2016, p. 207). In her *Esthetics of Performance*, Erika Fisher-Lichte, among various categories constituting the phenomenon of performance, also mentions those which have an explicitly communitarian character. She writes directly about community (Fisher-Lichte 2016, pp. 90–106), about contact (Fisher-Lichte 2016, pp. 107–19), about embodiment (Fisher-Lichte 2016, pp. 136–64), about presence (Fisher-Lichte 2016, pp. 164–79), and about transformation (Fisher-Lichte 2016, pp. 301–10). Community is first of all a space of encounter. In times of excessive individualism, performance and its symbolic and metaphorical character is actually (or can be, and should be) one of the most efficient tools to achieve it. It offers both interaction and involvement. It permits integration between the corporal and the spiritual, human and divine. As Dyrness observes, “aesthetic and symbolic projects are also spiritual sites where the affections, the goods of the world, and religious longings meet and interact” (Dyrness 2010, pos. 116).

As we mentioned, good communication is only a means to transmit a message. The affinity between monks and artists can be also traced on this level. Following the authors we quote, one can distinguish three main themes of this message: (a) bringing to contemplation; (b) showing the sacredness of everything; (c) calling to glorification.

Geoff Hall, exploring the affinity between art and mysticism, observes that they both help in achieving the contemplative vision of the world: “Art like mysticism, breaks through the screen of objectivity and draws on our pre-conceptual capacities of contemplative vision” (Hall 2012b, pos. 765). As we mentioned above, it is a very important aspect and task of perception. The most ancient, classical monastic tradition connects it clearly with internal spiritual experience seen as a perception of Divine Light, which permits us to see everything in truth. These optics naturally lead towards discovering the sacredness in everything. Valters Painter defines it as essential for monasticism: “This is the heart of the monastic path, of being present to the sacredness of everything—including ourselves” (Valters Paintner 2011, p. 100). This approach is very close to the sensitivity for beauty in everyday life which is becoming more and more popular. Elisabetta Di Stefano, apart from giving an overview of various texts dedicated to this theme (Di Stefano 2017, pp. 11–35), presents it in a wide anthropological and ecological context (Di Stefano 2017, pp. 89–119). In this sense, the monastic approach to the world, born from a deep spiritual and mystical relationship to God and proved by the long history and culture of monasteries of the Benedictine tradition, can find its contemporary continuation, perhaps in new forms, but on the base of the same anthropological principles. It is an approach not of contemplative passivity, but of a wise collaboration in continuation of the divine act of creation. Fox describes it very clearly in the words which smartly combine theology and anthropology:

God has gifted creation with everything that is necessary. Humankind, full of all creative possibilities, is God’s work. Humankind is called to co-create. God gave to humankind the talent to create with all the world. Just as the person shall never end, until into dust they are transformed and resurrected, just so, their works are always visible. The good deeds shall glorify, the bad deeds shall shame (Fox 2004, p. 228).

In this appeal one can find easily an echo of Saint Benedict’s amazing conclusion to the chapter dedicated to artists living in the monastery—discussing the possible price for their products, he recommends, quoting the words from the first Letter of Saint Peter Apostle, that in everything God may be glorified (1 Peter 4:11; *The Rule of Saint Benedict* 57: 7).

The final observation which should be added to this short look at the affinity between monks and artists, in view of the further growth of their presence and meaning in the world, concerns the style of being of a monk as an artist and, vice versa, of an artist as a monk. It is a matter of humility, which, more precisely and adequately in the modern context, we would prefer to call “discretion”. In this context we refer to the amazingly monastic reflection published recently by Pierre Zaoui, a French philosopher, under the very meaningful title *The Art of Disappearing* (*L’arte di scomparire*). In spite of appearances it is not a nihilistic book. On the contrary, it appears to be a very subtle proposal for a good and honest life in our times. It is a proposal for a style of presence and interaction, for a fresh and updated look at some monastic values. The author describes the main idea of his proposal in the following words:

Your discreet, unobserved, transparent position opens you up to a new experience: the abandonment of the ghosts of omnipotence, of being indispensable, of being responsible for each and every one. Becoming suddenly discreet means giving up for a moment any will of power. Not that the will to power is negative in itself, but we know too well its dark and tyrannical face, and even the luminous face is sometimes a heavy burden, for its need to overcome itself relentlessly, to always push its forces to their extreme limit. Hence the so soothing joy of being able to download it for a moment on others or on things, to let them appear, not to give them more shade, to take off from their sun (Zaoui 2015, pos. 49).

In this declaration one can see a new melody played with the notes of artist identity, life, and action. The classical, many-centuries-old stereotype of the glorious power of art is here transformed into a new vision, which Zaoui discreetly links to theology and religion:

The art of discretion seems to depend on an authentically metaphysical gesture, if not actually theological origin, which aims to constitute its concept by differentiating it from proximate

but distinct experiences: the ancient and worldly ones of touch, modesty, demeanor, of courtesy, and religious ones of humility, detachment or withdrawal from the world (Zaoui 2015, pos. 272).

The explanation of this approach is also very meaningful, sensitive, and corresponds to the modern trends in art which really need more humility and discretion. Beauty and truth, particularly seen as gifts from God, are sufficiently powerful to exist and do their work. We should not disturb them. On the contrary, new, quiet, creative spaces are needed to give them opportunity to grow:

Because a life without secrets, without mystery, without shadows, without interstitial spaces between oneself and others, as well as between oneself, is a life destined to absolute terror and without limits, which in the end destroys every residue in us of humanity (Zaoui 2015, pos. 1047).

3. Conclusions

Concluding this reflection, we hope that the affinity between monasticism and art it outlines may be a helpful way of looking differently at, and perhaps with a larger perspective on, both contemporary artists and monks. The mutual symbiosis, organically and naturally resulting from this affinity, also turns out to be stimulated by our times. If art has always been present, even sometimes struggling for its identity, then monasticism seems to be losing its terrain. The necessity of deep spiritual experience, so important for art, may in fact be a good occasion for rediscovering monastic traditions and practice in collaboration with artists. It seems that this work has already begun. What it needs now is mutual sensitivity, courage, patience, and perseverance. In this way the monastic values which set the course of this reflection (existential necessity of wilderness, prayerful intimacy with God, deep and serious internal spiritual work, openness for mystical experience, practice of meditation, grace of contemplation, and path of conversion) will find their new expression, and so they will be able to be transmitted to people who for different reasons do not know them. At the same time, it could also be a powerful message of evangelization, since, in essence, Christian monks have always been radical practitioners and witnesses of the Gospel. In times when sensibility for spirituality and religion is weakened and only an interest and attraction for beauty remains, it would be good to recall that, in origin, these two spheres went together.

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