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# FDP HERALD

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## Fellowship of the Order of Dionysis and Paul Newsletter

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The Light of the World by Holman Hunt

### Light of the World

The Lantern or Lamp have long been an important symbol in many cultures for fairly obvious reasons. A light in the darkness. In ancient Damascus it was the law to walk at night with a Lantern at your feet, so as to guide your way through the many obstacles that may lie before you on the path ahead. Anyone not holding a light was reckoned to be judged as up to no good.

In Christian terms, Saint Christopher is sometimes seen as holding a Lantern as well as carrying the child Christ upon his shoulder. The imagery associated with this Saint which has been a little forgotten in more modern times is that Saint Christopher would be wading through the waters supporting the infant, heading towards the guiding lantern held by the Hermit, who was said to be the man who originally converted Saint Christopher to Christianity.

In much of the artwork involving Saint Christopher and the Hermit. The Lantern is held up high as a guiding light. This in itself does not seem unreasonable. The shape of the way the hermit stands, often with a tall staff in his left hand, and the Lantern high in his right, one might consider the forming of the hebrew final letter Nun.

This coincidentally may speak of Psalms 119: v105 with the subtitle 'Nun' - "Your Word is a Lamp at my feet, and a Light to my Path".

As an aside, it is also interesting that a 4th Century BC Cynic philosopher named Diogenes (meaning Born of God) was said to wander the streets in broad daylight clutching a lantern claiming he was searching for an Honest Man, as a scathing commentary of the corruption of the world in which he lived.

The Lantern, as opposed to a candle, is a protected flame. In some cultures the flame is hidden either behind skilled patterned metalwork, or coloured glass.

The great lantern, known as the Pharos of Alexandria was one of the great wonders of the ancient world. This was said to be the tallest structure in the world at one point; A giant bonfire atop a great tower. This served as both a warning for seafarers, but also a guiding one to safe haven. The height also allowed the ability to see further out towards the horizon for enemy vessels. In many languages the word for Lighthouse is 'Phare' or a derivation thereof. The Lighthouse emblem is often used as an alternative symbol of Saint Christopher, who is the Patron Saint of Travel.

As a point of interest some say that the word Pharaoh meant 'King of Lights'. In Egyptian Hieroglyphics the name means 'Great House'.

'The Light of the World' by Holman Hunt depicts the Christ knocking upon a door while holding a lantern at his feet. The legend at the bottom of the painting quotes Revelation 3:20: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me"

The parable of the Ten virgins in Matthew 25: 3 also depicts lamps as an indicator of ensuring the light is ever burning in readiness for the Lord.

"..the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!'.

Finally it would be remiss of me not to quote John 8:12 "I am the Light of the World. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the Light of Life"




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**The Final Letter Nun: Means 'Fish' and has the numerical value of 50**

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**Hermit, also called Eremite, one who retires from society, primarily for religious reasons, and lives in solitude. In Christianity the word (from Greek erēmītēs, "living in the desert") is used interchangeably with anchorite, although the two were originally distinguished on the basis of location: an anchorite selected a cell attached to a church or near a populous centre, while a hermit retired to the wilderness.**

**The first Christian hermits appeared by the end of the 3rd century in Egypt, where one reaction to the persecution of Christians by the Roman emperor Decius was flight into the desert to preserve the faith and to lead a life of prayer and penance. Paul of Thebes, who fled to the desert about 250 AD, has been considered the first hermit.**

**The excessive austerity and other extremes of the early hermits' lives were tempered by the establishment of cenobite (common life) communities. The foundation was thus laid in the 4th century for the institution of monasticism (i.e., monks living a common life according to an established rule). The eremitic life eventually died out in Western Christianity, but it has continued in Eastern Christianity.**

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# A New Model of Monasticism

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*“The greatest of all achievements”*

In the early years of the fourth century, a renowned ‘solitary’, St. Anthony (c. 251–356), introduced a model of spiritual communal life when he undertook the spiritual direction and organisation of the many followers who had gathered around him. At roughly the same time, in the far south of Egypt, St. Pachomius (c. 292–348) founded at a place called Tabenna, what may be considered the first conventional Christian monastery. Both of these communal models or systems spread rapidly and in a relatively short time were firmly established throughout the Levant.

In due course these systems merged and it became the custom for those seeking the life of a solitary or hermit to enter a monastery to receive spiritual direction and guidance before undertaking the spiritual discipline of a solitary. By the middle of the fourth century the term ‘monk’ or Monakhos (Grk, meaning ‘alone’ or ‘solitary’) was commonly applied to men and women who were known to have dedicated their life to God, be they solitaries (following the rule of Anthony), or monastics living in a monastery, (following the rule of Pachomius).

During these embryonic years of Christian monasticism, increasing numbers of aspiring ascetics, following in the footsteps of Anthony and Pachomius, entered into the desert wilderness of Egypt to engage in a solitary life of spiritual discipline. Their extraordinary lifestyle spread far and wide, reaching as far north as Britain in the 5th century where monastic settlements were established in isolated areas of western and northern Britain such as Bardsey Island and Llangadfan.

In principle little has changed over the course of time. Today we live in a world wherein the incessant demands to satisfy the cravings of human appetite, fuelled by a powerful and sophisticated mass-media, have stimulated an unprecedented growth in world Consumerism, a term that refers to the economic philosophy that emphasises the acquisition of material goods and services as a social imperative that is good for society and social progress.

Why this great movement took place and why so many took to the life of the monastic, are questions as vital today as they were in the fourth century. One obvious reason was the frequent and increasingly violent persecution of Christians by the Roman Administration during the late third century. In response growing numbers of people withdrew into the wilderness, away from centres of population, to avoid persecution and to find the peace and solitude necessary to live the spiritual life. The State oppression culminated in the Great Persecution instituted by the Emperor Diocletian in the year 303, which finally came to an end when Constantine became emperor in the year 312. Another factor, which is just as pertinent today, was the need to get away from the perceived madness of an increasingly materialistic society full of political intrigues and conspiracies.

Consumerism, along with many developments in science and technology have effected major cultural changes in the intellectual and emotional life of our civilization, and where

the political landscape, increasingly dominated by a materialistic philosophy, not only rejects but is frequently hostile to religion, the spiritual life, and all spiritual thinking. As a consequence, unrestrained Consumerism has become the driving force shaping our civilisation. More people are engaged in the design, production and marketing of 'stuff' than in essential services such as food production or nurturing natural resources. It appears to be the case that if we are not creating 'stuff' we are consuming 'stuff'.

Clearly there are benefits to such productivity, but there are also obvious defects in this social and economic force; perhaps the most significant defect being that unrestrained Consumerism encourages greed and ambition above all else. This has resulted in the unsustainable use of natural resource causing immense damage to the fabric of our world; particularly the poisoning of the oceans through dumping toxic waste, the deforestation of continents, the extinction of countless species of plant and animal life – including the senseless destruction of the vital bee population, the indiscriminate proliferation of genetically manipulated crops and the barbaric use of factory-farming... This list is almost endless, but it should be noted that none of these alarming events are happening in the name of religion or spirituality, no they are happening in the name of 'Profit' and 'Progress' as unbridled greed and ignorance drives our unbalanced 'consumer culture'.

It is, then, not difficult to understand how growing numbers of people are seeking to redress the balance with values derived from living a spiritual life, which is the only real antidote to consumerism. However, the social constraints of our civilisation mean that for legal or economic reasons many of us are not free to enter into the wilderness and follow the solitary way of life. Also, some of us have family responsibilities requiring our presence, our time, and our attention to manage domestic affairs, which need funding, so we must work. However, the work-place is very demanding as employers expect more and more of an employees' time; furthermore, spiralling costs force many into maintaining two or more jobs. Thus, we are being turned into consumers responding to the demands of market forces, which are many, leaving us little time to take stock of our lives and get to know who we really are.

With all of this in mind, the 'new model' of monasticism is not something new, nor is it a radical departure from what we already know; but it is revolutionary – indeed it always has been – because it offers everyone without exception an alternative to the perpetual merry-go-round of a secular culture driven by consumerism. It applies equally to men and women, to young and old, to rich or poor, to those who are either pursuing a busy secular career or running a household. There is no qualification other than a willingness to engage with the 'interior life', because the monastic ideal embodied from its beginning more than seventeen hundred years ago, and continues to embody today, the principle of 'spiritualising' one's life, which is achievable whether we live in the wilderness or in an urban environment.

In either case it entails entering into the interior 'wilderness' of the soul – a solitary endeavour that is the essence of monasticism – and engage in the daily observance of Prayer and Meditation through which we may learn something of our own spiritual nature and come to see the divine not only within ourselves but within all living things. Such a way of life enables us to accept the challenges we encounter as opportunities to

transform our own unruly nature (the wilderness), and ‘make a difference’ every single day of our life. It is this change of focus that constitutes the new model of monasticism, which unites the secular and the spiritual dimensions of our life, and empowers us to bring meaning and purpose into our lives and the lives of our families and friends, and links us with a growing community of people living the contemplative life – the greatest of all undertakings.



*Audio of  
Daily Office  
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2 Timothy 1:7

**For the Spirit God gave us  
does not make us timid,  
but gives us power, love  
and self discipline.**

### **The Paradox of our Age**

**We have bigger houses  
but smaller families;  
more conveniences, but less time.  
We have more degrees but less sense;  
more knowledge but less judgment;  
more experts, but more problems;  
more medicines but less healthiness.  
We've been all the way to the  
moon and back,  
but have trouble in crossing the street to  
meet our new neighbour.  
We built more computers to hold more  
copies than ever,  
but have less real communication;  
We have become long on quantity,  
but short on quality.  
These are times of fast foods  
but slow digestion;  
Tall men but short characters;  
Steep profits but shallow relationships.  
It's a time when there is much in the  
window but nothing in the room.**

HH 14th Dalai Lama

### **The Lantern**

**Ever turning protecting Light,  
From treacherous shores defend.**

**Ever shining guiding Light,  
To haven safe and calméd sea.**

**O shrouded mystery of Light,  
Revealed to a chosen few.**

**All embracing beacon of Light,  
The door that opens the way.**

**A Lantern at my brow,  
A Lamp to guide my feet,  
A Torch to point ahead,  
A Star defends my back,  
A Flame that stands aright,  
A Candle is left to read,  
All about me  
The Light of the World**

Br. James