

# Religious Orders as Transnational Networks of the Catholic Church

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The history of the Christian churches as transnational and global actors is reflected in the history of Christian religious orders and communities. The existence of various models of life in a variety of orders, from autonomous monasteries to centrally directed communities, made the spread of religious orders and the establishment of an organisational network that transcended national and linguistic borders possible. A high degree of flexibility in the orders' three main areas (missionary work, pastoral care, education and health) enabled them to survive periods in which their activities were constrained. The international orientation and structure of religious orders offers the best chance of overcoming the current critical personnel shortage which shifted the geographical focus from Europe to Asia and Africa.

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## Introduction

Religious orders and communities are among the defining elements of Christian life. Beginning in the third century various forms of ascetic life developed, from individual forms to groups of various sizes. By leaving their home country and all things familiar to them, and by submitting to the regulation of everyday life, the members of religious orders were able to devote themselves to spiritual, missionary (→ Media Link #ab), civilisational and cultural tasks. In this way the history of the religious orders reflects, not merely the history of Christianity, but also an important part of the cultural history of Europe and the world.

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In 16th century Spain and Italy the reform of the old religious orders – those that had been organized along lines of strict observance – and the creation of new orders led to a flowering of monastic life. But proponents of the Reformation and humanists such as Erasmus of Rotterdam (1469–1536) (→ Media Link #ac) rejected the mode of life of religious orders, believing that it imposed unacceptable constraints on Christian freedom. In their view each of the faithful was called to holiness. They therefore demanded the abolition of the hierarchical difference between clergy and laymen. This criticism of religious orders was summed up by Erasmus in the well known phrase: "Monachatus non est pietas" (life in a religious order is not synonymous with religion or piety). In Germany it took decades for the traditional religious orders, such as the Benedictines, Dominicans and Franciscans, and their female branches, to recover from the personnel losses suffered at this time. The Hermits of Saint Augustine, the order to which Martin Luther (1483–1546) (→ Media Link #ad) belonged, and the Cistercians never truly recovered. After the French Revolution (1789) (→ Media Link #ae) the European proponents of the idea of the nation state had no sympathy with the ideal of regulated religious life either. Enlightenment philosophers and cameralists (adherents of the administrative science of the German absolutist states) viewed the religious orders of the Catholic Church as political threats. In the period between the 18th and 20th centuries, the fact that the orders were rooted in an international religious community directed by the Bishop of Rome, who regarded himself as both a spiritual and a secular ruler, made the orders suspect to those dedicated to the concept of nationalism. In addition, the orders' radius of action, especially that of the missionary soci-

eties, went far beyond the borders of the smaller political states. At the heart of the religious orders' motivation was the image of themselves as transnational "global players" commissioned by Jesus to carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth (Matthew 28: 18–20). Such a mission precludes the notion of restricting oneself to one nation or language. In what follows we will sketch several lines along which the Western religious orders developed.

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## Types of Religious Orders prior to the 16th Century Reformation

The classic models of the transnationally oriented religious orders originated in the Middle Ages. About 529 Benedict of Nursia (ca. 480–547) (→ Media Link #ag) founded a monastery at Monte Cassino on the site of what had been a temple to Apollo. The closing of the Platonic philosophical Academy in Athens by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I (482–565) (→ Media Link #ah) around the same time is generally regarded as the approximate date for the end of the ancient world and for the beginning of the Christian Middle Ages. In the early Middle Ages monasteries, founded and essentially formed by missionaries from England, Scotland and Ireland, existed throughout the Frankish empire. Following the Carolingian Reform and the homogenization of the monastic rules by Benedict of Aniane (ca. 750–821) (→ Media Link #ai) the monasteries were also tasked with playing a role in building the empire. The functions described in the plans for the monastery at St. Gall (→ Media Link #aj) demonstrate the monasteries' economic autarky as well as the types of service that they were to perform for church and state. Due to their geographically diversified holdings, monasteries in the Middle Ages were active beyond individual political boundaries. This was particularly true for the new Cistercian order with its reformist intentions. Its system of filiations required international communication that transcended linguistic borders (along the Way of St. James, for example, many new branches of the Cistercians and Benedictines of Cluny came into being). (→ Media Link #ak) These were established by religious orders rooted in various regions. The transfer of economic and scientific knowledge took place through monastic granges (farming estates) and urban granges (*Stadthöfe*) which served as markets and which made the Cistercians into the first international company.

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Other activities were emphasized by the mendicant orders founded in the early 13th century as part of the Poverty Movement. Their focus on pastoral care led to a preference for settling in the growing cities. In contrast to the stability that characterised the Benedictine tradition these new orders reflected the mobility of modern society formed by trade. In addition the mendicant orders, in particular the Dominicans, were active at the universities and Latin, the common language of education, facilitated intra-European communication. For example, the Swabian Albertus Magnus (ca. 1200–1280) (→ Media Link #am) studied in Padua and Cologne, and taught in Hildesheim, Freiburg, Regensburg, Strasbourg, Paris and Cologne. After a brief time as Bishop of Regensburg he was active in Würzburg, Strasbourg and Cologne. His student Thomas of Aquin (ca. 1225–1274) (→ Media Link #an) was born in the vicinity of Naples, studied in Paris and Cologne, taught in Paris, Orvieto, Rome, Viterbo, again in Paris, then in Naples, and died on his way to the Council of Lyon. Up until the Enlightenment such a curriculum vitae was not problematic for European scholars. Another focus of the mendicant orders was on pastoral care among the people a field on which, due to their better education, they often competed with the local clergy. The Franciscans in particular, and the Capuchins (founded only in the 16th century) were the major bearers of missionary activity among the common people.

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## The Jesuits – the Primacy of Pastoral Care

... maturo consilio, ex certa scientia, et plenitudine potestatis Apostolicae saepedictam Societatem extinguimus, et supprimimus; tollimus, et abrogamus omnia, et singula ejus officia, ministeria et administrationes, domus, scholas, collegia, hospitia, gymnasia, et loca quaecum quavis in ... provincia, regno, et ditione existentia, et modo quolibet ad eam pertinentia.<sup>1</sup>

With these words on 21 July 1773 Pope Clement XIV (1705–1774) (→ Media Link #ao) suppressed the Society of Jesus (→ Media Link #ap) which had existed for over two hundred years, in which time it had become the most influential spiritual, pedagogical and political force in the Catholic Church during the post-Reformation period. In acceptance and rejection, love and hate, admiration and aversion, no other religious order has, from the time of its inception (and to the present day), polarized more than the Society of Jesus.

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It was not until 40 years after its abolition that the order could be re-established. In the German territories it was not readmitted until after 1849. To the nationalist mind in 19th century Germany its centralized leadership awakened the fear of foreign influence in the German church and society. The *Kulturkampf* (culture struggle) was therefore directed against the world-wide Catholic Church whose activities transcended national boundaries and linguistic barriers, and particularly against the Jesuits who were considered to be the Church's most important, influential and dangerous representative. In the German Empire the ban on its activities was not lifted until 1917, in Switzerland not until 1973.

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From the very beginning the Society of Jesus was characterized by transnational activity. Following his conversion, the Society's founder, Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) (→ Media Link #aq), born in the Basque region of Spain, and a servant of the Spanish crown, wanted to settle in Jerusalem. After this plan failed he studied in Barcelona, in Alcalá de Henares and in Paris. On 15 August 1534 the first of his companions were ordained at Montmartre. Pope Paul III (1468–1549) (→ Media Link #ar) recognized the community as a religious order as early as 1540. Along with Ignatius the original seven Jesuit companions were Pierre Favre (1506–1546) (→ Media Link #as) of Savoy, Francisco de Javier (Francis Xavier, 1506–1552) (→ Media Link #at) of Navarra, Diego Laínez (1512–1565) (→ Media Link #au) and Alfonso Salmerón (1515–1585) (→ Media Link #av) of Castile, Nicolas Bobadilla (1511–1590) (→ Media Link #aw) of León, and the Portuguese Simon Rodrigues (1510–1579) (→ Media Link #ax). The international make up of Ignatius's first group of companions proved paradigmatic of the order's future. Pierre Favre brought the first German into the order, Petrus Canisius (1521–1597) (→ Media Link #ay) of Nijmegen. The most important missionary of the first generation was Francis Xavier who led missionary journeys (→ Media Link #az) to India, Japan and to the coasts of China. Among other Jesuits who transcended the boundaries of European culture were Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) (→ Media Link #b0) from southern Italy and Johann Adam Schall von Bell (1592–1666) (→ Media Link #b1) from Cologne who became court astronomer to the Chinese emperor. A controversially discussed project, and one of the issues that led to the Pope's decision in 1773, was the semi-state structure of the reductions (settlements organized by the Jesuits for the indigenous population) (→ Media Link #b2) of the Guaraní Indians in areas of the present day states of Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina. In the reductions native Indian handicrafts were cultivated as well as Alpine folk music – an extremely interesting cultural and historical mixture. No other religious order has been so resolutely transnationally oriented as the Jesuits from their very beginning.

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## Typology of the Life of Religious Orders between the Reformation and the 19th Century

Imitating the model of the Jesuit Order, communities of priests were established at the end of the 18th and during the 19th century that dedicated themselves to specific pastoral tasks. The Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer was founded by Alfonso di Liguori (1696–1787) (→ Media Link #b3) in the Kingdom of Naples in 1732. Under its general vicar Clemens Maria Hofbauer (1751–1820) (→ Media Link #b4) it was later re-established in Austria and Poland. The Redemptorists specialized in the sacrament of penance and in popular mission. In Catholic circles in Germany and Austria the Redemptorist fathers contributed to the intellectual and spiritual awakening of the *Vormärz* era (time before the revolution of March 1848). The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, founded in 1816 by Eugène de Mazenod (1782–1861) (→ Media Link #b5), dedicated themselves to a similar purpose. From 1841 on, the order's primary aim was the mission in Canada. Established in 1800 and re-organised in 1817, the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and of the Perpetual Adoration of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar (sometimes known as the Picpus Fathers) was also mission oriented. Along with Eucharistic adoration it devoted its energies to the mission in Oceania. In France the desolate state of religion in rural areas gave occasion to the establishment of new religious orders. The Marist Brothers were originally founded to do pastoral work in the area of Lyon. Guillaume-Joseph Chaminade (1761–1850) (→ Media Link #b6), the founder of the Marianists, recognized the need for the co-operative pastoral care of laymen and priests in the various and differing social environments. The most important of the new orders established in the 19th century was the Salesian Society founded in 1857 by Giovanni Bosco (1815–1888) (→ Media Link #b7). Dedicated to the pastoral care of young people, it is today the second largest religious order in the Catholic Church.

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In the tradition of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, founded at the end of the 17th century by Jean-Baptiste de La Salle (1651–1719) (→ Media Link #b8), the 19th century witnessed the emergence of a series of fraternal communities and congregations that were either expressly engaged in schooling or who specialised in the care

of the sick. In the first category we also find the Marist Brothers founded by Marcellin-Joseph-Benoît Champagnat (1789–1840) (→ Media Link #b9) in 1817, the Frères de l' Instruction chrétienne (1819) of Jean-Marie-Robert de La Mennais (1780–1860) (→ Media Link #ba), the Irish Christian Brothers (1802) and the Brothers of St. Patrick (1808). In the second category we find, among others, the Barmherzigen Brüder von Montabaur (Merciful Brethren of Montabaur) (1856) and their founder Ignatius Lötschert (1820–1886) (→ Media Link #bb), Peter Friedhofen's (1819–1860) (→ Media Link #bc) Brothers of Mercy of Our Lady of Perpetual Help (1856) and the Brothers of the Poor of St. Francis (1857) founded by Johannes Höver (1816–1864) (→ Media Link #bd).

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However, the greater part of 19th century religious communities consisted of the newly founded women's congregations. The personality and the ability to assert themselves varied greatly among the founders of these congregations. Many had been directly influenced by their confessor, and consequently, in many cases, the establishment of a religious women order owed more to the confessor of the founder than to the founder herself. Others, such as St. Marie-Madeleine Postel (1756–1846) (→ Media Link #be), St. Julie Billiart (1751–1816) (→ Media Link #bf), St. Madeleine Sophie Barat (1779–1865) (→ Media Link #bg), the Blessed Karolina Gerhardinger (1797–1879) (→ Media Link #bh) and the Venerable Catherine MacAuley (1731–1791) (→ Media Link #bi), were independent and self-reliant women who helped to expand their respective religious communities beyond the borders of their home dioceses. They secured the international development of the congregations through filiations and the founding of subsidiary houses. Most of the women's institutes were apostolically oriented. In the main areas of their work, education and charity, the individual communities had different focal points: girl's education, (home) nursing care, managing hospitals, catechism instruction and missionary work, aid to the socially weak and disadvantaged (widows, orphans, the elderly, domestic servants, young women workers, prisoners and former prisoners, the blind, the deaf-mute, the intellectually and physically handicapped, etc.). In the congregations women were able to develop professional skills and their work and training were duly acknowledged. Scholars have characterized these institutions as "neugegründete (Gründer und/oder Gründerin), zentralisierte (mit Mutterhaus und Generaloberin) und kontrollierte Kongregationen (zunächst durch den Bischof oder seinen Repräsentanten, später durch die zivile Gewalt)".<sup>2</sup> These structural prerequisites enabled the congregations to react flexibly to new situations and to carry out their tasks without time consuming preliminaries:

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Die Geschichte dieser Gründungen ist fast in allen Fällen die gleiche. Um deren verwirrende Vielfalt angesichts identischer Aufgaben begreifen zu können, muß man sich immer wieder die Isolierung vor Augen halten, in der die verschiedenen Provinzen lebten. Ein frommes Mädchen weicht spontan oder auf Anraten eines Priesters der Kindererziehung oder der Kranken- und Armenfürsorge; bald nimmt sie einige durch ihr Beispiel angezogene Gefährtinnen zu sich; die Schloßherrin des Ortes gewährt ihr moralische und finanzielle Unterstützung, der Pfarrer ermutigt sie oder aber legt ihr Hindernisse in den Weg; ein Seelenführer aus dem Jesuitenorden oder einem anderen Orden taucht im Hintergrund auf; bald festigt sich die Gründung; man kauft ein Haus; der Bischof mischt sich ein; um seine Billigung zu erhalten, braucht man Regeln, eine Tracht, eine verantwortliche Obere, einen Namen, einen Schutzpatron, ein Noviziat. All dies kristallisiert sich nach und nach heraus, und eines Tages ist man schließlich bereit, um die Autorisation des Heiligen Stuhles und der Regierung einzugeben. Eine neue Kongregation ist geboren.<sup>3</sup>

Only a few of the approximately 1,250 congregations founded in the 19th and 20th centuries spread beyond their regions of origin. But some did and in so doing became actors in the transnational work of education and charity. A few examples may serve to illustrate this development.

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First Example: The Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny

Anne-Marie Javouhey (1779–1851) (→ Media Link #bj), who was born in a small village in Burgundy, felt called upon to devote her life to God from the time of her first communion, which took place in the first year of the French Revolution. She experienced the Church that had been forced to live in the underground and her piety developed in contact with its priests. On 11 November 1798, she performed a private religious ceremony in her native village of Chamblanc. Despite her father's sometimes vehement opposition she began to instruct children in religion. Secure in her feeling to have been called upon to found a new religious order, she appealed for help to the Bishop of Autun. In Napoleonic France the

founding of religious societies was permitted again and on 12 December 1806 a decree of the emperor recognized the Association de Saint-Joseph that Javouhey had founded. Six months later, on 12 May 1807, the religious order's first nine sisters took their vows. In 1812 they acquired a house in Cluny and took the name of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Cluny. In 1815 they opened a school in Paris. At the suggestion of the colonial office the order undertook missionary activities in the French overseas territories. The first sisters journeyed to Réunion in 1817, to Senegal in 1819, and to Guadalupe and Guyana in 1822. In 1824 Anne-Marie Javouhey established the first African seminar of a French order. Javouhey, who was the mother superior of her society for 44 years, made several trips abroad in order to visit the order's various houses. Recognition by the state came in 1827, and in the same year the Bishop of Autun approved the rules of the order. It received papal recognition in 1854, three years after the death of its founder.

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The membership of the society, that has remained international up to the present day, developed as follows:

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Year	Sisters	Houses	Houses in France
1825	122	22	14
1852	1221	144	75
1901	3808	385	136
1969	3481	336	72
1999	3047	417	45

#### Second Example: From the Westerwald into the World

Already as a young girl working as a day labourer in Dernbach Katharina Kasper (1820–1898) (→ Media Link #bk) felt called to a religious life and to service to the poor. With other young women she founded a pious congregation in 1845 that combined religious life with a life of active charity. After a first contact with the Bishop of Limburg, Peter Joseph Blum (1808–1884) (→ Media Link #bl), a small house in Dernbach was built in 1848. The congregation's statutes that called for the "spreading of virtue by example, instruction and prayer" were approved in 1850. On 15 August 1851 in the parish church of Wirges, five women took vows for a three year period as the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ (PHJC). A year later they received as statutes the modified rules of the Sisters of Mercy, and in 1853 a priest became the cooperative's superior.

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The Poor Handmaids increased rapidly, primarily within the diocese of Limburg and in the neighbouring dioceses. Eight years after its inception the congregation already had 38 houses and 224 members. The first of its foundations in the United States of America took place in 1868 and during the *Kulturkampf* the mother house was also relocated to the US. By the time of its founder's death, membership had increased to 1,725 distributed among 193 houses. Thus the PHJC had developed into a congregation that contributed decisively to works of charity in smaller communities.

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Margaretha Rosa Flesch (1826–1906) (→ Media Link #bm), a miller's daughter from Vallendar, became the founder of a religious order as well. Initially she had wanted to live as a recluse. She took up residence close to the *Kreuzkapelle* (Chapel of the Cross) in Waldbreitbach in 1851, at first alone, then with two companions. But in 1860 the parish priest gave this hermitage to a group of men that would develop into the Congregation of the Franciscan Brothers of the Holy Cross. In 1863 the sisters received permission to take vows and, with the veiling start the novitiate. By 1878, from the *Marienhaus* (St Mary's House), the mother house in Waldbreitbach, the society had grown to include more than 100 sisters living in 21 settlements. Rosa Flesch, victim of an intrigue on the part of the spiritual rector, was not re-elected mother superior in 1878 and lived the rest of her life as a simple sister in the mother house. She had laid the ground-work for the spreading of her society to the United States, the Netherlands and Brazil. Furthermore, this was a first step to the organisational ensuring of social institutions in the respective countries.

## Missionary Societies

At the beginning of the 19th century a new missionary interest arose in Europe. Financial and moral support for missionaries led to the founding of missionary societies in Lyon (1822) by Pauline Marie Jaricot (1799–1862) (→ Media Link #bn) and in Aachen (1832) by the physician Heinrich Hahn (1800–1882) (→ Media Link #bo). The Union of the Catholic Apostolate in Rome, founded by Vincent Pallotti (1795–1850) (→ Media Link #bp) maintained close contact with the mission association in Lyon. The Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, the Vatican authority responsible for missionary activities, supported this effort and thus secured the financial and motivational monopoly of the headquarters in Lyon. Pope Gregory XVI (1765–1846) (→ Media Link #bq) strengthened the mission's ties to Rome by assigning a specific religious order to each of the missionary areas.

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Following the example of the communities of diocesan priests, as cultivated in the Paris seminaries of Saint-Sulpice and the Rue du Bac, communities were founded with the express purpose of engaging in missionary activity. The idea of "the Evangelisation of Africa by Africans" propagated by the Italian Daniele Comboni (1831–1881) (→ Media Link #br), who in 1864 had established a centre for the education of an African clergy in Cairo, was adopted by the French bishop Charles Lavigerie (1825–1892) (→ Media Link #bs), Archbishop of Algeria, and since 1882 cardinal. In 1868 Lavigerie founded the Missionaries of Our Lady of Africa – the White Fathers and White Sisters.

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Branches of missionary societies in Germany were not possible until the *Kulturkampf* came to an end, and then only for the purpose of training young members for the German areas of mission work. For carrying out pastoral and missionary work in the German colonies after 1890 the following missionary societies were approved and operated with great success: the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, the Pallottines, the Divine Word Missionaries, (→ Media Link #bt) the Capuchins, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the White Fathers, the Marist Brothers, the Salvatorians and the Missionaries of the Holy Family. Although the process of gaining approval for a new branch sometimes took years, an intensive cooperation developed between religious orders and the state.

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Within the period of just a few decades, missionary societies and European government authorities organised the evangelisation of Africa in close co-operation. Missionary starting points for entering North Africa were Algeria, Morocco, and Egypt; for West and Central Africa, the major rivers (the Niger and the Congo); for East Africa, the harbour city of Dar es Salaam; for South Africa, Madagascar and the coastal region between Port Elizabeth and Durban.

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An example of the almost "accidental" founding of a mission society, and for the circuitous way in which this often occurred, is the emergence of the Missionary Benedictines of St. Ottilien. It was enthusiasm for the task of missionary work that induced the Swiss born Benedictine P. Andreas Amrhein (1844–1927) (→ Media Link #bu) to leave the monastery of Benedict Beuron and to spend six months with the Mill Hill Missionaries in England and also a period of time with Arnold Janssen (1837–1909) (→ Media Link #bv), the founder of the Divine Word Missionaries, before setting out to realize his own project. In 1884, at the invitation of the Missions Circle of Regensburg priests, he established a missionary institute in the former Benedictine abbey at Reichenbach am Regen, which he was able to acquire cheaply. As he wrote to the Bavarian minister-president Johann von Lutz (1826–1890) (→ Media Link #bw), he wanted to organise a "katholische deutsche Missionsgesellschaft für Innerafrika ... mit dem religiösen Zweck ... der Einführung der Kultur und christlichen Religion in unzivilisierten heidnischen Ländern, speziell in Innerafrika, durch Gründung größerer Missionsstationen mit Schulen, Werkstätten, Waisenhaus, Spital und großer Ökonomie, letztere teils zum Unterricht der Eingeborenen im Landbau und um die Jugend zur Arbeit anzuhaltend, teils zur Selbsterhaltung der Mission".<sup>4</sup> Amrhein wanted to train both missionaries and laymen for limited periods of work in Africa, but, initially, without establishing his own missionary society.

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The establishment at Reichenbach became well known very quickly: By the end of 1885 150 candidates had registered, half a year later the number had grown to 250. In 1886 the first priest who wanted to become a missionary received his ordination. In the same year Amrhein acquired a farm in Emming and named it St. Ottilien for the nearby pilgrim's chapel. The re-settlement in St. Ottilien in 1887 was also a step towards creating a stronger community among the missionaries. Amrhein developed constitutions based on the Rule of Saint Benedict. As a result of the greater opportunities for development provided by St. Ottilien, and the benevolent attitude of the Bishop of Augsburg, Pankratius von Dinkel (1811–1894) (→ Media Link #bx), Amrhein decided to leave Reichenbach. He made his plans known in an appeal to German Catholics in the autumn of 1887. It was his intention to establish an institute of missionary sisters, known today as the Missionary Benedictines of Tutzing. The Benedictine Missionaries (St. Benediktus-Missionsgesellschaft) announced their willingness to assume responsibility for an apostolic prefecture in German East Africa. The missionary project should be supported by charitable work and by prayer in the home country. Amrhein calculated: "Wenn nur jeder Katholik Deutschlands wöchentlich 1 Pfennig zahlen würde, könnten 200 Freiplätze gestiftet werden im Missionsseminar und noch dazu (würde das Geld hinreichen), die jährliche Expedition von ein Dutzend Afrikamissionären zu bestreiten."<sup>5</sup>

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These words express the typical structure of the missionary co-operatives: an inner core, the bearers of the mission, and the supporting patrons who provide not merely material and financial support but who are also in spiritual contact with the community.

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As early as 1887 the Missionary Benedictines chose the southern part of German East Africa for the area of their mission. After the First World War the German missionaries were expelled, but were able to return in 1926. The Abbey Peramiho in Tanzania was made into a regional seminar for the diocese's indigenous clergy, albeit the taking of indigenous novices into the monastery developed only slowly. Further missionary fields for the Ottiliens were Korea since 1909 and, since 1920, North Korea, southern Manchuria and Zululand in South Africa. Today the congregation of the Missionary Benedictines of St. Ottilien comprises 1,100 monks, who live in 19 monasteries and 50 settlements in Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia. The majority of the members are no longer Europeans. More than 50% of the sisters of the Missionary Benedictines of Tutzing are from Asia.

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## New Spiritual Communities

The life of the religious orders continued to develop in the 20th century, but now under the influence of spiritual movements and secular institutes. Their rise signalled an end to *Milieu-Katholizismus* (the milieu structure of Catholicism). The once posited – but not always realised – unity of a society in which one was embedded "from the cradle to the grave", no longer existed, and could therefore no longer function as a supporting structure. In order to make its presence felt in the 20th century the Church, therefore, had to cultivate new aspects. An experiment of French priests to minister to labouring people focused on being a Christian while belonging to the labouring classes, but was banned in 1953 and its work brought to an end. However, it did succeed in drawing attention to areas of western society that were no longer reached by Christianity, as well as to point to ways of bringing Christianity into areas that had been marginal to the Church's traditional sphere of influence. The recognition of secular institutions brought the world into focus as a positive point of reference for Christian spirituality. Life in religious orders was no longer an escape from the world but was concerned with the shaping of concrete life experiences. The intrinsic value and the inherent laws of creation were taken seriously for they point to Christianity's element of incarnation in the world.

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In the course of the 20th century a number of groups emerged in the Christian churches, which, depending on their particular foci, may be called "spiritual movements", "church movements" or "lay movements". Among these we find, for example, the Schoenstatt movement, founded by Joseph Kentenich (1885–1968) (→ Media Link #by) in 1914, the Irish Legion of Mary, founded in 1921 by the civil servant Frank Duff (1889–1980) (→ Media Link #bz), the Marian Congregations which, after the Second Vatican Council, were renamed the Life Communities of Christ, the Focolare Movement founded by Chiara Lubich (1920–2008) (→ Media Link #c0), the Cursillo movement, the Communion and Liberation movement, the Neocatechumenal Way, the Community of Sant' Egidio etc. On the one hand these movements represent an important new field of activity for religious orders and are for some members irreplaceable sources of spiritual

renewal; on the other hand they call into question some cherished traditions.

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The various movements have been shaped by the personalities of their founders. Their intellectual and spiritual impulses became the reference points of their members' personal calling. The movements are made up of all categories and classes of the faithful and thus reflect the comprehensive reality of the Church. The members are part of a unified structure and institution in which various forms and grades of membership exist. From this structure traditional forms of communal religious life can also develop. Finally, internationality and interculturality are part of the movements' nature.

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## Outlook: The Future of Religious Orders

In the second half of the 20th century the influence of Europe on religious orders faded rapidly. In Europe and North America social changes and the transformation crisis after the Second Vatican Council, led many to leave religious orders. Some orders lost up to a third of their members. In Europe the high number of very old members also played a role. This led to an 80% decline in the number of nuns in Germany between 1960 and 2010. New members, on the other hand, have become rare. Many institutions, especially in the area of education and health care, had to be abandoned or turned over to other sponsors. This is an on-going process.

▲28

However, it is precisely in this phase of transition that the international structure of the religious orders has proved its value. The one-way street, through which for centuries the members of religious orders journeyed from Europe to other countries and continents, has become a two-way street. The internationalization of the religious orders has also affected the leadership of the orders: orders that had been established and formed by Europeans are now directed by non-Europeans. Europeans and non-Europeans now live in religious houses together. Religious orders that had been founded in Africa and Asia have taken over pastoral duties and health care responsibilities in Europe. For example, in Germany, in a few years most of the nuns under the age of 65 will be of foreign origin. Still, it remains an open question whether this development will mark a milestone on the way to a truly transnational inner and outer structure of religious orders, and whether the inculturation of the life of non-European religious orders can succeed in 21st century European societies.

▲29

Joachim Schmiedl, Vallendar

## Appendix

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## Notes

1. ^ Ranke, Pápste 1996, p. 749, "after a mature deliberation, we do, out of our certain knowledge, and the fullness of our apostolical power, suppress and abolish the said company: we deprive it of all activity whatever, of its houses, schools, colleges, hospitals, lands, and, in short, every other place whatsoever, in whatever kingdom or province they may be situated. (transl. by W.P.).
2. ^ Langlois, Catholicisme 1984, p. 635, "Newly established congregations (male and/or female founders), centralised (with mother house and mother superior) and directed (at first by the bishop or his representatives, later by civil authorities)." (transl. by W. P.).
3. ^ Aubert, Wiedergeburt 1985, p. 257, "The development of such a founding is almost always the same. In order to understand the bewildering diversity of congregations that exist to perform identical tasks, one must keep in mind how isolated the various provinces were. A pious young woman dedicates herself to educating children, or to caring for the sick and poor, either spontaneously or due to the counsel of a priest; soon she assembles a group of companions who have been drawn to her by the desire to follow her example; the lady of the manor lends moral and financial assistance, the priest encourages her, or places obstacles in the way; a spiritual guide from the Jesuits, or another religious order, becomes active in the background; soon the founding is becoming more secure; a house is purchased; the bishop begins to involve himself more and more; in order to secure his continuing support, rules must be drawn up, a habit adopted and a responsible superior must be chosen, as well as a name, a protecting saint and a novitiate. All this happens until one day, finally, the group is ready to seek the authorization of the Holy See and the government. And thus a new congregation is born." (transl. by W.P.).
4. ^ Weissenberger, Abt Plazidus 1963, p. 258, "Catholic German missionary society for inner Africa ... with the religious intention ... of introducing culture and the Christian religion into uncivilised heathen countries, particularly in Central Africa, by establishing large mission stations with schools, workshops, orphanages, hospitals, and a large agriculture complex, the latter, partly to instruct the natives in farming and to teach the young people to work consistently, and partly to ensure that the mission can maintain itself autonomously." (transl. by W. P.).
5. ^ Ibidem, p. 269, "If each Catholic in Germany gave only one penny a week, 200 openings could be created in the missionary seminar and there would still be enough money to finance the yearly expeditions of a dozen African missionaries." (transl. by W. P.).

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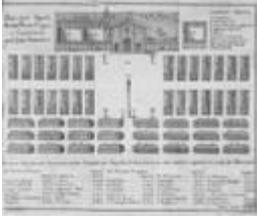
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China monumentis, 1767, MPI Berlin [↗](#)

#### Link #b2



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Andreas Amrhein (1844–1927)

#### Link #bv

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### Link #c0

- Chiara Lubich (1920–2008) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/114546179>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/11857468X>)

