

CISZTERCIEK



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A „SZERZETESRENDEK A KÁRPÁT-MEDENCÉBEN”

sorozat eddig megjelent könyvei:

BAZILITÁK (1993)

PÁLOSOK (1996)

BENCÉSEK (1996)

CISZTERCIEK (1997)

MÁLTAIAK (1999)

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SUMMARY

Foreword

When the founders of *Cistercium* (Cîteaux) moved out from Molesme, no one thought of a new monastic order. They only wanted to establish a "*Novum Monasterium*", a new style of monastery, and wanted to go back to what they called *puritas Regulae*, the purity of the Rule of St. Benedict. But let's see how it all happened.

Rules regulating the life of monks have been written down since the fourth century in order to hand down experience, and serve the highest law and regulation of all: the Gospel. From among such rules, the Rule of St. Benedict, written probably in the middle of the sixth century, takes a very special place. According to the Rule of St. Benedict, the monastery is "a school for the Lord's serving", in which the monks' community keeps a harmonious balance between liturgical praises to God (*opus Dei*), prayerful reading (*lectio divina*), as well as work and other exercises, and runs on the path of God's commandments in the light of the Gospel, under the rule of Christ, whose deputy is the abbot.

We know about the existence of the Rule of St. Benedict from the Dialogues of Pope St. Gregory. Even if this "biography" cannot be considered authentic in all respects, it reveals how St. Benedict received visitors to the monastery, and how he acted when he was out. St. Gregory gave an account of St. Benedict "trying to give faith to the population living around by preaching continuously", and even sending the brethren frequently to neighbouring villages "to encourage souls". The great pope said about the Rule of Benedict that its main feature is moderation (*discretio*).

Saint Benedict did not establish any "order", as Saint Francis or Saint Ignatius did later, he "only" wrote for the monasteries a Rule, in which the local abbot was trusted with the regulation of a lot of details.

The Rule of St. Benedict was not the only rule for monks, and was not generally accepted until the ninth century, the time of St. Benedict of Anian, when chorus prayer, amplified with many psalms, litany and procession, became very popular. In the eleventh century in Cluny more than two hundred psalms were chanted daily. Such life was rather strict, after its own fashion. Simultaneously, new spiritual movements were started among the monks, in order to return to the "purity of the Rule", manual work and poverty.

The founders of the "New Monastery" (*Cistercium*) wanted to restore the balance of liturgical life, prayerful reading and labour, and did so by reference to the Rules. But they did not go back to the Rule in all respects. They kept some liturgical elements which St. Benedict did not even know about, and let in laymen who were not accepted as monks, and whose obligations and rights were different from those of choir monks. They thought that they would be otherwise unable to "keep the provisions of the Rule day and night". However they did not let in the monastery any children, to whom St. Benedict had dedicated a whole division, and who were many times mentioned by him.

Cistercium began to thrive after initial difficulties and was soon able to establish self-dependent abbeys, which were formed into a new Order by the new spirit *Charta Caritatis*, the constitution of the Cistercian Order.

The initial uniformity in life-style became multi-faceted slowly and almost unnoticeably as several hundred abbeys were founded even during the time of St. Bernard. The abbots, who held a general chapter annually, tried to face the new challenges, and revised the constitution of the Order during the twelfth century.

The many changes in church life, the society itself, as well as the spiritual and political life in general, required new solutions in certain areas of the monastic life. Especially after the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century, a number of monasteries began to undertake pastoral services in parishes. In the eighteenth century, when the modern educational system was in the making, some monasteries opened schools for the public. These activities became the two main features of the Cistercian monks in Hungary after the Ottoman times.

The sources and principles of the current Hungarian Cistercian life (in Zirc) are as follows:

1. The very first source is the Gospel, primarily the life and teachings of Christ, as unfolded in the Gospel, set out by the authority of the Church, and reflected in the conscience and living experience of the Church. This is the superior law.

2. Today's Cistercian life is rooted in the monastic and Cistercian traditions. Tradition is not only a reflection of the past but also a living and actual reality, which is dynamically looking forward to the future and urges a new

way of implementation in compliance with the new circumstances. The implications of the power of tradition and the multifaceted forms of past endeavours must be revealed, and the permanent values must be distinguished from elements changing through history.

3. God may be approached only through Christ in love. Cistercian life is a school of love, and love must embrace, in a single act, both Christ and our neighbours. Therefore, real love must be made manifest in the dual ministry to both God and men, and the two should be without contradiction. The unity of our prayers and labour must be based upon the unity of the act of love. This is how our divine worship and actions integrate into one.

4. As Christ is inseparable from the Church, ministry of Christ means ministry to the Church through prayer, repentance from sin and living an apostolic life.

5. It is a particular duty of the members of a monastic Order to continue the prayer of Christ in the Church. This is done by celebrating Mass, psalmody and by prayerful readings and private prayers.

6. As every man is, so today's Cistercian monks are under the common law of obligatory work. The Constitution of the Congregation of Zirc, approved by the Holy See, lays down:

Our daily work undertaken in obedience to the greater glory of God and to the benefit of our fellowmen is an essential part of our monastic life. Pursuant to the tradition of our Congregation, our monasteries are involved in a particular manner in raising our youth, primarily in our institutions and in other Catholic schools. We are willing to offer our services to meet the needs of the Church by providing a priestly ministry and otherwise, preferring, however, such forms of ministry that protect us from harming the basic values of monastic life and the institutions entrusted to us.

All this needs continuous renewal because human history progresses at an ever faster pace, always brings new circumstances, and creates new results and challenges, and therefore also Cistercian life must accept and adapt to changes. Such renewal (*accommodata renovatio – aggiornamento*) requires from each Cistercian monk continuous and devout conversion by which he may be renewed to the image of Christ, the Son of God, both as an individual and as a member of the community.

Zirc, 26 January 2005

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Cistercian monks in the Carpathian Basin

King Béla II asked Cistercian monks in Heiligenkreuz to come to Hungary around 1137 because their numbers rose so sharply within a few years time that the revenues of their estates proved to be inadequate. The first Cistercian monastery was founded, however, only in 1142 under the rule of King Géza II. He settled the Cistercian monks from Heiligenkreuz at a royal estate in today's Báticasék, then known as Cikádor. The groundwalls of the abbey Cikádor were found along the northern side of the current parish-church. No other Cistercian monastery was founded thereafter for 37 years.

It was King Béla III (1172–1196) who invited Cistercian monks again to Hungary. In 1179, when he founded the monastery of Egres, 61% of the monasteries of the Order were already in existence across Europe. Between 1142–1270, 18 monasteries were founded in Hungary, of which ten were founded by kings, and three, the monasteries of Gotó (*Honesta Vallis*), Bélháromkút (*Tres Fontes de Beel*) and Zagreb, were founded by church dignitaries.

Only five deeds of foundation are available today. However, the year of foundation, the name of the monastery and the founder, and the mother abbeys of the monks are known in the case of all 18 monasteries. The times of foundation are recorded in ancient lists of monasteries. The other significant source of information is the collection of the capitulars of the General Chapter, in which each of the 18 monasteries is mentioned at least once or twice. The third source of information is deeds. There is no evidence of the existence of any Cistercian monastery that is not mentioned in the said sources. There were planned, non-implemented or non-approved foundations, and there were some attempts to adopt Benedictine monasteries, but they cannot be counted as genuine abbeys. In *Originum Cisterciensium Tomus I.*, an excellent work published in 1877, Leopold Janauschek listed all available catalogues of monasteries, and corrected any known mistakes. He also refers to 18 monasteries existing in Hungary, including Slavonia. However, the site of two monasteries were erroneously recorded. One is *Sancta Crux in Hungaria*, a foundation of Egres, mentioned in the capitulars between 1226 and 1240. Catalogues of abbeys set its foundation either in 1214 or 1216. We do not know much about this *abbey*, however, it is supposed to be identical with the church of the Csák clan in

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