

Piotr Krawczyk

DIVERSITY OF MONASTIC LIFE
IN THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

INTRODUCTION

Consecrated life is a very vast and rich reality where the evangelical counsels materialize. This is possible thanks to the variety and number of gifts received from God. The history of the Church has seen individual and collective forms of consecrated life. In the 1917 Code of Canon Law,¹ the ecclesiastical legislator speaks of the religious and members of societies of apostolic life as consecrated persons. The 1983 Code of Canon Law,² in addition to the aforesaid groups, also includes secular institutes, hermits, or anchorites, and the order of virgins who may be associated together in specially established societies [Skorupa 2016, 180]. In addition, John Paul II, in the Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*,³ addresses the question of consecrated widows and widowers (no. 7). The very form of consecrated life – religious institutes – may also vary significantly in terms of realisation. Not only in history, but also today, there are monas-

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¹ *Codex Iuris Canonici Pii X Pontificis Maximi iussu digestus Benedicti Papae XV auctoritate promulgatus* (27.05.1917), AAS 9 (1917), pars II, pp. 1-593 [“CIC/17”].

² *Codex Iuris Canonici auctoritate Ioannis Pauli PP. II promulgatus* (25.01.1983), AAS 75 (1983), pars II, pp. 1-317 [“CIC/83”].

³ *Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Adhortatio apostolica post-synodalis Vita consecrata* (25.03.1996), AAS 88 (1996), pp. 377-486 [“VC”].

tic congregations, enclosed orders, regular canons, hospitaller orders, mendicant orders, congregations performing works of mercy, as well as societies of apostolic life similar to religious institutes, and secular institutes. The history of the Church reveals the evolution of religious institutes and proves that religious life is a dynamic reality which is not free from shifts and enhancements. The historical context helps understand why the contemporary religious life is governed by regulations under canon law and beyond.

1. THE GOSPEL AS A RULE OF LIFE

The eye witnesses of Christ's life on earth, his disciples, lived a more or less ascetic life, although they did not know the idea of consecrated life as it is today. For them, the Holy Scripture, and especially the Gospel texts, was a sign post and the fundamental "rule" of life [Szewczul 2017, 37]. The Acts of the Apostles mention Christians who sold their assets and gave their money away to the poor and to the Christian community (cf. Acts 2:44-45; Acts 4:34-35; Acts 6:1), thus making a sacrifice of their lives [Karczewski 2006, 16]. The order of virgins emerges in the 1st c. AD. Women would choose an "eternal" service to God and the Church, and the 4th c. AD saw the consecration of virgins done by bishops.⁴ From the 3rd c. AD onwards, a hermit life begins to develop. Hermits wished to get closer to God through seclusion from the world, while preserving the evangelical counsels of chastity and poverty. Some hermits also attracted followers and raised disciples. This is how hermit communities were formed, and in the 4th c. AD, St Pachomius formulated the first rule for them. In the same period and somewhat later, in the early Middle Ages, celebrated saints, such as Basil the Great, Martin of Tours, Augustine of Hippo, and Benedict of Nursia, also established their communities. The rules penned by Basil, Augustine, and Benedict for their own communities also provided, in addition to chastity and poverty, that monks undertake to obey their superiors [Neri 1995, 72]. Already after the 7th c. AD, some of the monasteries following monastic rules merged into congregations, thus cre-

⁴ Cf. *Kongregacja do spraw Instytutów Życia Konsekwowanego i Stowarzyszeń Życia Apostolskiego, Ecclesiae sponsae imago: instrukcja na temat ordo virginum*, Warszawa 2019, nos 2-3.

ating a form of unity with one another while keeping a central governance model [Bar and Kałowski 1985, 27-28].

2. MEDIAEVAL RISES AND FALLS

In the Middle Ages, the forms of consecrated life evolved towards the apostolate. In addition to taking the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience, religious individuals lived communally under their superiors' guidance and within the framework of the rule. They also performed pastoral duties in various dioceses, preached the Gospel, and engaged in charitable works. Among these religious orders were the Canons Regular who, from the 8th century onwards, organised their way of life around the liturgical and pastoral ministry in cathedrals and collegiate churches. After the 11th century, hospitaller and chivalric orders were founded with a particular aim of serving pilgrims to the Holy Land and defending them, as well as the places they visited. Occasionally, these orders would swear to provide this service as an additional, fourth vow. At the turn of the 12th century, the mendicant movement began, which inspired St Francis of Assisi, founder of the Order of Friars Minor (Franciscans), and St Dominic Guzman, founder of the Order of Preachers (Dominicans), to lead a very modest life. The religious in these communities took solemn vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. Their way of life and of proclaiming the Gospel led to the emergence, alongside the male (first order) and female community (second order), of a form enabling the laity to have a share in this spirituality and offering an option of living in a marriage (third order) [Neri 1995, 73-74].

The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 somewhat slowed down the process of the formation of new religious orders and the evolution of their forms. It was the Council Fathers' decision in response to the spread of new religious orders and the heresy of new religious movements (such as the Cathars and the Waldensians). They simply banned the approval of new monastic rules. The faithful who wished to establish new orders were supposed to accept one of the existing and approved rules [Szewczul 2017, 49]. Exceptions were made for orders that operated before the council but whose rules had not been approved yet. This was the case, for example, with the Franciscans. Pope Honorius III approved their rule in 1223 but

he announced it in his bull, *Solet Annuere*, confirmed earlier, 13 years before, by Innocent III [Horowski 2019, 7]. The Carmelites followed a similar path. Their rule was written down and approved by Patriarch of Jerusalem St Albert in the early 13th century. In 1226 Pope Honorius III allowed them to follow the rule from before the council, as he noted in the bull, *Ut Vivendi Normam* [Paszowska 2010, 56-57].

Later, in the 15th and 16th centuries, a very serious crisis of religious life occurred, caused by moral, spiritual, and doctrinal relaxation. A commission of cardinals and prelates appointed by Paul III to reform religious orders in 1537 decided that it would be easier to wait until monasteries became vacated and only then to fill them with new members than try to renew them [Kumor 2002, 166]. Hence, although new orders were still being created at that time, they would follow rules that had already been approved (e.g., the Theatines and the Barnabites adopted the Rule of St Augustine) or they would emerge as a result of reforming an existing order (e.g. the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin after the Franciscan reform).

3. RESPONSE OF THE RELIGIOUS TO THE REFORMATION

The crisis of the Church and religious life was one of the root causes of the Reformation movement. Martin Luther, the father of the Reformation, was a member of the Order of St Augustine. However, in the toughest moments in the history of the Church, the Holy Spirit comes with a solution which is as strong as the crisis itself. This time was no different. Paul III's decision proved a breach in the conclusions of the Fourth Council of the Lateran prohibiting the approval of new monastic rules. In 1540 the same pope, in his bull, *Regimini Militantis Ecclesiae*, approved a new order, the Jesuits, or the Society of Jesus, founded by St Ignatius of Loyola, against some cardinals' will. At the same time, the pope ordered the Jesuits to draw up their constitution based on the original guidelines attached to the aforesaid bull. First, the order was to accept a maximum of 60 clerics (the limit was removed four years later) and its members were to invest into the outfit of the diocesan clergy, so they were focused on standard apostolic tasks. The monks were to take solemn vows, however, in addition to the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience to superior, a vow of obedience to the pope was added [Bednarz, Filipowicz and Skórka 1968,

122-26]. The characteristic features of the newly established order resemble some of the varieties of the Order of Canons Regular. This is to such an extent that some canon law experts, such as J. Bar, J. Kałowski, or A. Neri, rank the Jesuits among the monastic family based on the Rule of St Augustine [Bar and Kałowski 1985, 29; Neri 1995, 74]. However, this view should be opposed for several reasons. First, the bull approving the order did not recommend that they follow an existing rule. Instead, the pope referred to the orally approved “Formula of the Institute” from one year earlier and ordered the Jesuits to prepare a constitution based on that. Additionally, Ignatius Loyola, who was elected the first general of the order and was responsible for framing the constitution, meticulously collected and studied the rules of numerous “old” congregations. Also the early members of the Jesuits were aware of participating in a completely new project, which exceeded the boundaries of the ecclesiastical legislation of the time [Bednarz, Filipowicz and Skórka 1968, 397; 418-19].

The 16th century also saw disputes over whether the solemn profession is the essence of religious consecration. In 1566 Pius V issued the constitution *Circa Pastoralis*. In it, he reduced religious life only to institutes in which solemn vows were taken. Any other congregations were deprived of juridical personality [Kałowski 1991, 78]. Although the new doctrine of Pius V had a major impact on the formation of legislation on religious life, at the same time, documents which challenged or circumvented the law were put in place. The Jesuits were involved in this. By admitting members of various degrees (professors taking solemn vows, coadjutors, non-clerics taking simple vows), they contributed to the recognition of brethren with simple vows as true religious. This was confirmed by the immediate successor of Pius V, Gregory XIII, in the documents *Quanto Fructuosius* of 1583 and *Ascendente Domino* of 1584 [ibid., 81]. Therefore, the approval of the Society of Jesus opened the door to the evolution of the forms of religious life toward congregations with simple vows [Bednarz, Filipowicz, and Skórka 1968, 438-39].

New geographical discoveries in the 15th and 16th centuries, the Reformation and the growing sensitivity to poverty somehow automatically called the Church to respond. There was no shortage of faithful Catholics of both sexes to devote themselves to the conversion of pagans, to counter-reformation initiatives, or to works of mercy. However, it was challenging to sanction their activities from a legal and institutional per-

spective. One of the obstacles was the reform of the Council of Trent and the aforesaid constitution *Circa Pastoralis* of Pius V. It tied religious life to solemn vows and the requirement to live in enclosure. The conciliar reform of religious orders elevated the quality of consecrated life. On the other hand, however, it was challenging to reconcile the apostolate or works of Christian charity with a strict form of enclosure. The congregations of simple vows proved to be a solution. They were not formally endorsed, but the law was circumvented by approving only their constitutions. Initially, such congregations were regarded not as religious orders but as lay communities; over time, however, they began to enjoy some privileges of religious orders. Later on, the attitude of canon law jurists towards these institutes was somewhat relaxed, and some even received a papal consent to operate. In the middle of the 19th century, the practice of approving congregations of simple vows became established in the Holy See. It was confirmed by relevant documents of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. The 1900 apostolic constitution of Pope Leo XIII, *Conditae a Christo*, was a crowning achievement of this process. The document recognized the congregations of simple vows as enjoying the “canonical state of perfection.” They were equated right- and duty-wise with the “old” orders in CIC/17 [Bar and Kałowski 1985, 29-30; Kałowski 1991, 87-88].

4. NEW ROADS IN NEW TIMES

The changes of the 19th and early 20th centuries facilitated the emergence of new congregations of simple vows. The Congregation of Bishops and Regulars set out the detailed guidelines for the design of constitutions to make them a genuine code of the institute’s own law. The old rules, on the other hand, gradually ceased to be legal documents and were replaced by constitutions. They became an element of tradition and guidance on the spirituality and ascetic life of regulars [Szewczul 2017, 51-52]. Many new congregations were established at that time based on the rules of third orders. An example of this is the Polish Capuchin, Blessed Honorat Koźmiński, who lived in the Russia-occupied part of Poland in the years 1829-1916. Based on the rule of the Third Order of St Francis, in the second half of the 19th century, he established 26 male and female non-habit-

wearing congregations. Due to tsarist repression (no new members could be admitted), they had to operate in a clandestine form [Trela 1989, 98].

In CIC/17 the ecclesiastical legislator did not make any significant changes to religious life. The new code primarily systematised the existing law. Norms for enclosed orders and religious congregations were harmonised. At the same time, the two types of religious institutes were separated and the differences between them highlighted, including those embedded in history [Kałowski 1991, 96]. A side effect of the codification was that the norms concerning religious orders were very detailed and extensive [Skorupa 2008, 9-10].

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council repeatedly addressed the reform of religious life. Of significance is the decree on the renewal of religious life, *Perfectae Caritatis*,⁵ responding to the challenges of the present day. Notably, the document does not use the word “reform” but “renewal.” The point was to return to the beginnings and revive the splendour of religious life in the present day [Jamioł 2012, 63]. The decree contains the following renewal principles: 1) it is necessary to return to the Gospel as the ultimate rule of religious life; 2) it is necessary to return to the founders’ spirit and special aims as well as sound traditions and own legacy; 3) institutes should share in the life of the Church in accordance with their own characteristics and work; 4) it is necessary to ensure that members have knowledge of current events, so that they may be able to assist people more effectively; 5) the first purpose of the religious life is to follow Christ and be united to God and only then external activity (no. 2).

The outcome of *Vaticanum II* is also the Code of Canon Law promulgated by John Paul II. It is sometimes referred to as the last document of the council. Like the Pio-Benedictine Code, it does not contain any significant novelties in the area of religious law. Instead, it resolves and unifies this form of life according to the conciliar line of thinking. The division into religious orders and congregations was abolished, and a single name was introduced for all – religious institutes. The distinction between solemn and simple vows was removed. The ecclesiastical legislator added several definitions, often following conciliar documents. They help understand what religious institutes are where the renewal should head

⁵ Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, Decretum de accommodata renovatione vitae religiosae *Perfectae caritatis* (28.10.1965), AAS 58 (1966), pp. 702-12.

[Kałowski 1991, 101]. When working on the reform of the code, some difficulties were identified which had to be processed and regulated in a new way. Among them was the question of bishops' authority in matters of apostolate, public worship, the sacrament of penance in institutes, return to the ideas and intentions of the founder, and the operation of third orders. Some elements of CIC/17 were grafted to religious constitutions and other documents of institutes' own law [Skorupa 2008, 149-67; Idem 2018, 391-92].

Since the promulgation of CIC/83, a number of documents have been issued, both by the pope and the Congregation and later the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. The Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* of John Paul II is worth noting. Although it has never been published as a set of legal norms, it may be a source of inspiration for consecrated persons and for the entire Church, also with regard to religious law (cf. VC 13). Relying on the reflection of the Synod of Bishops, the pope reiterated and took a deeper look at the CIC/83 text, including issues concerning the power and obedience of religious (cf. VC 43) and cooperation with the particular Churches and their legitimate autonomy from diocesan bishops (cf. VC 48-49). The proposal of the Synod Fathers, expressed by John Paul II, to reflect on the idea of "mixed" religious institutes, is particularly valuable. Mixed institutes are communities that were founded as secular and, over time, became clerical after responding to the needs of the Church. CIC/83 divides religious institutes into these two groups only. In *Vita Consecrata*, the pope confirmed the appointment of a special commission to propose solutions for mixed institutes, such as equal rights and obligations of all members, both clerics and non-clerics (cf. VC 61). The problem was revisited less than twenty years later also in a letter of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. It was titled, *The Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church*. Unfortunately, the conclusions of the commission are not widely known. The aforesaid document of the congregation did not sort anything out in the matter, either. Indeed, it mentions the equal dignity of members of religious institutes, regardless of whether they have or have not been ordained.⁶ The de-

⁶ Cf. Kongregacja do spraw Instytutów Życia Konsekrowanego i Stowarzyszeń Życia Apostolskiego, *Tożsamość i misja brata zakonnego w Kościele*, Warszawa–Rembertów 2016, no. 39.

cision of Pope Francis of 18 May 2022 may be considered a real breakthrough. As a result of the derogation from Can. 588 § 2 CIC/83, non-clerics can be nominated major superiors in clerical religious institutes or clerical societies of apostolic life of pontifical right. In other words, and in practice, non-clerics may hold the same offices in clerical institutes as clerics.⁷

The post-conciliar documents of the Holy See referring to religious life would most often elaborate on and deepen the problems raised during *Vaticanum II*. They concerned the return to life by the Gospel, to the ideas and intentions of the founders, but also to a life as brothers and sisters in the community as witnesses of communion, faithful to Christ, and continuing to pursue vocation [Szewczul 2012, 14, 19-20, 24; Idem 2005, 102-103]. Documents were also published signposting directions where answers could be found on, for example, how to manage the adaptation of one's own charism and way of life to changing times, or how to identify new areas for diaconia.⁸

In recent years, documents addressing the renewal of women's contemplative institutes have been extremely valuable. For example, the Instruction on the Contemplative Life and on the Enclosure of Nuns *Verbi Sponsa* of 13 May 1999. Among other things, it offers new guidelines concerning the papal enclosure and regulations on the formation of associations and federations of independent convents.⁹ The most recent papal document addressing this topic is the Apostolic Constitution *Vultum Dei Quaerere* on Women's Contemplative Life of Pope Francis, dated 29 June 2016. It repealed the canons of John Paul II's CIC/83 that opposed the new proposals and the regulations contained in the previous apostolic constitution and instructions on cloistered life.¹⁰ *Vultum Dei Quaerere* was issued by the

⁷ Cf. Dicastero per gli Istituti di Vita Consacrata e le Società di Vita Apostolica, *Rescritto del Santo Padre Francesco circa la deroga al can. 588 §2 CIC* (18.05.2022), <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2022/05/18/0371/00782.html> [last access: 14.10.2023].

⁸ Cf. Kongregacja do spraw Instytutów Życia Konsekrowanego i Stowarzyszeń Życia Apostolskiego, *Młode wino, nowe bukłaki. Życie konsekrowane od Soboru Watykańskiego II i wyzwania nadal otwarte. Ukierunkowania*, Warszawa 2017, nos 7-9.

⁹ Cf. Kongregacja do spraw Instytutów Życia Konsekrowanego i Stowarzyszeń Życia Apostolskiego, „*Verbi Sponsa*”. *Instrukcja o życiu kontemplacyjnym i klauzurze mniszek*, Watykan 1999, nos 14 and 27.

¹⁰ Cf. Franciscus PP., *Constitutio apostolica de vita contemplativa mulierum Vultum Dei quaerere* (29.06.2016), AAS 108 (2016), <https://press.vatican.va/content/>

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life on 1 April 2018 under the title, *Cor Orans*. It was published as a strictly legal text. It referred in detail to the matters contained in the constitution, and even repealed some canons of CIC/83. The novelty introduced by these documents is the obligatory, and not voluntary, as it was the case before, membership of independent contemplative monasteries in federations, of course, while maintaining their autonomy. Only the Holy See can exempt a party from this obligation. The document also recommends that some elements of permanent formation be implemented jointly, and even initial formation homes be created for several monasteries. According to the provisions of *Cor Orans*, a monastic cloister was distinguished, apart from the papal cloister that existed earlier in CIC/83 and the so-called constitutional one [Szewczul 2019, 68, 70, 72-73].

Although this does not fall within the subject of this paper, lay institutes and societies of apostolic life should be mentioned. A. Skorupa recalls that CIC/83 tells the difference between the forms of consecrated life, and each of them must be respected due to its specificity. The norms on religious institutes may apply to others only if it is clearly stated [Skorupa 2016, 188]. Secular institutes and societies of apostolic life do not belong to the group of religious institutes, but they are institutional forms of consecrated life or take after them. These two forms of life mentioned above are a novelty to the legislation and help identify the characteristics of strictly religious life. By defining their framework and telling what they are, the legislator indirectly instructs what religious institutes are not.

Next to religious institutes, since the 14th century, there have been societies of common life; CIC/83 refers to them as societies of apostolic life (cf. Can. 731). What makes them similar to religious orders is that their members live together and pursue the evangelical counsels; however, they do so not through religious vows, but they rely on other bonds defined in the constitutions. Moreover, the apostolic purpose of the society is given priority, which also determines the way of life and operation. The history of the societies of common life is linked to the decisions of the Fourth Council of the Lateran, which outlawed the establishment of new religious rules, as well as to subsequent decisions of the ecclesiastical authorities

mentioned above. Cautious about the high standard of religious life, they did not permit too strong apostolic commitments of the religious [Bar and Kałowski 1985, 30-31]. In such circumstances, the founders of the new groups struggled with securing the approval of their way of life by the Church. Their options broadened after declaring that they did not intend to set up a new order, proof of which was the exclusion of public vows. Moreover, there was also a need for simpler legal forms to enable involvement where other religious orders minded their religiousness. It was not about convenience but about the effectiveness of apostolic action [Bogdan 1988, 424]. At the same time, popes and bishops generally did not oppose the existence of societies of pious women and men (including clerical ones), so long as their members did not want to be considered religious, remained lay and were subordinate to bishops. Persons belonging to such a society could not wear religious dress, but they would often put on similar attire, thus being similar to monks. As for male societies, the bishop would often allow their members to wear the outfit of the diocesan clergy. It was not until CIC/17 that the societies of apostolic life were ranked as one of the forms of consecrated life with their own laws similar to religious law [Bar and Kałowski 1985, 31].

With the Apostolic Constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia* of 1947,¹¹ Pope Pius XII established secular institutes. This form began to develop in France at the beginning of the 19th century. This approach was forced by the French Revolution. Later, similar institutes were also erected in Spain, Germany, Austria, Italy, and the Netherlands. Their development also ran in parallel with the operation of institutes set up by Blessed Honorat Koźmiński in the Russia-controlled Kingdom of Poland. In principle, secular institutes are to contribute “to leading a life of perfection in spite of any difficulties arising from time, place and circumstances. For those who wish to do that but cannot or should not join a Religious Community, an Institute is often the answer. The effectiveness of Institute life in the Christian renewal of families, of secular professions, of society in general, through people’s daily contact, from the inside of the secular scene, with lives perfectly and totally dedicated to God’s sanctifying work in them is obvious. These Institutes also open the way to many forms of

¹¹ Pius PP. XII, *Constitutio apostolica de statibus canonicis institutisque saeculariibus christianae perfectionis acquirendae Provida Mater Ecclesia* (02.02.1947), AAS 39 (1947), pp. 114-24.

apostolate and service in times, places and circumstances from which priests and Religious are excluded by the nature of their calling, or which for other reasons are not accessible to them” (no. 19). Secular institutes differ from religious institutes and societies of apostolic life in that their members are not obliged to live a common life although they practise the evangelical counsels in their consecration. In CIC/83, this form of life, along with religious institutes, is included in the group of institutes of consecrated life [Bar and Kałowski 1985, 31-32].

CONCLUSION

The history of the Church corroborates what Pius XI wrote in the Apostolic Letter *Unigenitus Dei Filius*, “Although the nature of religious life is one and indivisible, it may adopt different forms.”¹² Divine Providence continuously meets the needs of the Church by establishing new institutes where necessary, according to the pope’s remarks.¹³ In various circumstances, God chooses the ways of religious institutes that meet the current needs of the Church and the world. In spite of the changing times, people’s needs and ways, new approaches to religious life are far from replacing the old ones. More than that, they offer greater opportunities to devote our lives to the exclusive service of God. The study of religious law developments in the history of the Church helps understand the differences between individual religious institutes and enables us to undertake the task of renewal in these communities thanks to returning to the Gospel and the fundamental ideas of their founders. Also, it must not be denied that promoting knowledge about the past among religious individuals can help avoid old mistakes and rebuild the identity envisaged by the founders.

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¹² Pius PP. XI, Epistola apostolica *Unigenitus Dei Filius*, AAS 16 (1924), p. 133.

¹³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 134.

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Diversity of Monastic Life in the Historical Perspective

Abstract

In the history of the Catholic Church, various ways of implementing the consecrated life and its specific type in religious life have been revealed. To this day, there are monastic orders, cloistered orders, canons regular, hospitaller orders, mendicant orders, and congregations performing works of mercy. The author briefly presents the history of the evolution of these orders, from antiquity to the present day. The article shows how they have changed throughout history and how they undertake contemporary tasks in a new way. The nature of religious life is still the same, but, depending on the circumstances, it constantly takes new forms to implement the ideal of imitating Christ by pursuing the evangelical counsels in the present times.

Keywords: history of religious orders; rule of the order; religious constitutions; religious institutes; evangelical counsels

Zróźnicowanie życia zakonnego w perspektywie historycznej

Abstrakt

W historii Kościoła Katolickiego ujawniły się różne sposoby realizacji życia konsekrowanego oraz jego szczególnego rodzaju w życiu zakonnym. Do dzisiejszych czasów funkcjonują zakony monastyczne, zakony klauzurowe, kanoników regularnych, zakony szpitalne, zakony żebrzące, kongregacje pełniące dzieła miłosierdzia. Autor w skrócony sposób prezentuje historię ewolucji tych zakonów, począwszy od starożytności, aż do czasów obecnych. W artykule pokazane jest, w jaki sposób na przestrzeni dziejów zmieniały się one i w nowy sposób podejmowały aktualne zadania. Natura życia zakonnego jest ciągle ta sama, ale w zależności od okoliczności przybiera ciągle nowe formy, aby w aktualnych czasach realizować ideał naśladowania Chrystusa poprzez życie radami ewangelicznymi.

Słowa kluczowe: historia zakonów; reguła zakonu; konstytucje zakonne; instytucje zakonne; rady ewangeliczne

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