

the ideas but not capable of living in detail the meditative life. The style of life was rugged and very simple. The discipline was severe and the order, more than any other known to me, sustained itself pretty well on a much higher level of purity than was true of many. Nothing was to be gained by being a Carthusian except a lot of quiet, a vegetarian diet, and mighty little conversation.

The Franciscans

Francis of Assissi, (1182-1226) was a naturalist, a mystic, and a pious man. He formed a group of friars with the idea of moving through the country and doing good. The order today is identified as the OFM (Order of Little Brothers). Papal approval came in 1216 although Innocent III was a bit reluctant...the new group showed too much zeal in an age when zeal was limited to fanatics and revolutionaries. And however we may feel about the Roman system, it is hard not to like Francis as a person and appreciate him as one with a mystical 'mind who had a true sense of the nearness and interest of God.

Marked with missionary vision, Francis went to Egypt in 1220 and left the governing of the order to others. His own concepts of discipline were so ethereal as to make an unworkable society...therefore his followers had to develop a structure for performance and he regretted what they had done in the loss of simplicity and freedom. But this allowed him to exercise his zeal for Islamic work and to seek to rally other monks to the same end.

His success in personal work and/or recruiting was not notably marked but he did put down the foundations for others in later centuries. His reputation of piety steadily increased and it was reported that at his death he bore the stigmata. His canonization came quickly following his demise, a truly remarkable honor. There is much in his personal life that is admirable and his order laid great stress on serving others. The movement was practically minded and it has been one of the great serving units of the Roman church.

A feminine follower, Clara Sciffi, formed a body for women and the group became popularly known as the "poor Clares". Poverty, chastity, and obedience were the watchwords of both parties.