

1. The Cistercians:

*100-110*

The order has a complex beginning originating in the efforts of three men: Stephen Harding, Robert of Citeaux, and Alberic, a monk. They were really independent of one another but their ideas were held in common and they worked in the Benedictine order in 1098, eventually turning to form a new order that, among other things, rejected feudal incomes, wore white robes, and depended on the working power of the monks for stabilization. They promoted agriculture and meditative piety while arguing for simplicity of life style. Their monasteries would be in remote places and a number of prominent monastics are found among them including Bernard of Clairvaux. The society disliked pageantry and objected to the excessive life of many of the orders. Harding drew up the "rule" and for a few centuries it was one of the more diligent orders

2. The Carthusians

Founded in 1084 the order concentrated on meditative life to an absolute degree. Silence was the monastic rule and the monasteries were supported by a lay community dedicated to the idea but not capable of living the meditative life style. It was a rugged and simplistic order and sustained a good life style arrangement. The only thing to be gained by becoming a Carthusian was a lot of quiet, a vegetarian diet, and no boring conversation.

3. The Franciscans

Growing out of the ideals of Francis of Assisi, the order was established in 1216 and known as the Order of Little Brothers (OFM). Francis was a mystic, a lover of nature, a man who gave his considerable inheritance (and a lot of his father's money) to the poor and concentrated on missions to the Muslim territories...going to Egypt in 1220 and leaving the technical organization of the community to others. Francis was not an organizational person but a man of great personal discipline. Canonization quickly followed his death and a feminine follower, Clara Sciffr, organized a feminine group on the same lines...the "Poor Clares" The order was marked by poverty, chastity and ecclesiastical obedience.