

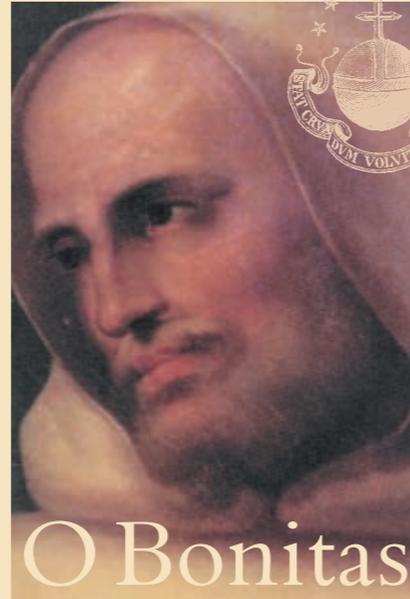


## CALL TO THE DESERT

In 1084, St. Bruno led six followers into the wilderness of the French Alps to embrace the call of Jesus Christ. Today 24 Carthusian communities uphold his sacred lineage in a tradition unbroken for 900 years.



Inspired by the Desert Fathers, the Carthusian monastery (known as a Charterhouse) has always perceived itself as a “desert” where God draws His people to speak to their hearts. The Carthusian enters an authentic silence and solitude stripped of comforts and consolations. There God leads him on a journey of surrender that surpasses the illusionary happiness of worldly success and possessions.



# O Bonitas

*“What benefits and divine exultation the silence and solitude of the desert hold in store for those who love it... For here, men of strong will can enter into themselves and remain there as much as they like, diligently cultivating the seeds of virtue, and eating the fruits of Paradise with joy. Here, they can acquire the eye that wounds the Bridegroom with love by the limpidity of its gaze, and whose purity allows them to see God Himself. Here, they can observe a busy leisure, and rest in quiet activity. Here also, God crowns His athletes for their stern struggle with the hoped-for reward: a peace unknown to the world, and joy in the Holy Spirit.”*

St. Bruno's Letter to Raoul Le Verd

*“I am living in the wilderness of Calabria, far removed from all human habitation. There are some brethren here with me, some of whom are very well educated, and they are keeping assiduous watch for their Lord, so as to open to Him at once when He knocks.”*

St. Bruno's Letter to Raoul Le Verd



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## THE CARTHUSIAN LIFE

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## SERVING THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

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The Carthusian does not live for himself alone. He embraces solitude and austerity for the love and glory of God and for the well-being of the world. All who choose this solitary life participate in Christ's sacrifice and serve the Church as faithful witnesses. The

monk does not abandon his fellow beings but unites himself with all, as he stands before the living God. His practice of penance allows an even fuller participation in the saving work of Christ Who redeemed humanity from the bondage of sin. The consecrated life confirms the mystery of redemption at work within the Church.

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## THE HISTORY OF THE CARTHUSIAN ORDER

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God called St. Bruno, a German of eminent sanctity, to return contemplative life to the glory of its original beauty. While serving as the highly respected Dean of the Rheims Cathedral School in France, St. Bruno grew inflamed by a call to the monastic life. He eventually led his small band to an uninhabited region in the Cartusia Mountains near Grenoble, France (hence the name "Carthusian"). Guided by the Holy Spirit, they developed a semi-eremitic monastic life.

St. Bruno's spirituality drew similar groups to the region. Guigo the fifth Prior of the Grande Chartreuse (as the first community became known) wrote *The Customs*, which the other groups adopted as their rule of life. In 1141 the first General Chapter meeting united all the Priors and their monks in promises of obedience. The General Chapters have since evolved to preserve St. Bruno's distinctive charism with vitality and integrity

under its own Statutes. In response to the Second Vatican Council in 1962, the Carthusians reviewed their lifestyle to serve a changing contemporary world.

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## THE CARTHUSIAN ORDER IN OUR CONTEMPORARY WORLD

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The Carthusian Order has spread from La Grande Chartreuse, the Motherhouse in France, to seven other European countries (Spain, Italy, Portugal, Germany, Switzerland, England, Slovenia) and two in the Americas (United States, Brazil). New foundations recently emerged in Korea and Argentina.

The Charterhouse of the Transfiguration resides in a secluded mountain valley in southwest Vermont, an ideal setting for monastic life. The monastery nestles in a deep ravine surrounded by a huge natural buffer zone accessed by a single long private gravel road. The community only admits those called to consider a vocation in a careful discernment process. No other visitors are allowed.

The Charterhouse unites fathers, converse brothers, and donate brothers in a shared vocation. All leave the world to consecrate their lives to Jesus Christ in solitude and contemplation. Fathers and converse brothers take solemn vows of obedience, stability, and conversion of life. The donate brothers make similar promises to the House and Order, yet retain ownership of personal property.

The father spends most of the day secluded in his hermitage, in prayer, study, and preparation for the priesthood—all are eventually ordained. The brother works five or more hours in addition to prayer and study in his cell. Both vocations are authentically Carthusian.



The hermitages of the fathers exist in one wing of the monastery and the cells and work areas of the brothers in another. Both share a third common area containing the Church, chapels, refectory, and Chapter House. The community meets in Church two times each day to chant the Latin Gregorian of the Mass and Vespers according to the Carthusian Rite, and also rises to chant in the middle of



the night. On Sundays and Solemnities, the monks say most of the canonical hours together, and share a noon meal. On Mondays, they have a walk together in the mountains. Through these and other communal gatherings throughout the year, the community allows the love nourished in cell life to foster mutual understanding.

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## MARY IN THE LIFE OF THE CARTHUSIANS

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The Carthusian Order recognizes Mary, the Mother of God, as a Principle Patron and the *Mater Singularis Cartusiensium* (the Mother in particular of all Carthusians). We consecrate our church and community to her Immaculate Heart and daily recite her Little Office. Every Charterhouse implores her continuous protection with a daily Mass in her honor. Monks also recite the Office of the Blessed Virgin each day in their cells.

Mary offers the incomparable example of her own faith and obtains for her faithful children the gifts of the Holy Spirit in abundance. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin invites a living communion with her Son Jesus and His deep love. The Order addresses its first and last words of each day to Jesus through his Mother Mary.

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## VOCATION

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The most essential element in a Carthusian vocation is the grace of a call. A monk cannot progress along this often perplexing path unless God wishes it and provides the graces for it.

The conviction of a call, however, requires discernment to avoid error. A candidate needs good physical health and, due to the demands of such a life of solitude, must be free of serious emotional and psychological problems. The Carthusian life also requires significant maturity and sound judgment. The Statutes allow no one under 20 or over 45 to be admitted.

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## CALL TO ACTION

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We invite all who feel a call to contact the Vocational Director to learn more about our life. The Order maintains websites in various languages to inform those interested in this vocation. The official website of the Carthusian Order, <http://www.chartreux.org>, also links to the other Carthusian sites.

