

1 **Monasticism**

2 **Terminology**

- Male ascetics are called monks.
- Female ascetics are called nuns.
- Communities of monks are called monasteries.
- Communities of nuns are called convents.

3 **Hermits**

- Solitary asceticism gained popularity in the late 200s as the church grew and seemed to become more worldly.
 - Hermits lived alone in the desert, communing with God.
 - Hermits practiced chastity—the renunciation of marriage.
 - Hermits practiced poverty—the renunciation of possessions.

4 **Important Hermits**

- Anthony
 - An Egyptian, considered the founder of monasticism
- Simeon Stylites
 - Became famous and attracted large crowds
 - Lived atop a pillar for over thirty years to escape the crowds

5 **Monastaries**

- In the early 300s, ascetics began to live together in their own communities.
- New emphases were added to the chastity and poverty of the hermits.
 - Strict discipline
 - Submission to authority
 - A highly structured lifestyle
 - Labor

6 **Strengths of Monasticism**

- Monasticism often represented high standards of spirituality.
- As Roman society collapsed, monasteries provided leadership.
- Monasteries became centers of scholarship.

7 **Weaknesses of Monasticism**

- Monasticism tended to encourage attempts to earn salvation through works.
- Monasticism tended towards unhealthy separation from the world.
- Monasticism reinforced the view that true holiness is not possible for ordinary Christians.
- Monasticism sometimes strayed into Gnostic views of matter.
- Discipline in monasteries tended to decline over time.