

Abstract

Title : Could the wave of New Monasticism, through its characteristic marks, contain the catalyst that the Church of Ireland may adopt to reconnect with today's society?

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The aim of this dissertation is to understand whether, in the light of apparent growing apathy towards the Church, the current wave of New Monasticism could become a catalyst which the Church of Ireland may adopt to reconnect itself with today's society. This dissertation examines the history of monasticism, and reveals that when the Church failed to engage with the needs of society, it was the monastic communities, founded by people such as St Antony, St Benedict, and St Francis, that maintained a pattern and spiritual discipline which brought about a renewal and recovery of the Christian faith into society. The dissertation also examines what New Monastic communities today define as the characteristic marks that identify this new wave. It shows how each aspect of New Monasticism is aligned to biblical foundations, and demonstrates both in the Old Testament and New Testament, the guidelines for living in community, loving each other, and caring for those in need.

Research supporting this dissertation is provided through a Church of Ireland diocesan-wide survey, case studies of New Monasticism already seen in the Church of Ireland, and interviews with groups in Ireland which demonstrate aspects of a monastic way of life. Finally, the outcomes of this dissertation show how the active adoption of aspects of monastic living, namely a daily rhythm of life, the adoption of a disciplined Rule of life, the recognition of the strengths of community living through the existing parish structures, and an intentional purpose in everything that parish churches do in community, could dramatically enhance the spiritual wellbeing and future of the Church of Ireland.