

THE VOCATION OF CITEAUX IN RELATION TO

EREMITISM

by

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tures in order to create new eremitical formulas.

::: its most urgent task consists perhaps in assuring the development within its own traditional structures, of vocations which are authentically contemplative and even solitary, in the sense which St Bernard gave to this word. In order to attain this end it should be prepared to consent to all the sacrifices entailed. A cistercian monastery which would no longer be disposed to free certain of its monks from tasks which are too absorbing in order to facilitate within the common life an authentic experience of despoilment and of prayer when they are called to this, would have truly lost its reason for existence.

::: beyond this Citeaux must also remain attentive to the possibility of true eremitical vocations which find their realization only outside her framework, but which may germinate within this framework. It will thus be better aware of the necessary variety of monastic institutions within the one Ordo monasticus, of their complementary limits and of all that which legitimately orientates one toward the other. For those monks in whom the superior has discerned a true call to the desert, he will not hesitate to freely allow certain opportunities for this, whether keeping within the jurisdiction of the Order and allowing them a specially adapted program, or honestly directing them towards eremitical institutions which the Church protects and approves.

::: in thus generously promoting an eremitical movement which seems to be truly raised up by the Holy Spirit, without at the same time abandoning its own proper vocation, Citeaux will not only have worked for the Church or for the monastic Order, it will also have furnished the proof of its own spiritual maturity: "An exceptional call from the cloister to the desert is less a glory for the hermit than it is a witness rendered by God to the virtue of that cloister which rendered it possible" (P.Doyere, art.cit. col.981).