

The Order of the Holy Cross and the Reason for Monks

- “On November 25, 1884, James Otis Sargent Huntington, then 30 and an Episcopal priest, knelt in a small convent chapel in New York City and vowed: “I desire for love of Jesus, to devote myself body, soul and spirit to the service of Almighty God in the religious life as a member of the Order of the Holy Cross, and to that end to take upon my of my own free will the vows of Religious Poverty, Chastity and Obedience.” From Adam McCoy’s *Holy Cross: A Century of Anglican Monasticism*.
- Situating OHC in the context of Anglican religious life.
- From Adam McCoy’s chapter in the *Oxford Handbook of Christian Monasticism*, entitled, “The Anglican Tradition.”
 - For three hundred years after the dissolution of the monasteries, there were no vowed religious, monasteries, or convents in the Church of England.
 - Ignited by the Oxford Movement (1833-1845), monastic life revived.
 - Since the Reformation, the Church of England had regarded monastic life with great suspicion.
 - At the center of this suspicion was the non-dispensable lifelong religious vows, which many feared allowed fanatical leaders to manipulate young, impressionable, and enthusiastic women and men into making ill-advised commitments, depriving them of freedom, family, and property.
 - Monastics were deemed socially useless.
 - Theologically, the reformers feared a “works righteousness” mentality.
 - With the Oxford Movement came an emphasis on Anglo-Catholic practices and attitudes which included the vowed life.
 - The first enduring Anglican communities were established for women in the 1840s.
 - By 1860, some eighteen communities had been founded in England, and another thirteen by 1890, as well as sixteen outside of England.
 - These communities shared three major characteristics: each embraced charitable work at its core; almost all were founded as cooperative efforts of clergy; and all adapted the post-Reformation Roman Catholic forms of

charitable sisterhoods rather than the earlier, more traditional forms of the monastic life.

- Over the years a typical pattern emerged: a clergyman concerned for the welfare of a distressed area conceived the need for help. He would then assemble clergy and leading laity, who would identify suitable buildings, initiate a funding plan, and invite interested women to form the community, of which he would be temporal guardian and spiritual advisor.
- Men's communities began later, were fewer in number, and remained much smaller.
- The first non-British communities arose in New York City: Anne Ayers' Sisterhood of the Holy Communion in 1852 and The Community of St. Mary in 1865, the latter which still survives to this day.
- Richard Meux Benson initiated the first enduring Anglican men's religious community.
- Benson, since 1850 the vicar of Cowley, adjacent to Oxford, was attracted to both the study and practice of the ascetic life.
- In 1865 he and two friends joined to form the Society of St. John the Evangelist (SSJE). They based themselves at Cowley, and on 27 December 1866 they made lifelong vows of celibacy, poverty, and obedience. SSJE began work in America in 1870 in Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- The second lasting men's community was American, The Order of the Holy Cross, begun in 1881 by James Otis Sargent Huntington, a young social activist priest, and two friends. Influenced and sponsored by The Community of St John the Baptist, a women's monastic community, the first work of the Order of the Holy Cross was with German-speaking immigrants in the Lower East Side of New York City. OHC combined the work with the poor that was characteristic of the early sisterhoods with the preaching, mission, and spiritual direction characteristic of SSJE.
- Since 1881, the order has reached across the country and into several parts of the world.
- The first community outside New York City was in Westminster, Maryland from 1892-1904 before relocating to West Park, NY in 1904.
- From there St. Michael's Monastery and St. Andrew's School in St. Andrew's, TN was founded in 1905.

- Kent School in Kent, CT in 1906.
- St. Athanasius Monastery in 1922.
- Mount Calvary Retreat House in Santa Barbara, CA in 1947.
- Holy Cross Priory in Toronto, Canada in 1972.
- Incarnation Priory in Berkeley, CA in 1972.
- Absalom Jones Priory in 1973.
- Holy Redeemer Priory in Nassau, The Bahamas in 1975.
- Holy Saviour Priory in Pineville, SC
- St. Benedict's Priory in South Africa in Grahamstown in 1998 and in Hermanus in 2019.
- OHC and Holy Cross Monastery today
 - 28 members of the Order
 - 16 members at Holy Cross Monastery
 - 2 Juniors
 - 2 Novices
 - Internship program
 - Guesthouse ministry and other ministries
- Reason for monks
 - Desert monasticism
 - Spiritual Direction
 - Vows
 - Community and solitude
 - Monasticism through the centuries
 - Monasticism's place in the church