



MYSTICS, MONKS AND THE DESERT FATHERS

October 15 / 16, 2025

Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 10:17-31; Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35; Revelation 14:4
Gonzalez, Chapter 15

1. In *Matthew 4:1–11*, Jesus confronts temptation in the wilderness. How does this passage illuminate the motives of the early monks and mystics who withdrew into the desert? What might “the wilderness” symbolize for modern Christians today?
2. In *Mark 10:17–31*, Jesus calls the rich young ruler to give up his possessions. How did figures like Antony of Egypt take this command literally, and what can we learn from their radical detachment in an age defined by comfort and abundance?
3. The communities described in *Acts 2:42–47* and *4:32–35* lived in shared fellowship and mutual care. How did early monastic communities seek to recover or embody this model? What parallels and differences can you see between their communities and the modern church?
4. The early mystics taught that true knowledge of God comes not through intellect but through love and purification of the heart. How does this understanding of “knowing God” compare with our usual approaches to learning and discipleship in church today?

5. Early ascetics often lived under severe discipline — fasting, silence, solitude. In what ways might these practices cultivate holiness, and in what ways might they become spiritually unhealthy or self-centered?
6. *I Peter 2:13–17* calls believers to submit to authority while living as servants of God. How did monastic life both challenge and support the authority of the institutional church and state in the early centuries?
7. *Revelation 14:4* describes those who “follow the Lamb wherever He goes.” How do you interpret this image in light of the monastic call to obedience, humility, and perseverance? What does following the Lamb look like in your own life or vocation?
8. St. Patrick and the Celtic monks blended deep contemplation with active mission. What can their model of “contemplative evangelism” teach us about engaging our communities in San Antonio today?
9. Celtic Christians saw God’s presence in wind, fire, and sea — in all of creation. How does this “sacramental” view of the natural world challenge or enrich our own theology of creation and worship?
10. The Desert Fathers sought God through silence, simplicity, and solitude. What spiritual disciplines might help modern Christians recover a similar attentiveness to God’s voice amid the noise and distractions of daily life?