

### THE MONASTERY



**Figure 1**  
Tatev Monastery, Armenia  
Built in the 9th century  
© Alexander Naumov



**Figure 2**  
Monastery of Sainte Marie de La  
Tourette, France  
© Montse Zamorano

Create a silent dwelling place for one hundred bodies and one hundred hearts.<sup>1</sup>

Father Marie-Alain Couturier

In the early 1950s, Father Marie-Alain Couturier offered the words seen in the quote on the left to Le Corbusier, who was hand selected by the Father to undertake the design of a new facility for the training of friars by the Provincial Dominican Council of the Lyons region of France. By the end of the decade, the architect had seen the Monastery of Sainte Marie de La Tourette through completion, a project widely regarded as one of the greatest examples of twentieth century architecture. The monastery sits on the slope of a steep hillside. Its form is a rectangle, defined by four hefty concrete structures that shelter a central cloister. The simplicity of the plan is reflective of historic monasteries, but the complexity of the interplay of the elements of the building and the procedure of moving through the resultant spaces redefined the nature of this project type. The poetry of this masterpiece is not found in tradition, but in maintaining a healthy respect for the needs of the users while rethinking the nature of the place and creating an experiential environment laced with sensations of both “tension and compression,” both “openness and density.”<sup>2</sup>

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This semester you will be asked to undertake a similar task (albeit at a significantly smaller scale), developing a design for a monastery that both accounts for tradition and, hopefully, engages with new possibilities. When you think about the qualities and nature of a monastery, it is likely that many of you immediately picture a structure like Tatev Monastery shown above in Figure 1, a heavy, ancient building sitting on a European hillside. In this endeavor, you, like Le Corbusier and countless others have in the past, must create an environment in which a group of individuals can live, work, and study in devotion to their God; in which they can come to better understand their faith both individually and together.

“A monastery is a community of men or women, devoted to the service of God and obeying a fixed rule.”<sup>3</sup> Monastic rules of life vary in strictness and in detail and each community supplements the rule of its order by its own code of observances. Although we may think of monasteries as a component of a particular religion, in fact a wide variety of world religions have followers who choose to dedicate their lives, or a portion of their lives, to the study of their faith in this type of environment. The monastic life can be pursued by a single individual in solitude or in communities of thousands. These communities often consist of men – monks – but also can be made up of a group of women – nuns (both are western terms and vary from religion to religion). Regardless of type, place, or sex, those living in monasteries are traditionally bound by some variation of three vows: “to poverty against the deceits of the world, to chastity against the lusts of the flesh, [and] to obedience against the snares of the devil.”<sup>4</sup> In western tradition, a monk’s chief duty is to take part with his brethren in the celebration of daily mass and other rituals of faith. A portion of the remainder of his day is set apart for meditation, but his surplus time is devoted to labor. For some monks, the business affairs of a monastery or outreach initiatives integrate the monastic and practical worlds. Other individuals find their vocation in manual labor in the fields, gardens, or workshops, while some monks devote themselves to literary and scholarly study.

### PROJECT BRIEF

One of the first steps to be taken in seeking to understand spirituality is to recognize that it is expressed through an abundance of media: letter and instruction, music and poetry, preaching and painting, works of service and worship, diary, dress, dance, and, not least, stone and wood and glass.<sup>5</sup>

This, clean lines of shadow, shafts of light, the play of sound – all invite the eye and the ear of the heart to behold the beauty of God, not only in optical delight, but also in the recognition of what is missing, in the draw of the human heart beyond what is given.<sup>6</sup>

Michael Downey

A group of men from the Flint Hills region of Kansas, who have spent decades studying religion, have been called to come together and closely examine their faith. Several of these individuals have spent the past five years living and learning at a Cistercian monastery abroad and they intend to create a new monastery in its image, with one significant exception. Most monasteries in the west are located remotely from hubs of secular life. The monastic tradition is to remove oneself from the urban condition and seek spirituality surrounded by the natural environment. These monks, however, are eager to explore ways of finding the solitude and retreat necessary for contemplation and study while maintaining an active and supportive presence in the community in which they have served diligently for their entire lives. As such their new monastery will be located in the active center of Manhattan, Kansas, on a site purchased with funds raised from the church and from private donations from like-minded supporters.

The design of this project will require you to consider the intersection of a number of **dualities**. The location of this project within a town creates the first: **secular and religious**, the community outside the walls and the one residing within. Additionally, monastic life is a balance of the individual exploration of one’s faith and a collective life with one’s brothers, requiring consideration for both **solitude and communal living**. Significant consideration must also be made in the creation of space, examining the relationship between **light and shadow, stereotomic mass and filigree constructions, and interior space and the surrounding natural environment**, all of which are essential components of this project typology. I am sure you will unearth more dual considerations with your research.

To be successful in the design of the monastery means critically thinking beyond your assumptions, beyond your preconceived notions of this place. It means starting to understand the needs of this particular group of users and putting your own beliefs to the side while doing your best to conceive

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of the environment best suited to help this group of individuals expand and understand **THEIR** faith. Successful designs will also require attention at a variety of scales, from the site, to the building, to the room, to the space for the individual, to the detail. Design thinking is essential at all scales to ensure that the intent of the design proposal is carried through the project, not just in the broad strokes.

### SITE

Situated in secluded valleys whose wooded slopes rise to form an enclosure of nature that echoes the man-made wall within them, the abbeys of the Cistercians rest in a compelling harmony with their surroundings. Basic to this harmony and a defining feature of their buildings is a pervasive simplicity of shape, placement, scale, and materials.<sup>7</sup>

Peter Fergusson

The site chosen by the monks for their new monastery is an open green space between Pierre and Colorado on Juliette Avenue. It has been re-parceled from a larger lot owned by the City of Manhattan, which occupied the entire city block. The site is approximately 140'x315' (44,100 sf or just over one acre in area) and is zoned R-M. To successfully design this project, you are required to fully understand the property/site, the regulations governing the site, as well as the immediate and larger surrounding contexts. In order to better understand the property and surrounding environment, you will need to become familiar with the tools available to you at the City and County level including:

[Riley County Zoning Map](http://rcitgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=44d3b5cf690747b785a57bb7d9c41c6d)

<http://rcitgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=44d3b5cf690747b785a57bb7d9c41c6d>

[Riley County Zoning Code](https://cityofmhk.com/458/Manhattan-Zoning-Regulations)

<https://cityofmhk.com/458/Manhattan-Zoning-Regulations>

[Riley County Parcel Map](http://rcitgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=b2662a0fd9f24f9d8c5d0bbe79c624f9)

<http://rcitgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=b2662a0fd9f24f9d8c5d0bbe79c624f9>

[2015 International Building Code](https://codes.iccsafe.org/public/document/toc/542/)

<https://codes.iccsafe.org/public/document/toc/542/>

Figure 3

Project Site (not to scale)



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Sensitivity to architecture's expressive power surfaces in Cistercian writing and legislation in the twelfth century, and it can also be inferred from the passionate attention given to planning and design in the order's buildings. No other monastic movement showed as great a preoccupation with architecture or implicitly acknowledged the powerful nature of its art.<sup>8</sup>

Peter Fergusson

### PROGRAM

The project program is based on that of a contemporary Cistercian monastery, scaled to be appropriately sized for a community of up to sixteen monks. Although alternative programmatic elements and considerations may be allowed, you are encouraged to work with the given material to help keep the semester's expectations and workload manageable. Proposed changes will only be allowed if they are thoughtfully connected to the project and the design concept, necessary for the ultimate success of the design scheme, and manageable within the time frame of the semester.

The program below provides an outline of some of the functional considerations for the project, but does not convey any design or spatial content. You must take this program, understand each and every component, develop a full outline for the functional and experiential needs of the spaces, and place each component properly in relationship to each other. The development of relationships between parts is essential to solving the programming puzzle. How do these components arrange into blocks of space that can be used to create an organizational strategy and a hierarchy within the project?

#### I: Public Entry

1: Lobby	200sf	Space should include a vestibule and a front desk, which will serve as a control point for the public face of the facility. The lobby should also include seating for guests who may need to wait to be attended to.
2: Restroom	120sf	Two single stall restrooms, (2) x 60 sf
3: Gift Shop	300sf	Space will vary with respect to programming concepts, but it will serve as a way of selling wares produced in the monastery to guests.
<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>620sf</b>	<b>  800 gsf</b>

Additional Notes: This area must be on the ground floor, provide accessible entry, and should be clearly visible and inviting to visitors.

#### II: Private Entry

1: Storage/Receiving	120sf	Temporary holding space for deliveries and other materials prior to being reallocated to other areas of the monastery
2: Office	100sf	Office for individual assigned to monitor deliveries, mail, and other daily activities in and out of the monastery.
3: Restroom	60sf	One single stall, unisex restroom
<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>280sf</b>	<b>  360 gsf</b>

Additional Notes: This area should be located away from the public entry, but on the ground floor, and it should be centrally positioned and adjacent to vertical circulation. The area also needs to be easily accessed by delivery vehicles and a relatively short distance from the garage and maintenance spaces.

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Given their role as places of meditation, the monastic cells were accorded special treatment in the design process... Since Le Corbusier perceived cells as the exemplar of functional space, the element of unity that links man with the activities he performs and the space surrounding him had to be expressed more clearly here than anywhere else.<sup>9</sup>

Philippe Potie, in his description of La Tourette

### III: Private Living

1: Cells	2,880sf	Living units for 16 individuals which are approximately 10x18, (16) x 180 sf. Each unit should be identical and should be carefully planned based on your research. Access to private outdoor space for each cell is worth considering.
2: Balneary	300sf	Bathing and restroom facilities for the individuals living at the monastery. Number of fixtures will be determined via code analysis.
<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>3,180sf</b>	<b>  4,130 gsf</b>

### IV: Communal Living

1: Multipurpose Room	480sf	Space is used for general communal, informal activities. It should include a single stall restroom and storage.
2: Refectory	320sf	Dining space for the residents
3: Kitchen/Servery	500sf	Commercial grade kitchen with cold and dry storage as well as easy access for delivery of goods. Servery is used to serve meals to the residents as well as to collect refuse and return tableware to the kitchen.
4: Library	800sf	Space should include storage and at least one private reading or meeting room along with adequate seating and desk/table surface for studying.
5: Scriptorium	240sf	This room is used for writing and for copying or transcribing manuscripts. It should have adequate seating and table/writing surface. Light should be of primary concern in this space.
6: Chapter House	600sf	Space is used daily for formal meetings of the residents, including communal readings/talks.
<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>2,940sf</b>	<b>  3,820 gsf</b>

### V: Infirmary

1: Cells	420sf	Two infirmary cells, (2) x 210 sf, adjacent to infirmary office and with proximity to private entry for access for medical professionals. Each cell will require a sink and the pair should share a restroom.
2: Office	140sf	Office for individual assigned to oversee the infirmary and for storage of residents' medical records, medical supplies, etc.
<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>560sf</b>	<b>  730 gsf</b>

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The cloister may be the core of the monastery, but the church is its centerpiece.<sup>10</sup>

Terryl Kinder

### VI: Church

1: Narthex	300sf	The narthex is traditionally located at the west end of the nave in a Christian church, serving as a porch or antechamber. It will serve here as a connector between the public entry and the nave of the church.
2: Nave	1,600sf	Scope and size of this component could vary depending on the conceptual makeup of the monastery. The layout of a monastery church differs from that of a traditional church and will require guidance from your research. The orientation of the church traditionally has the altar at the east end of the nave, which is oriented east/west.
3: Vestry	200sf	This space is adjacent to the church and serves as a preparatory space for those leading the services.
<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>2,100sf</b>	<b>  2,730 gsf</b>

#### Additional Notes:

The church typically serves as a place of worship not only for the residents, but also for the general public who wish to attend services. This relationship could be different in your project though as we have a church adjacent to our site. The church is a large, double height space and should be thoughtfully integrated into the composition of the monastery.

### VII: Administrative Area

1 Abbot's Cell	260sf	The abbot leads the monastery (although this individual could go by a different name depending on how you conceptualize the project). This cell will include enlarged storage and a small bathroom.
2 Abbot's Office	140sf	Should be adjacent to the Abbot's cell.
3 Office Suite	1,000sf	The monastery administrative center will include an office for the Prior (second in leadership), a second private office, and communal office space for two individuals. Tasks undertaken include those of the Cellarer, who is in charge of procuring food and drink, and the accountant. Storage for records and supplies should be included as well as a single stall restroom.
<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>1,400sf</b>	<b>  1,820 gsf</b>

### VIII: Cloister

1: Cloister	2,400sf	The cloister is a space of activity and movement and provides connectivity between the different areas of the monastery. This square footage assumes 300 linear feet of corridor that is 8' wide.
<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>2,400sf</b>	<b>  3,120 gsf</b>

The cloister is the innermost courtyard of an abbey, the heart of the monastery.<sup>11</sup>

Terryl Kinder

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### IX: Integrated Support Spaces

1: Storage	400sf	Additional storage for supplies. May be located in a lower level space with mechanical services.
2: Mechanical	400sf	Equipment to be housed in the space will vary depending on the chosen systems, but ideally located along exterior wall with access from both inside and outside building. Assure access for removal/installation of large equipment.
3: Electrical	50sf	Dedicated space for electrical panels on ground or lower level. Should include a 15 sf closet on upper level.
4: Telecommunications	50sf	Dedicated space for telecommunication panels on ground or lower level.
5: Elevator	160sf	One hydraulic elevator will be included. The shaft will be 8'x10' and will require a machine room on the lowest level of similar size
6: Exit Stairs	320sf	You will need to include a minimum of two exit stairs that meeting building code which will be approximately 8'x20'.
7: Custodial	80sf	Room contains all cleaning and maintenance supplies for the monastery. The room must include a mop sink and storage along with space for a trash cart.
8: Laundry	100sf	Room contains industrial washer and dryer as well as storage and workspace.
<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>1,560sf</b>	<b>  2,030 gsf</b>

### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Philippe Potie, *Le Corbusier: The Monastery of Sainte Marie de La Tourette* (Berlin: Birkhauser, 2001), 7.

<sup>2</sup> Colin Rowe, "Dominican Monastery of La Tourette, Eveux-sur-Arbresle, Lyons," *Architectural Review* 129, no. 772 (1961): 410.

<sup>3</sup> A. Hamilton Thompson, *English Monasteries* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1913), 1.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.* The following sentences also paraphrase heavily from this source.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Downey, "Forward," in *Cistercian Europe: Architecture of Contemplation* by Terryl N. Kinder (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 11.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, 12.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Fergusson, *Architecture of Solitude: Cistercian Abbeys in Twelfth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 3.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, xxv.

<sup>9</sup> Potie, *Le Corbusier*, 36.

<sup>10</sup> Terryl N. Kinder, *Cistercian Europe: Architecture of Contemplation* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 141.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, 131.

### X: Ancillary Support Spaces (not included in total sf)

1: Trash Collection	3,000sf	Two dumpsters, one for trash and one for recycling. Composting area would also be a positive inclusion.
2 Maintenance		Shop facility for undertaking repairs and other work done on the monastery.
3 Garage		Parking for two vehicles (passenger van and smaller vehicle).
4 Grounds		Storage for all tools and supplies necessary to maintain the property and landscape.

#### Additional Notes:

These elements will be located in an ancillary building separate from, but near the monastery. These spaces should have a close relationship to the private entrance to the monastery, which will provide access to the secondary structure. Ideally, the two buildings would be connected by a covered walk. The second building will only be designed conceptually, but should be clearly tied to the site strategy for the project.

<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>15,040</b>	
<b>Grossing Factor</b>	<b>1.3</b>	Accounts for wall thickness, circulation, etc.
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,552</b>	