



THE WHITE CAT AND THE MONK

Saint Emmelia Ministries Homeschool Curriculum

Orthodox Christian Homeschooling

Title: *The White Cat and the Monk*

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Social Studies - *Geography*

Read the Author's note. On a map, locate southern Germany, Austria, and Ireland (you could also use Google Maps to look up Reichenau Abbey). You could also print off a map of Europe and color in these three countries. The monk in this story was an Irish monk who lived in Reichenau Abbey in Germany. His notebook, which contains this poem, is now at a monastery in Austria.

Social Studies - *Culture, Monasteries*

In Medieval monasteries, monks had many different tasks, in addition to praying and attending services (just like Orthodox monks do today!). Read about the lives of monastics in the attached material. Consider what jobs you might have if you were a monk. For example, if you are good at art, you might illuminate manuscripts. If you're interested in plants, perhaps you'd be the gardener for the monastery.

Make your own monastic schedule (and if you want an extra challenge, try living it for the day!). Depending on where you live, you could also visit an Orthodox monastery.

Language arts: *Poetry*

The White Cat and the Monk is based on a very old poem. What are some other poems you know? What makes a poem a poem?

Older students - read the original, translated poem (see attached). What is its rhyme scheme? Can you hear its meter?

Language arts: *Narration*

The first part of this book is wordless. Go back and look at the story again. Can you narrate what Pangur Ban is doing, especially now that you know the rest of the story?

Language arts: *Adjectives*

This book has many beautiful words to describe both the monk and his cat. Make a list of them. What adjectives do they have in common? For an extra challenge, find the words that describe their home!

Language arts: *Vocabulary*

Here are some words we've discussed that have to do with monasticism. Look them up and use them in a sentence (old students can write their own sentences on paper). You could also use the list of jobs and chores from the "Life of a Medieval Monk" website.

Scriptorium

Illuminated

Monastic

Scholar

Older children - read the original poem in the Old Irish. A derivative is a word that looks like the word it originated from (e.g.: aquarium from the Latin *aqua*, meaning water). A cognate is a word that looks the same and means the same thing in two languages. Are there any cognates or derivatives from the Old Irish?

Art- *Illuminated manuscripts*

Illuminated manuscripts were beautifully illustrated books, painstakingly copied out and illustrated by monks in a scriptorium (art studio). These manuscripts were usually liturgical services, the psalms or other scriptures, or books of prayers. The most famous illuminated manuscript is called The Book of Kells. It contains the four gospels in Latin.

Look up pictures of the Book of Kells, and go back and look at the illuminated manuscripts in *The White Cat and the Monk*. Then, make your own illuminated manuscript. You could draw a picture of Pangur Ban and the monk and give it a beautiful border, or you could write your name. If you decide to draw Pangur Ban, consider what he might look like. What does his name mean?

Older students can choose a Bible verse to copy out in their neatest handwriting, or even a section from the original poem.

Math- *Distance*

Find out how far Ireland (you could use Kells for a specific town) is from Reichenau, Germany. Calculate how long it would have taken the monk to travel from his home to the abbey!

Math- *Basic operations*

Using Pangur and his mice or the monks and his books, create addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division problems. (e.g., If Pangur catches 3 mice per night, and there are 27 mice in the monastery, how long would it take him to catch all the mice? If the monk has read 8 books and he reads 5 more, how many books has he read?)

Science- *Ink*

Make your own ink out of berries (see attached recipe for an easier version, just use berries and see what happens!). Consider what each ingredient in the ink does. See what happens if you add more or less of an ingredient. Then, discuss why ink used to be so expensive (based on the information in the first link).

Discussion questions for spiritual connection:

What is the purpose of the monk's work? How is his work similar or different from Pangur Ban's work?

What virtues do the monk and the cat show?

The monk in the story is an Irish monk who lived in a German monastery. Who are some Irish and German saints?

The monk's job is to study manuscripts, which were probably the Bible or other religious writings. What do you think he's trying to understand? What questions do you have about church or the Bible? (Consider writing a letter to your priest asking them!)

Lives of Monastics:

The Life of Medieval Monks

The daily life of Medieval monks which was immersed in the Medieval Religion of the times were based on the three main vows:

- The Vow of Poverty
- The Vow of Chastity
- The Vow of Obedience

Medieval Monks chose to renounce all worldly life and goods and spend their lives working under the strict routine and discipline of life in a Medieval Monastery. The reasons for becoming a monk, their clothes and the different orders are detailed in Medieval Monks. This section specifically applies to the daily life of Medieval monks.

The Life of Medieval Monks

The daily life of Medieval monks was dedicated to worship, reading, and manual labor. In addition to their attendance at church, the monks spent several hours in reading from the Bible, private prayer, and meditation. During the day the Medieval monks worked hard in the Monastery and on its lands. The life of medieval monks were filled with the following work and chores:

- Washing and cooking for the monastery
- Raising the necessary supplies of vegetables and grain
- Reaping, Sowing, Ploughing, Binding and Thatching, Haymaking and Threshing
- Producing wine, ale and honey
- Providing medical care for the community
- Providing education for boys and novices
- Copying the manuscripts of classical authors
- Providing hospitality for pilgrims

The Life of Medieval Monks - Monastic Jobs and Occupations

The daily life of Medieval monks included many different jobs and occupations. The names and descriptions of many of these positions are detailed below:

- Abbot - the head of an abbey
- Almoner - an almoner was an officer of a monastery who dispensed alms to the poor and sick
- Barber Surgeon - the monk who shaved the faces and tonsures of the monks and performed light surgery
- Cantor - the cantor was the monk whose liturgical function is to lead the choir
- Cellarer - the cellarer was the monk who supervised the general provisioning of the monastery
- Infirmarian - the monk in charge of the infirmary
- Lector - a lector was a monk entrusted with reading the lessons in church or in the refectory.
- Sacrist - the sacrist was the monk responsible for the safekeeping of books, vestments and vessels, and for the maintenance of the monastery's buildings

- Prior - in an abbey the deputy of the abbot or the superior of a monastery that did not have the status of an abbey

Daily Life of a Medieval Monk - the Daily Routine

The daily life of a Medieval monk during the Medieval times of the Middle Ages centred around the hours. The Book of Hours was the main prayer book and was divided into eight sections, or hours, that were meant to be read at specific times of the day. Each section contained prayers, psalms, hymns, and other readings intended to help the monks secure salvation for himself. Each day was divided into these eight sacred offices, beginning and ending with prayer services in the monastery church. These were the times specified for the recitation of divine office which was the term used to describe the cycle of daily devotions. The times of these prayers were called by the following names - Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, Nones, Vespers and Compline:

- Lauds : the early morning service of divine office approx 5am
- Matins : the night office; the service recited at 2 am in the divine office
- Prime : The 6am service
- Sext : the third of the Little Hours of divine office, recited at the sixth hour (noon)
- Nones : the fourth of the Little Hours of the divine office, recited at the ninth hour (3 pm)
- Terce : the second of the Little Hours of divine office, recited at the third hour (9 am)
- Vespers : the evening service of divine office, recited before dark (4 - 5pm)
- Compline : the last of the day services of divine office, recited before retiring (6pm)

Any work was immediately ceased at these times of daily prayer. The monks were required to stop what they were doing and attend the services. The food of the monks was generally basic and the mainstay of which was bread and meat. The beds they slept on were pallets filled with straw.

Messe ocus Pangur Bán,
cechtar nathar fria saindán;
bíth a menma-sam fri seilgg,
mu menma céin im saincheird

Caraim-se fos, ferr cach clú,
oc mu lebrán léir ingnu;
ní foirmtech frimm Pangur bán,
caraid cesin a maccdán.

Ó ru-biam — scél cen scís —
innar tegdais ar n-óendís,
táithiunn — díchríchide clius —
ní fris tarddam ar n-áthius.

Gnáth-húaraib ar gressaib gal
glenaid luch inna lín-sam;
os mé, du-fuit im lín chéin
dliged n-doraid cu n-dronchéill.

Fúachid-sem fri frega fál
a rosc anglése comlán;
fúachimm chéin fri fégi fis
mu rosc réil, cesu imdis,

Fáelid-sem cu n-déne dul
hi-n-glen luch inna géchrub;
hi-tucu cheist n-doraid n-díl,
os mé chene am fáelid.

Cía beimmi amin nach ré,
ní-derban cách ar chéle.
Maith la cechtar nár a dán,
subaighthus a óenurán.

Hé fesin as choimsid dáu
in muid du-n-gní cach óenláu;
du thabairt doraid du glé
for mu mud céin am messe.

I and Pangur Bán, each of us two at his special art:
his mind at hunting (mice), my own mind is in my
special craft.

I love to rest—better than any fame—at my booklet
with diligent science:
not envious of me is Pangur Bán: he himself loves
his childish art.

When we are—tale without tedium—in our house,
we two alone,
we have—unlimited (is) feat-sport—something to
which to apply our acuteness.

It is customary at times by feat of valour, that a
mouse sticks in his net,
and for me there falls into my net a difficult dictum
with hard meaning.

His eye, this glancing full one, he points against the
wall-fence:

I myself against the keenness of science point my
clear eye, though it is very feeble.

He is joyous with speedy going where a mouse
sticks in his sharp-claw:

I too am joyous, where I understand a difficult dear
question.

Though we are thus always, neither hinders the
other:

each of us two likes his art, amuses himself alone.

He himself is the master of the work which he does
every day:

while I am at my own work, (which is) to bring
difficulty to clearness.

Make your own ink:

Supplies

- 1 Cup ripe berries (such as raspberries, strawberries, blackberries)
- 1 Teaspoon vinegar
- 1 Teaspoon salt
- Red or blue food coloring (optional)
- Strainer
- Small bowl
- Small jar with lid
- Spoon

Instructions

Step 1 - Strain the Berries

- Place a few berries into a strainer.
- Hold the strainer over the mouth of a small bowl.
- Use the back of the spoon to crush the berries so that the juice drips into the jar.

Step 2 - Extract the juice

Empty the strainer and continue crushing the berries a few at a time until they have all been squeezed into juice.

Step 3 - Add vinegar

Add the vinegar and salt to the berry juice and stir until it dissolves.

Transfer the mixture to a small jar.

Step 4 - Add coloring (optional)

If the ink is too pale, add a drop of red or blue food coloring.

Make your own (permanent) ink, version 2:

- 1/2 tsp lamp black (This you can buy or make yourself by holding a plate over a candle and collecting the soot, or by collecting another form of char.)
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 tsp gum arabic
- 1/2 cup honey

Mix together the egg yolk, gum arabic, and honey. Stir in the lamp black. This will produce a thick paste that you can store in a sealed container. To use the ink, mix this paste with a small amount of water to achieve the desired consistency. Applying a small amount of heat may improve the consistency of the solution, but be careful—too much heat will make the ink difficult to write with.