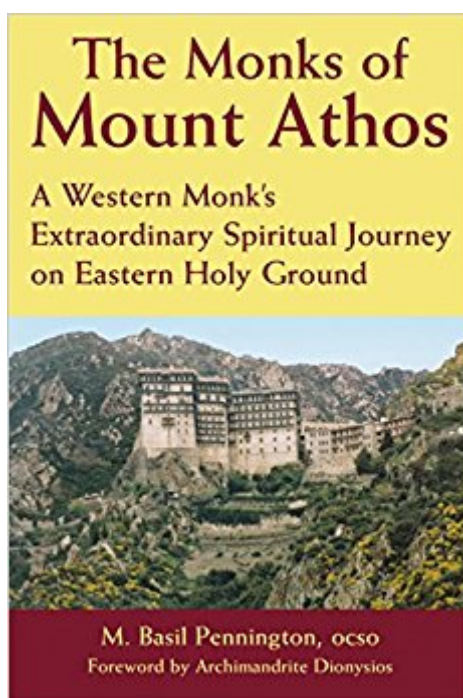


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# The Monks Of Mount Athos: A Western Monks Extraordinary Spiritual Journey On Eastern Holy Ground



## Synopsis

Discover the rich spirituality of monastic life on Mount Athos— a place like no other on earth. Twenty-five years ago, M. Basil Pennington, OCSO, was the first Western monk to live on Mount Athos for more than the usually permitted overnight visit. The Monks of Mount Athos chronicles his extraordinary stay, his experiences of the East, and lively conversations with his hosts about theological differences and unfamiliar spiritual practices. Listen in as Abbot Basil wrestles with historical differences between Christianity's East and West, learns the Orthodox practice of "the prayer of the heart," and explores the landscape, the monastic communities, and the food of Athos— a monastic republic like no other place on earth. New to this edition, Archimandrite Dionysios, a monk from "the Holy Mountain," reflects on the ecumenical openness fostered as a result of, and since, Abbot Basil's stay. The abbot's experiences on Mount Athos motivated him to re-examine his role as a monk and his relationship to God. His inspiring meditations will help you to explore your own relationship to God and to others.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Father M. Basil Pennington, OCSO, was a monk for more than fifty years. He lived at St. Joseph's Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts and was the author of many modern spiritual classics, including *Lectio Divina*; *Centering Prayer*. The Very Reverend Archimandrite Dionysios: Monk at Great Meteoron, tonsured by his Elder, Archimandrite Aemilianos. Confessor at Simonos Petras

Monastery, Mt. Athos. Unanimously elected Abbot of Pantocrator Monastery, Mt. Athos. Abbot of Holy Cross Monastery, Confessor and Headmaster of the Jerusalem Patriarchate. Founder of Exaltation of the Holy Cross Monastery, Thebes, Greece, where he now serves. Author of The Priest as Confessee and Confessor and many lectures and letters to his spiritual children.

Very deep. A spiritual retreat on the Holy Mountain. Fr. Basil shares his views about finding God more deeply among Orthodox Monks

This is a most lovely participation of a book on the Holy Mountain because the diarist leaves no areas of interest out, ie he engages all the senses in truly orthodox fashion...he lets us smell incense and diesel fuel, see sunshine swinging candle lights darkness and shadows, touch relics and kiss them, make prostrations, hear beautiful chanting the sounds of thunder and rain, and taste delicious breads and fresh fruits. We are welcomed in as he struggles with his thoughts and prayers, as he worships and desires God, and practices falling down and getting up. The author is an absolute sweetheart and he shares his life in just a few months of diary. For joy and fun you get to meet a young elder Ephraim...long before he is having monasteries in Arizona.,and many other people who you fall in love with immediately. My favorite book on Athos, which as an orthodox woman i understand and accept fully i can only go there if i become a great saint and bi-locate or in passing away leave behind a piece of my bones. Or for just a few dollars participate with joy in anothers travels by way of a good read. Favorite book on Athos, and a favorite on brotherhood and Love, too.

This book is a quiet and unexpected little gem. It is the journal that Roman Catholic Pennington wrote during his prolonged visit in the 1970's to Mount Athos, where numerous Orthodox Catholic monasteries have stood for centuries. No other Roman Catholic had ever been allowed to stay on Mount Athos for one night, much less for months on end, so Pennington's residence there appears to have been a unique and unprecedented interaction between the two branches of faith. Although each branch has its own views and traditions, which were discussed to some degree, what the book shows is that the nature of day to day interaction resides more in personalities than in differences of doctrine or tradition. Many of the Orthodox monks welcomed Pennington warmly. Others regarded him with suspicion, as a heretic. Some refused to allow him to stay overnight in their particular monasteries. Some talked with him long into the night, as equals, discussing doctrine and monastic life and other topics of interest. And Pennington himself welcomed all interactions and experiences

with interest and equanimity. His benign and pleasant demeanor seems to have gone far in making a success of the unprecedented interaction. This isn't a deep thinking or philosophical kind of book. No exploration of thoughts or doctrine. The most Pennington says in that regard is that he wanted to deepen his own spirituality by existing more often and for long periods of time in silence. Just thought I'd mention that, so other potential readers wouldn't be expecting something more complex and internal. It is interesting to read this book nearly 40 years after it was written. At the time, in the 70's, it was interesting at face value. But now, decades later, it has also taken on the aura of history, providing a glimpse into a world that has since changed into something somewhat different. The book is a lovely snapshot of a place, time, and tradition. For that, it really should become a religious classic.

I just got done reading these memoirs of his visit to Mount Athos in Greece entitled *The Monks of Mount Athos*, which is a truly great recounting of his stay there. If you want an easily digestible way to delve into Eastern Christian monasticism with Western tradition if you really know nothing about Eastern Christianity, this is a particularly good read. It is basically just his modified personal diary of his stay there, so there is not too much heavy theological lifting. I found it to be a pretty interesting read. It was written in the early 1970's, so a bit of the timeline and a few comments on the fallout from Vatican II is a bit dated, but the theological discussions with some of the great Eastern Orthodox monks he encounters and his descriptions of the day to day life of the various monasteries on Mount Athos he recounts is truly a good read. If you are expecting some mind altering Thomas Merton Seven Story Mountain-like theological treatise, you will probably be disappointed. As I said, it is mostly written in a personal diary/reflection prose, so it is very accessible if you just want a little taste of what goes on at Mount Athos. As someone with an advanced theological degree, I still learned quite a bit, as I do not know much about Eastern Orthodox monastic and liturgical practice. His descriptions were quite vivid. The author also includes a good list at the back of the book of definitions of various liturgical and theological terms that Eastern Orthodoxy uses that have no real correlation in Western Christianity or are called something completely different in Western parlance. I found that to be invaluable as a liturgical scholar. A lot of those terms with which I was only vaguely familiar.

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