

Ecclesiastical Terminology



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Abbey - a community of monks or nuns, ruled by an abbot or abbess. Usually founded by a monastic order. Abbeys often owe some form of feudal obligation to a lord or higher organization. They are normally self-contained.

Abjuration - renunciation, under oath, of heresy to the Christian faith, made by a Christian wishing to be reconciled with the Church.

Accidie - term used in ascetical literature for spiritual sloth, boredom, and discouragement.

Acolyte - a clerk in minor orders whose particular duty was the service of the altar.

Advocate - lay protector and legal representative of a monastery.

Advowson - the right of nominating or presenting a clergyman to a vacant living.

Agistment - a Church rate, or tithe, charged on pasture land.

Aisle - lateral division of the nave or chancel of a church.

Alb - a full-length white linen garment, with sleeves and girdle, worn by the celebrant at mass under a chasuble.

Almoner - officer of a monastery entrusted with dispensing alms to the poor and sick.

Almonry - place from which alms were dispensed to the poor.

Almuce - large cape, often with attached hood, of cloth turned down over the shoulders and lined with fur. Doctors of Divinity and canons wore it lined with gray fur. Cape was edged with little Ambulatory - aisle leading round an apse, usually encircling the choir of a church.

Amice - a square of white linen, folded diagonally, worn by the celebrant priest, on the head or about the neck and shoulders.

Anathema - condemnation of heretics, similar to major excommunication. It inflicts the penalty of complete exclusion from Christian society.

Anchoret (Anchorite, anchoress) - a hermit, or recluse.

Antiphon - a sentence, or versicle, from Scripture, sung as an introduction to a psalm or canticle.

Antiphoner - a choir-book containing the liturgical chants used in singing the canonical hours.

Apostate - term used to describe a person who leaves religious orders after making solemn profession. Considered a serious crime in the eyes of the Church, being not only a breach of faith with God but also with the founders and benefactors of the religious house.

Apparels - small rectangular pieces of embroidered stuff, used as ornaments to the alb and amice.

Apparitor - a summoner; an officer of an ecclesiastical court whose duty it was to cite persons to appear before it.

Appropriation - the formal transfer to a monastic house of the tithes and other endowments of a parish church, agreed usually in return for the promise to keep a vicar on the proceeds.

Apse - semicircular or polygonal terminal of the chancel at its eastern end, terminating the chancel.

Apsidal - apse-shaped.

Aquebajulus - a holy-water clerk.

Arcade - row of arches, usually supported on columns.

Arch-brace - curved timbers inserted to strengthen other members in a roof.

Archdeacon - subordinate of a bishop with responsibility for supervising the diocesan clergy and holding ecclesiastical courts within his archdeaconry.

Asylum - also called Right of Sanctuary. The right of a bishop to protect a fugitive or intercede on his behalf. Once asylum has been granted, the fugitive cannot be removed before a month has passed. Fugitives who find asylum must pledge an oath of adjuration never to return to the realm, after which they are free to find passage to the borders of the realm by the fastest way. If found within the borders after a month's time, they may be hunted down as before with no right of asylum to be granted ever again.

Aumbry - a locker or cupboard of some kind, usually placed in the north chancel wall, for the safe-keeping of service-books and sacramental vessels.

Austin - the English form of the name "Augustinian" as in "Austin Friars."

Avoidance - the vacating of a benefice.

Ballflower - decorative motif consisting of three petals enclosing a ball; common in the early fourteenth century.

Barber Surgeon - the monk who shaves faces and heads and performs light surgery.

Barbican - fortification defending the gateway to a castle.

Bay - division of a building, usually by piers, buttresses, fenestration, or vaulting.

Beakhead - Norman decorative motif consisting of a row of beast or bird heads pecking.

Beltane Eve - the night of April 30, one of the two times of the year when mortal rules are believed to be suspended and supernatural events are common. Sometimes called May Day Eve.

Benedictine Order - monastic order founded by St. Benedict. Monks take vows of personal poverty, chastity and obedience to their abbot and the Benedictine Rule.

Benedictional - a liturgical book containing formulas for blessing of people and objects.

Benefice - an ecclesiastical living; an office held in return for duties and to which an income attaches. A grant of land given to a member of the aristocracy, a bishop, or a monastery, for limited or hereditary use in exchange for services. In ecclesiastical terms, a benefice is a church office that returns revenue.

Benefit of Clergy - a privilege enjoyed by members of the clergy, including tonsured clerks, placing them beyond the jurisdiction of secular courts.

Black Canons - a common name for

Boss - decorative knob, usually covering the intersection of vaulting ribs.

Breviary - a book containing the Divine Office (lessons, psalms, hymns, etc.) for each day.

Buttress - projecting mass of masonry, giving additional support to a wall.

Calefactory - warming-room in a monastery.

Canon - a lawyer trained in canon law (the law of the Church).

Canonical Hours - the services sung or recited at the fixed times of the day: matins, lauds, prime, tierce, sext, none, vespers, compline.

Canonical Penance - periods of penitential discipline, usually expressed in days or years, imposed for various sins as set out in the ancient Penitentials.

Canons Regular - communities of clergy following a monastic rule, especially the Rule of St. Augustine.

Canted - inclined, or angled.

Cantor - monk or clerk whose liturgical function is to lead the choir.

Capitals - head of a column.

Capitular - of or pertaining to an ecclesiastical chapter.

Capitulary - a compilation of episcopal or other statutes.

Cappa Clausa or Closed Cape - a gown sewn down the front except for a short slit in the front middle which enabled hands to emerge, worn mostly by regents in theology, arts and law during lectures.

Caputium - includes the hood and tippet or cape. Hood originally covered the head but later dropped back upon the shoulders.

Carrels - divisions of a chamber or cloister walk into individual study areas.

Cartulary - a book or register containing copies of the deeds or charters relating to the lands, churches and other properties of a monastery, or of any other establishment.

Cassock - a long coat reaching almost to the ground and fastened up the front, with fairly tight sleeves. Worn by men, both lay and clerical. Often fur lined since its main purpose was to keep wearer warm. Was worn under the eucharistic vestments but is completely covered by the alb so that it does not show.

Casuistry - a system of moral theology which takes full account of the circumstances and intentions of penitents and formulates rules for particular cases.

Catechumens - members of a Christian congregation being prepared for baptism or confirmation.

Catharist - related to the dualist heresy of the Middle Ages which regarded the flesh and the world of physical phenomena as intrinsically evil.

Cellarium - store-house of a monastery.

Cellerer - officer of a monastery entrusted with the general provisioning of the community.

Chancel - part of a church to the east of the crossing, containing the main altar and choir.

Chancery - the secretarial office of a king or bishop.

Chantry Chapel - chapel attached to a church, endowed for the saying of masses for the soul of the founder or another person (i.e., a wife or husband) nominated by the founder.

Chapter - the daily assembly of a monastic community at which a chapter of the Rule was read, faults were confessed, and business was transacted. Also the term for a body of clergy serving a cathedral.

Chapter-house - room in which monks met daily, to discuss business and to hear a chapter of the monastic rule.

Chasuble - a sleeveless mantle, worn over the alb and stole by a celebrant priest.

Chevet - French type of east end of a church, comprising an apsidal chancel with ambulatory and radiating chapels.

Chevron - Norman zigzag decoration.

Chrism - holy oil; a mixture of olive oil and balsam used in Christian ritual.

Ciborium - a chalice-shaped vessel, with a lid, for the consecrated bread (the reserved Host).

Claustral - pertaining to the cloister.

Claustral Prior - the abbot's second-in-command, responsible for the internal life of the monastery.

Clerestory - upper stage of church elevation, above the aisle roofs, usually pierced by windows.

Clustered-shaft - see Pier.

Coenobitical - the term for monastic life in community, as opposed to the life of hermits.

Collar-beam - horizontal beam tying two rafters together above the level of the wall-top.

Collect - a short prayer appointed for a particular day (hence "collect-books").

Collegiate Church - a church served by a corporation or college of clergy, of which a cathedral is one type.

Commendam - in the late Middle Ages, the practice of granting the headship of a monastic

house as a perquisite to a secular clerk or bishop.

Commissary - an officer representing the bishop in a part of his diocese and exercising jurisdiction there in his name.

Compline - the last service of the day, being the final canonical hour, about 9 p.m.

Conduit - pipe or channel for conveying water.

Confraternity - association with a monastic community granted to the member of another monastery or to a lay person, conferring a special commemoration in the prayers of the community and a share in its spiritual privileges.

Consistory Court - an ecclesiastical court, appointed by a bishop or archbishop, with jurisdiction extending to both clergy and laity.

Conventuals - the name given to that section of the Franciscan Order that accepted the need to modify the practice of absolute poverty enjoined by St. Francis, as as to build churches and permanent friaries.

Cope - a semicircular piece of silk or other cloth, worn by ecclesiastical persons in processions, at vespers and on other occasions.

Corbel - stone projection from a wall, supporting a weight.

Corporal - a linen square on which the consecrated elements are placed during the celebration of the Eucharist.

Corrodian - lay person who had obtained the right to board and lodging in a monastery, usually by payment of a down payment at an earlier date.

Corrody - a pension, in the form of board and lodging or money, or both, granted to a lay person by a monastery, often at the request of the king or patron of the house, who billeted retired servants and retainers on the monastic establishment in this way.

Coucher - a large book (hence "coucher-book", a large cartulary).

Crocket - leaf-shaped decoration added to pinnacles, gables, capitals, etc.

Crosier or Crook - bishop's pastoral staff. The word meant originally the bearer of a crook and is in no way connected with cross, though the words have been confused.

Crossfigill - an ascetic exercise practiced by Celtic monks, which involved standing in prayer for long periods with the arms outstretched in the form of a cross.

Crossing - part of a church between the transepts.

Cruet - a vessel, usually one of a pair, for holding the wine or the water at the Eucharist.

Crypt - chamber underneath a church, usually at the east end.

Culdee - Celtic monks of Scotland and Ireland who flourished from the eighth to the fourteenth centuries, but who were mostly absorbed by the Augustinian canons from the twelfth century.

Cure - cure of souls; the spiritual charge of parishioners (hence "curate").

Custodian - in the Franciscan Order, the head of a custody.

Custody - in the Franciscan Order, the subdivision of a province.

Custumal - a book setting out in detail the practice of a particular monastery, with instructions for the celebration of the divine office and for the other activities of the monastic day, compiled to supplement the general prescription of the Rule. Also a compilation recording the manorial customs and rents due from an estate.

Dalmatic - a wide-sleeved vestment, slit on each side of the skirt, and marked by two stripes. Worn by deacons and bishops; also by kings and emperors at their coronation. Originally used in the province of Dalmatia.

Deacon - assistant to the priest and next under him in rank, being a member of the third order of the ministry.

Dean - in early monastic use, a monk appointed by the abbot to supervise a group of ten brethren; in general ecclesiastical use, the head of a cathedral chapter; also the senior priest and supervisor of a rural deanery.

Decorated - term applied to the style of Gothic architecture which flourished in England from about 1280 to 1340.

Decretum - a common title for a collection of canon law, arranged thematically, in use from the 11th century onwards.

Demesne - that part of an estate that a landlord retains in his own hands and exploits directly, as opposed to portions of the estate that are leased to tenants.

Denization, charter of - royal charter of naturalization.

Diffinitors - a term used by the Cistercians and the Dominicans for those members of the general chapter who drafted legislation and steered the assembly.

Diploma - technical term for an elaborate type of charter used in the early Middle Ages to confer land or privileges.

Dilapidations - payments due on the vacating of a benefice to make good any damage sustained by Church property during the previous incumbency.

Dorter - a monastic dormitory.

Double Monastery - Combined monastery for men and women but sexually separated. Ruled by either an abbot or abbess.

Dowry - in monastic use, a gift of land or an entrance fee, normally extracted by a nunnery as a condition of accepting a new member. Canon law forbade the exaction of dowry, but permitted voluntary gifts. In the case of men's houses, it was normal practice for a postulant to bring an endowment with him.

Early English - term applied to the style of Gothic architecture which flourished in England from about 1220 to 1280.

Easter Sepulcher - a recess, or structure, on the north side of a chancel, used at Easter in the setting up of a representation of the burial of Christ; but often merely a temporary wooden erection.

Elevation - vertical stages by which the architecture of a wall is erected.

Enterchase - a partition.

Eremitical - the mode of monastic life followed by hermits, either singly or in groups, from the Greek eremos, meaning a desert, as opposed to monastic life in community.

Eucharist - the Communion, or Sacrament of the Lord's Supper: the central ceremony of the mass.

Evangelical Counsels - the recommendations found in the Gospels to embrace celibacy, poverty, and obedience, as a means to attain spiritual perfection, which formed the basis of the monastic life.

Exemption - a privileged status obtained by some monasteries which freed them from the jurisdiction of their local bishop and made them directly subject to the papacy.

Familia - the household establishment of a bishop or abbot, consisting of his clerks and domestic servants.

Filiation - a monastic organization that made each monastery responsible for supervising its daughter foundations; a group of abbeys linked in this way to a common mother-house; a

system developed by the Cistercians.

Floriated - decorated with flowery patterns.

Florilegia - an anthology, especially one of patristic texts; such collections were widely used by medieval theologians.

Flying Buttress - arch carrying the thrust of a roof from the upper part of a wall to a free-standing support.

Foil - leaf-like ornamentation in windows, etc.: trefoil, quatrefoil, cinquefoil, sexfoil, etc., represent the number of leaves.

Frater - refectory.

Free Chapel - a chapel founded by the king (often developing into a wealthy church), not subject to the jurisdiction of the bishop.

Freestone - any easily carved fine-grained stone (e.g. a limestone or sandstone).

Gable - vertical triangular end of a building from the eaves to the apex.

Gablet - small gable, often for decoration only.

Galilee - chapel or vestibule, usually enclosing the porch at the west end of the church.

Gallery - intermediate story in the elevation of a church wall, between the arcade and the clerestory.

Garderobe - individual lavatory in a medieval building.

Garth - the open central space, normally a quadrilateral, enclosed by a cloister.

Glebe - land attaching to a church and intended to supplement the incumbent's income.

Gothic - general term used to describe the style of architecture which flourished in western Europe from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries.

Gradual - a book of antiphons.

Grange - a monastic farm settlement at some distance from the abbey, supervised by a monk and staffed by lay brothers, created to cultivate one of the abbey's estates.

Greek cross - a plain cross, the four limbs of which are of equal length.

Guardian - in the Franciscan Order the superior of a friary.

Hammer-beam - horizontal beam projecting from the top of a wall to support arch-braces, struts and rafters.

Howden - A college of secular priests.

Indulgences - a commutation of a certain period of canonical penance, authorized by a bishop, enabling the penitent who had repented and confessed his sin to substitute for his penance
Hymnary - a hymn-book, or hymnal.

Infirmarian - officer of a monastery in charge of the infirmary.

Infirmary - part of a monastery, commonly situated to the east of the main complex, with its own dormitory, chapel, and refectory, which housed the monks who were sick or who were too old and infirm to take part in the normal monastic round.

Interdict - a sentence laid upon a territory or an establishment, ordering the administration of the sacraments and all liturgical rites to cease until such time as the sentence has been lifted. An exception was normally made for the baptism of infants and the absolution of the dying.

Interdict - papal ordinance debarring certain persons or the inhabitants of a certain place from participation in the sacraments, church offices and burial services. Ecclesiastical banning in an area of all sacraments except for baptism and extreme unction. In general it does not ban high feast days. Used to force persons/institutions/communities or secular lords to a view dictated by the church or pope.

Introit - verses of Scripture, often from the psalms, sung at the beginning of the mass, varying according to the day of the year.

Jamb - straight side of a doorway or window.

Judge-delegate - a prelate commissioned by the pope to hear and determine an ecclesiastical case locally in its country of origin.

Knapped-flint - flint split for walling.

Lancet - slender window with pointed arch.

Lauds - the service of the divine office immediately following Matins. Sometimes it is confusingly called "Matins" in medieval texts. It was observed about 3 a.m.

Lavatorium - trough with running water where monks washed their hands before meals.

Leat - a channel conveying water, usually to a mill.

Lectio divina - "sacred reading," i.e., the reading of the Scriptures and the Fathers prescribed by the Rule of St. Benedict as one of the most important occupations of the monastic day.

Lectionary - a book containing the lessons to be read in choir during Mass and the divine office.

Lector - "reader," i.e., one who has been ordained to the minor church of lector; in a monastery, a monk entrusted with reading the lessons in church or in the refectory.

Legate - an ambassador, usually a cardinal, dispatched by the pope to a territory with plenary powers (some archbishops, including the archbishops of Canterbury, claimed to be legati nati or standing legates in virtue of their office).

Legenda - a legendary, or book of legends, concerning the lives of the saints.

Lenten veil - covering pictures and crucifixes during Lent.

Lintel - horizontal beam or stone bridging a fireplace, doorway, etc.

Liturgical Colors - blue for Advent; white for Christmas and the octave of the Epiphany; blue or white for St. John's Day; red for the Feast of the Innocents; red or white for Circumcision. From the octave of the Epiphany to Septuagesima red was worn. From Septuagesima to Passion Sunday probably blue was used. Red was worn from Passion Sunday and Advent, except on Low Sunday and the octave of the Ascension, when white was worn. Color for the Apostles and Martyrs was red, for the Virgins who were not Martyrs, white; for the Confessors blue or green. Funerals were to be in black.

Louvre - opening in the roof of a room to let the smoke escape.

Lunette - semicircular opening in a wall to support arch-braces, struts and rafters.

Maniple - a strip of silk, or other fine-stuff, worn over the left arm of the celebrant at mass.

Manual - a handbook of directions to the celebrant for the administration of the sacraments.

Martyrology - a list of the martyrs, read during the office of Prime.

Master-general - the head of the Order of Preachers or Dominican Friars.

Matins - the first office of the day, sung during the night about midnight, commonly called the Nocturns in medieval texts.

Mazer - a bowl or drinking-cup.

Mendicant Orders - begging orders, the general term for the orders of friars, so called because they refused to own corporate property and depended upon organized begging for their support.

Mensa - term used for that part of a monastic estate that was allocated to the direct support of the community and to supplying its table.

Michaelmass - Feast of St. Michael on September 29.

Minor Orders - the four lesser orders to which a man might be ordained, i.e., those of acolyte, lector, exorcist, and doorkeeper, as opposed to the three major orders of priest, Minister-general - the head of the Franciscan or Friars Minor.

Minorite - a Friar Minor or Franciscan.

Misericord - a special apartment in a monastery, for the use of monks receiving special indulgences in respect of diet and discipline; also a bracket on the underside of the hinged seat of a choir-stall, which, when the seat is turned up, gives some support to a person standing.

Misericorde - additional monastery refectory, in which the eating of meat was permitted.

Missal - a book containing the complete order of mass, including both the "ordinary" (unvarying parts) and the "proper" (the parts that varied according to the liturgical calendar). In the early Middle Ages the proper of the mass was distributed over a number of separate books, such as the lectionary which contained the lessons, and the gradual which contained the chants.

Mortuary - a customary levy, claimed by the priest, on the estate of a deceased parishioner.

Mouling - relief ornamentation.

Mullion - vertical bar dividing a window into lights.

Nave - part of a church to the west of the crossing.

Neophyte - a novice or new recruit.

Newel staircase - spiral staircase.

Nimbus - a bright or golden disk, surrounding the head of a divine or canonized person.

Nocturns - sections of the office of Matins. In the monastic office each Nocturn consisted of three Psalms followed by four lessons; on important festivals Matins comprised three such Nocturns and thus included twelve lessons. In medieval texts Matins is commonly

called Nocturns.

Nones - the liturgical office sung or recited at the ninth hour of the day, i.e., about 3 p.m.

Norman - term applied to the style of architecture which flourished in England from about 1050 to about 1200.

Novice - a member of a monastic community under training who has not yet taken vows.

Noviciate - the period of training undergone by a recruit before taking monastic vows.

Obedientiary - the holder of any office in a monastery under the abbot.

Obedientiary - a monk in charge of one of the administrative departments of a monastery, such as the cellarer, the sacrist, or the infirmarian.

Obit - a memorial mass celebrated annually on the mind-day of a deceased person, usually the anniversary of his death.

Oblate - a person given in childhood to a monastic community by his parents, to be brought up as a monk.

Oblation - an offering to Church funds.

Octave - the eighth day, or the period of eight days counting inclusively, that followed a liturgical festival.

Ogee - arch with a steep projection at the apex.

Order - series of concentric stages (e.g. shafts).

Orders - the various grades of the Christian ministry, viz. the four minor orders of acolyte, lector, exorcist, and doorkeeper; and the three major orders of priest, deacon, and subdeacon.

Ordinal - a service-book, with instructions to the priest on the order of services through the ecclesiastical year.

Ordinary - a high ecclesiastic, usually the bishop, entitled to exercise jurisdiction in his own right.

Orphrey - gold or other rich embroidery applied either to ecclesiastical vestments or to articles of lay attire.

Pallium - a yoke-shaped band of white wool, embroidered with crosses, worn by the pope and also by some archbishops, symbolizing in the latter case the delegation to them of

metropolitan jurisdiction over the other bishops of their province. It was conferred by the pope and normally had to be collected from Rome in person.

Panel-tracery - see Tracery.

Pardoner - a person holding a papal license to sell indulgences or pardons.

Paruchia - in the usage of the Celtic Church, the area and the churches, including distant territories, over which a monastery had spiritual jurisdiction.

Paten - a shallow circular dish, usually of silver, on which the consecrated bread is placed during the celebration of the Eucharist.

Paterae - flat circular or oval ornamentation.

Pax brede - a small plate or tablet (also known as an "osculatory"), with a handle on the back and with the image of Christ or of the Virgin on the front, to be kissed at mass by priest and congregation.

Peculiar - term for a parish or other area not subject to the jurisdiction of the bishop within whose diocese it is situated, but subject to the jurisdiction of a bishop or some other ecclesiastical body in another diocese.

Pelagian - relating to the heresy of Pelagius (c. 354-419), who denied the transmission of original sin and emphasized the primacy of human endeavor in achieving salvation.

Penitential - a treatise setting out the penances, or acts of satisfaction, appropriate to various sins, which a penitent was required to perform after he had repented and confessed his faults to a priest. Similarly, the section of a monastic Rule that prescribed penances for various faults or breaches of monastic discipline.

Penitentiary - an ecclesiastical officer concerned with the administration of penance in the diocese.

Penstock - sluice for regulating the flow of water through a channel.

Pentise - covered way, or small subsidiary building, with a sloping roof.

Perpendicular - term applied to the style of Gothic architecture which flourished in England between about 1340 and about 1530.

Pier - strong, upright support or pillar for arches, etc.

Pilaster - shallow pier attached to a wall.

Pileus or Cap - the distinctive head-dress of doctors, round or square. The square shape was made of four different pieces of material joined, with a small point at the top. Eventually became the mortar-board of modern university garb. Small point of the original pileus became the modern tassel.

Pinched - plaited.

Piscina - basin, usually set in the south chancel wall, for washing the chalice and paten at mass.

Placebo et dirige - the first words of the opening antiphons of Vespers and Matins respectively in the Office of the Dead; hence, in medieval usage a term denoting the entire Office of the Dead.

Plate-tracery - see Tracery.

Points - ties, laces.

Porticus - the side-chapels common at Anglo-Saxon minster churches, frequently used for the more important burials.

Postulant - a person seeking admission to a religious order.

Pound Scots - Scottish unit of currency, worth 1s. 8d., used until the eighteenth century.

Prebend - the revenues, whether from land or tithes, granted to an ecclesiastic as his stipend.

Prebendary - one in receipt of the revenues attached to a canonry in a cathedral or collegiate church.

Precentor - a cathedral dignitary responsible for the choir and the liturgical functions in the cathedral church.

Preceptory - a house of the Knights Templars.

Prelates - general term applied to the leading members of the ecclesiastical establishment.

Prime - a liturgical office sung or recited at the first hour of the day, i.e., at sunrise.

Prior - in an abbey the second-in-command or officer next in rank after the abbot; the superior of a religious house that did not have the status of an abbey.

Processional - an office-book, giving the text of the hymns, psalms, and litanies used in ecclesiastical processions.

Proctor - a legal representative of any person or bodies of persons able to act for them in ecclesiastical courts.

Procuration - a customary payment extracted from incumbents in lieu of their obligation to entertain a visiting bishop, archdeacon, or other high ecclesiastic.

Proprietary Church - a church in private ownership, the property of a landlord or of a monastery-the condition of most rural churches in the early Middle Ages.

Provincial - or "provincial minister"; the superior in charge of a province of the Friars Minor; in the case of the Dominicans.

Pulpitum - pulpit projecting from a wall. Also, in large churches, a stone screen dividing the nave and quire.

Purbeck marble - hard dark stone resembling marble, quarried from the Isle of Purbeck, Dorset.

Pyx - a vessel, usually a box, for holding the consecrated bread (the reserved Host).

Quadragesima - literally "the fortieth": the Latin term for Lent, a period of approximately forty days (in fact forty-six days) before Easter.

Quatrefoil - a very common Gothic architectural ornament in which four arcs are divided by cusps, rather in the form of a four.

Quinquagesima - the last Sunday before the beginning of Lent.

Quire - the part of a church where services were sung, containing the choir-stalls.

Radiating Chapels - series of chapels projecting radially from an ambulatory or apse.

Range - block of buildings.

Rector - in medieval canon law the incumbent of a parish who is entitled to receive the great tithes. Where a parish church had been appropriated to a monastery, the monastery became the corporate rector of the church.

Refectory - the dining hall of a monastery.

Regular Clergy - clergy who are monks, living under a monastic Rule (regula), as opposed to secular clergy who live in the world and do not belong to a religious order.

Reliquary - shrine or casket in which relics of saints were kept.

Rere-dorter - building containing the monastic latrines, so called because it was usually

situated at the back or far end of the dormitory.

Reredos - a screen, usually carved and painted, behind and above the altar.

Retable - an altar-piece; a painting, or frame holding sculptures, fixed to the back of an altar.

Retro-quire - chapel or part of a church east of the high altar, commonly used as the location for the shrine of a saint.

Rochet - a white-linen vestment, similar to a surplice.

Romanesque - term applied to the style of architecture which flourished in Europe from the early tenth to the late twelfth century; also called Norman in England.

Rood - a great cross, or crucifix, placed on the rood-beam in the chancel arch.

Rood-screen - screen below a crucifix, usually at the west end of a church, so called because it was normally surmounted by a rood or crucifix.

Rose Window - see Wheel Window.

Sacramentary - a type of liturgical book used in the early Middle Ages, containing the prayers said by the celebrant of the mass and the other sacrament. The lessons and the verses sung by the choir were contained in separate books.

Sacring - the consecration of the elements (hence "sacring bell" and "sacring torch").

Sacrist - monastic official responsible for the safekeeping of books, vestments and vessels, and for the maintenance of the monastery's buildings.

Sacristy - a small building, usually attached to the chancel or transept of a church, in which vestments and sacred vessels were kept.

Sanctuary - right of protection to fugitives within a church, or occasionally within the precinct of a monastery or cathedral.

Saw-tooth - decorated with serrations like a saw.

Scallop - decoration consisting of a series of truncated semi-Scapular - a rectangular piece of stuff hanging down from the shoulders before and behind. It has shoulder seams and a hole for the head to pass through.

Scriptorium - room in a monastery set aside for the use of scribes copying manuscripts.

Secular Canons - the secular clergy serving a cathedral or collegiate church, as opposed to

canons regular, who were clergy living under a monastic rule.

Sedilia - seats for priests officiating at services, usually built into the wall on the south side of the chancel.

Segmental - in the form of a segment, or divided into segments.

Seigneurial - lordly, pertaining to a feudal lord.

Sequestrator - the diocesan official appointed to take charge of estates or other property on which dues were owed to the bishop.

Server - the celebrant's assistant at the altar during mass.

Sext - the liturgical office sung or recited at the sixth hour of the day, i.e., about midday.

Shaft - small or subordinate pillar.

Simony - the offence of offering or receiving money to influence an appointment to ecclesiastical office.

Slype - passage.

Solar - upper living-room in a medieval house.

Solo-piece - projecting base for roof trusses, etc., at the level of the wall-top. **Soul-scot** - a mortuary, or offering made to the priest on behalf of a deceased parishioner.

Spandrel - triangular surface area between the apexes of two arches.

Spirituals - the name given to that section of the Franciscans that refused to modify the instructions of St. Francis on absolute poverty and who consequently refused to possess permanent buildings, as opposed to the "Conventuals" who accepted the need to compromise in this respect.

Springer - the point at which an arch unites with its pier, wall.

Squint - the hole cut in a wall or through a pier to allow a view of the high altar from a place where it would not otherwise be possible

Stepped - progressively staggered.

Stiff-leaf - foliage ornamentation consisting of many lobed shapes, common in the thirteenth century.

Stole - a narrow strip of embroidered silk or linen, worn over other vestments to hang round

the neck and down the front of the celebrant at mass.

Stoup - a stone basin for holy water, usually placed near the main entrance of the church.

Strainer arch - arch inserted across the space between two walls, to stop them leaning.

String-course - projecting horizontal band of masonry set along a wall.

Studium generale - a term of art, which appeared in the 13th century, denoting a school of universal status, used especially of universities. In canonical theory it indicated a privileged status which could only be conferred on a school by the pope. Its special mark was the right to its graduates to teach in any other school of Christendom without further examination.

Stylite - an ascetic who lived on top of a pillar.

Suffragan - assistant (hence "suffragan bishop").

Super-arch - larger arch, often blank, enclosing two or more smaller arches.

Surplice or Super-pellicum - a loosely fitting white linen vestment, with wide sleeves.

Synod - a council, or assembly, of the clergy.

Synodal - a customary payment made to the bishop by his lower clergy on the occasion of a visitation or a synod.

Tabard - a loose, usually sleeveless waistcoat, sometimes called a sclavine.

Temporalities - the landed estates and other properties belonging to a church or religious body, especially the estates of a bishopric, in respect of which the bishop owed secular duties to the king.

Tenebrae - the office of Matins and Lauds in the special form sung during the Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday of Holy Week, at which candles are extinguished one by one following each psalm.

Terce - the liturgical office sung or recited at the third hour of the day, i.e., about 9 a.m.

Tertiary - a member of a Third Order, a confraternity of lay people attached to the friars, who bound themselves to follow certain religious observances of the friars, including recreation of the day hours of the divine office.

Thurible - a censer; a vessel, usually of metal, for the burning of incense.

Tithe (praedial) - a tax, payable to the rector, of the tenth part of all agrarian produce.

Tithing - any group of ten persons; in early monastic usage, a group of ten monks supervised by a monastic officers called a dean. It was a means of devolving command in large religious communities.

Tonsure - monastic hairstyle: shaving the top of the head and leaving a ring of hair around the side, indicated that a young man had received clerical status.

Tracery - decorative openwork on the upper parts of a Gothic window. Bar-tracery and Geometric-tracery: both typical of the second half of the thirteenth century, consisting chiefly of foils within circles. Panel-tracery: typical of the period 1340-1530, consisting of straight-edge vertical panels.

Transepts - transverse portions, north and south, of a cross-shaped church.

Transitional - term applied to the architecture of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, during the transition from Norman or Romanesque to Gothic.

Translation - in the case of a bishop, his transfer from one see to another, a change which in classical canon law could only be authorized by the pope. The term was also used to describe the process by which the bodily remains of a saint were removed from their tomb to a place of honor above or behind the altar of a church. Originally it was an act that signified canonisation; from the 13th century, it was a solemn act carried out following canonisation by the pope.

Transom - horizontal bar across the lights of a window.

Triforium - intermediate stage in the elevation of a church wall, between the arcade and the clerestory, consisting of a blank arcading or a wall-passage.

Troper - a book of tropes, being the phrases or sentences added by a choir to embellish the mass.

Truss - roof-timbers framed together to bridge a space.

Tympanum - space between the lintel of a doorway and the arch above it.

Undercroft - vaulted room (often a basement) below a more important building.

Vault - an arched stone roof.

Vespers - the liturgical office of the evening, otherwise called Evensong.

Vestry - small chamber attached to the chancel or transept of a church, in which the ecclesiastical vestments were kept and put on.

Vicar General - an ecclesiastical officer appointed by the bishop as his deputy in matters jurisdictional and administrative.

Vicar - the incumbent of a parish church which has been appointed to a monastery or some other ecclesiastical body which receives the great tithes. The vicar receives a fixed portion of the endowments of the parish and offerings.

Vigils - in early monastic literature the term for Matins, i.e., the office sung during the watches of the night.

Warming-house - the only room in a monastery (apart from the infirmary and kitchen) where a fire was allowed.

Waterleaf - broad, leaf-shaped motif with a tied-ribbon effect at the top; commonly used to decorate capitals in the twelfth century.

Weeper - a sculptured mourning figure, often shown hooded, set against the side of a tomb-chest.

Wheel Window - circular window with radiating tracery resembling spokes.