

## Twenty saints to pray to when having a tooth ache

This picture is taken from the court inside Sct. Catharina convent in Ribe. In the background you can see the church. There are 2 well preserved convents left in Denmark, 1 in Helsingør (Zealand) and 1 in Ribe – the Mendicant Orders' Sct. Catharina. Monks are no longer living in the convent; it is now used for senior housing.

The Mendicant Orders lived in the towns. They had chosen a life of celibacy, poverty and no right to own anything. The first Mendicant Orders lived by begging for their daily bread from the people in town, but through the years buildings and land were donated to them. The Pope stated that if you presented God's servants with gifts, it was the same as giving them to God himself. So you depended on the gifts for the Mendicant Orders to help you get a life beyond death. The only way to secure your own salvation was by good deeds.

There were two kinds of Mendicant Orders; Grey Friars and Black Friars, they were named by the color of their monk's habit. The monks living in Sct. Catharina were Black Friars. They had different obligations; they had to take care of the poor and sick, they had to teach, they had to transcribe books – all books were written by hand back then – and they had to pray 7 times a day.

The poverty was great in The Middle Ages, but the sick and the poor knew that in the convent they could always get help. As long as the convent was able to help no efforts was in vain.

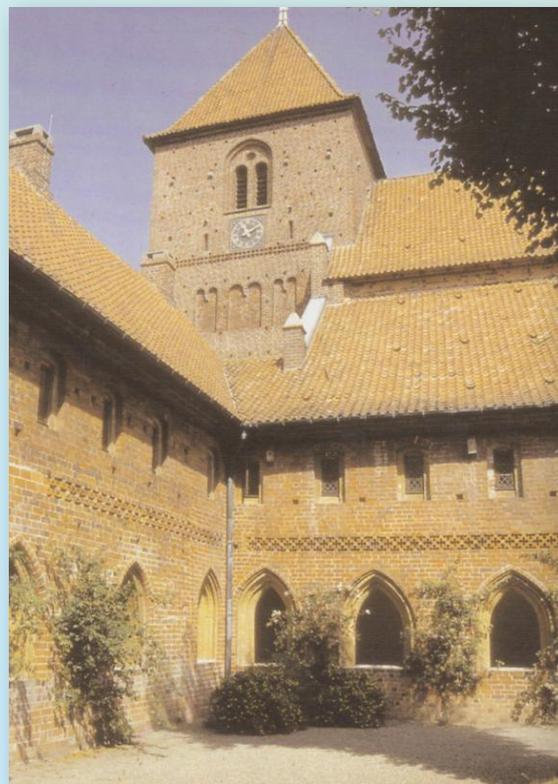
When you got old and weak, your children would take care of you, but if that wasn't possible you could stay at the convent until you passed away. In return you had to leave all your possessions to the convent when you passed away.

Many convents helped the sick to the best of their ability. They tried by using herbs or prayers. To fight the plague there were 62 saints to pray to, against the fever – 129 and for a tooth ache – 20. To get well, you simply had to have your faith in control!

For the common people it wasn't necessary to be able to read. All books were very expensive as they were hand-written; only a few could afford to buy a book. It was only priests, monks and public officers who needed to be able to read. Therefore a lot of convents and cathedrals were close to the schools. Boys who wanted to become priests or public officers attended these schools where they were taught by monks and priests (theologians).

They were not taught to read and write in Danish, but in Latin, as many books were in Latin, and if you wanted to go abroad, you would always do well in Latin.

We know of 6 convents founded in Ribe diocese during The Middle Ages (4 in Ribe, 1 in Seem and 1 in Løgumkloster). After the Reformation in 1536 the convents were torn down. Unfortunately that left no one to deal with the work normally taken care of by the convents. The poor and helpless had nowhere to go.



### Assignments: (IT, Danish, Christianity, History)

1. Find [www.ribekloster.dk](http://www.ribekloster.dk) on the internet
2. Check out the website for information on the history of the Sct. Catharina convent – make some notes.
3. Check out the website for information on what the convent is used for today – make some notes.