

## THE INTANGIBLE HERITAGE OF MONASTERIES: SPIRITUAL URBAN REFUGES

### Educating and Communicating Silence in the 21st Century

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#### ABSTRACT

*Introduction: Since the year 500, various European capitals have been connected by an intangible cultural heritage, establishing a network of knowledge that predates the World Wide Web. Objectives: The present study aims to recover education and communication in cities that host Benedictine monasteries, emphasising their role as spiritual refuges and spaces for the practice of silence. Methodology: The study utilises a range of media to analyse the communication of the intangible heritage of monasteries. The research examines how these spaces offer an alternative learning experience to today's materialism. Results: Monasteries continue to attract those seeking answers to contemporary concerns. Visitors report seeking spirituality and silence in the face of issues such as digital addiction and anxiety.*

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## 1. Introduction

The subject of this research is the Communication of the Intangible Heritage<sup>1</sup> of urban monasteries, with a particular focus on the value of silence. This work is part of the Research Project Communication of Intangibles of the NICOM Stable Research Group (*Nuevas Tecnologías y Comunicación para un Mundo Nuevo + Humano* [NICOM + H], 2021-actualidad)<sup>1</sup>. The objective is to conduct an analysis of the current methods of education and communication of this heritage. While monasteries are protected as tangible heritage due to their architectural structures and artistic works, there is currently no legal protection for monastic life, its teachings, and the transmission of universal spiritual knowledge beyond the physical structure and material content. The present project aims to contribute to the promotion of these aspects as UNESCO(2024)<sup>2</sup>Intangible Heritage. The project's initial hypothesis is that the transmission of silence within the context of contemplative life, community, spirituality, and transcendence can provide an alternative to the existential challenges currently experienced, particularly in urban environments, such as stress, excessive activity, chaos, noise, loneliness, materialism, and the loss of purpose and meaning in life. The research is focused on the Benedictine Monasteries in the geographical area of Madrid, and the rationale behind this choice is outlined in sections 1.1 and 1.2.

### 1.1. Historical Framework. Why the Benedictines

During the medieval and Renaissance periods, Benedictine monasteries established a substantial network of communication, exchange, culture, education, and knowledge. This network facilitated the unification, development, and mutual influence of Europe, creating an interconnected fabric in which the boundaries of various nations were traversed by the invisible strands of constant exchange of ideas, values, and processes of understanding the surrounding realities. This exchange united its members in a single community. Palo Alto (1949-59) has been considered the invisible university of the 20th century, a term used to describe a network of study centres that were far apart in space, but which shared a common search for interdisciplinary knowledge in the new communication. Similarly, from the 6th to the 21st century, Benedictine monasteries created an invisible network of study, sharing and pooling, despite the kilometres that separated one centre from another. It is precisely around these monasteries that many urban centres grew up or places of pilgrimage for hermits seeking the contemplative life were created (valley of the churches). It is interesting to note that some scholars have recently re-evaluated the notion of the 'invisible university' that united Bateson, Ives, Winkin, Goffman, Birdwhistell, Jackson, Hall and Watslawick in the 20th century, suggesting that it might have become invisible (Salvetti, 2016)<sup>3</sup>. This raises the question of whether the original network of exchange, knowledge and foundation has also become invisible. Beyond their artistic, architectural and monumental heritage, Benedictine monasteries imply an intangible heritage, a way of life and a community circulation of ideas and values that represent an existential alternative, a different vision that enriches diversity and must be protected. A notable aspect of this hidden heritage, which remains largely unknown to the general public, is showcased in the documentary "Libres" ("Free") (Blanco, 2023) available on Movistar+. This documentary presents the reality of monastic life as a radical and alternative choice:

For centuries, many men and women have given up everything to dedicate their lives to contemplation. This documentary manages to get inside and talk to people who rarely say a

<sup>1</sup> NICOM + H (2021-actualidad) *Nuevas Tecnologías y Comunicación para un Mundo Nuevo + Humano*. Grupo Estable de Investigación de la Universidad Francisco de Vitoria. Proyecto Intangibles. <https://www.ufv.es/facultad-de-ciencias-de-la-comunicacion/investigacion/grupo-de-investigacion-sobre-nuevas-tecnologias-aplicadas-a-los-nuevos-medios-y-nuevos-lenguajes-en-informacion-y-comunicacion-para-un-mundo-nuevo-nicom/>

<sup>2</sup> UNESCO, (2024). Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial <https://ich.unesco.org/es/que-es-el-patrimonio-inmaterial-00003>

<sup>3</sup> Salvetti, V. P. (2016) Palo Alto 1949-59: ¿"Universidad Invisible" ...o invisibilizada? <http://repositorio.filo.uba.ar/handle/filodigital/2938>

word and places that remain closed to the world: monasteries (...) what makes a person in the 21st century decide to shut himself inside four walls for the rest of his life. What his daily life is like, his motivations, his connection with pure nature and his outer life, which has a lot to do with his inner life. (Ibidem, 2023)<sup>4</sup>

Benedictine monasteries were built in harmony with their environment. With their elegant architectural forms, they have always been centres of great cultural education, where prayer and silent work have given life to the current model of civil coexistence, sustainable development and respect for the environment. St Benedict of Norcia, the patron saint of Europe, decided to give up worldly life and retire to pray in a cave on Mount Taleo, which later became the first Benedictine monastery (UNESCO; 2024)<sup>5</sup>. The Benedictine Order was originally dedicated to the contemplative life, the cloister, silence and prayer, although it gradually made room for manual work. According to St Benedict, manual labour constituted one of the pillars of monastic life, alongside prayer. This approach represented a significant departure from the prevailing practices of the time, particularly in the context of the declining Roman Empire where manual labour was typically restricted to enslaved individuals. This approach embodied an asceticism of humility that proved to be a considerable challenge for his monks, to the extent that they attempted to assassinate him. As time passed, the emphasis on manual labour was gradually eased to accommodate a greater focus on cultural and scholarly pursuits. This shift in focus eventually led to the establishment of the Cistercian Order, which revived the fundamental role of manual work in its members' lives. Along with manual labour, research, missions and education, *ora et labora* was a response to the Rule's motto that "idleness is the enemy of the soul". The order was founded in 529 by St Benedict of Nursia in Subiaco, Italy, where the first 12 Benedictine monasteries were founded. Today it is present in 47 countries and has 9,000 monks and 16,000 nuns. During St Benedict's lifetime there were 14 monasteries for men and 1 for women in Piumarola. Up to the present day, the Congregations have changed, grown and spread all over the world; the most important, in order of date of foundation, are the original Benedictine monasteries (529-543), the Camaldolese (980), Vallombrosana (1036), Silvestrina (1231), Olivetan (1319), English (1336), Hungarian (1514), Swiss (1602), Austrian (1625), Bavarian (1684), Brazilian (1827), Solesmes (1837), American-Casarian (1855), Casarian of Subiaco (1872), Beuronian (1873), Swiss-American (1881), Saint Odilia (1884), Annunciation (1920), Slavic of Saint Adalbert (1945) and Southern Cone (1976). The Order underwent two fundamental reforms. The first reform occurred in the 10th century in France under the leadership of Odon of Cluny, leading to the establishment of Cluniac Benedictine monasteries. The second reform took place in the 11th and 12th centuries, also in France, under the leadership of Cister, resulting in the establishment of Cistercian Benedictine monasteries. These monasteries sought to return to the Rule of St Benedict and the contemplative life. This final reform led to the establishment of a new order, known as the Cistercians. The establishment of sixty-eight new monasteries ensued, and in the subsequent years, the aspiration to adhere steadfastly to the sobriety and radicality of the Rule of Saint Benedict gave rise to the formation of the new Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance in Normandy at the Abbey of La Trappe (1098). Subsequently, during the 19th century, a schism occurred, resulting in the establishment of two distinct branches: the Cistercian branch of the Cistercian Order and the Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance (Trappists). During the medieval period, the Order of St. Benedict underwent a series of significant reforms, which led to the establishment of several notable religious communities. In Italy, these reforms resulted in the formation of the Benedictines of Valle Umbrosa (Gualberto fl. 1073), the Benedictines of Montefano (Sylvester 1177-1267), and the Benedictines of Monte Oliveto (Tolomei 1272-1348).

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>5</sup> UNESCO (2024) <https://www.visitlazio.com/i-monasteri-benedettini-candidati-unesco/>

## 1.2. Geographical Framework. The Benedictines in Spain and in Madrid

The Benedictines arrived in Spain in the 11th century, leaving a number of monasteries that have endured to the present day. It is important to note that when discussing monasteries with a community, it should be remembered that all male Benedictine monasteries were disentailed by Mendizábal in 1835. The current Benedictine monasteries that function as such, maintaining a community of monks, arose after the monastic restoration that began at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. This restoration of monastic life did not imply that they settled in the monasteries that had been left empty, for example, the history of the Paular Monastery, mentioned above, was first a Carthusian monastery (begun in 1390 and completed centuries later) and then a Benedictine monastery (1954). During the 1950s, the monastery was in a state of abandonment, subject to ignorance and barbarism, which would have exacerbated the transformation of this remarkable haven of peace into an entity disregarded by many and deliberately destroyed through neglect (Mas-Guindal Lafarga, 2000)<sup>6</sup>. The return of the Benedictine monks after the disentanglement does not therefore imply that this was to the original monasteries and not to new buildings. For example, the monastery of the Valley of the Fallen was newly constructed in the 20th century. Nevertheless, history has gone through a long period of history, and the monastery of the Valley of the Fallen was built in the 20th century. Even so, history has left Benedictine traces in those places. The following Benedictine monasteries are of particular interest: The Monastery of Santo Domingo de Silos, located in the province of Burgos (Autonomous Community of Castilla y León), and the Monastery of Santa María de El Paular, situated in Rascafría (Community of Madrid). The Monastery of Valvanera, in Anguiano (La Rioja), is another notable example. The Abbey of the Valley of the Fallen, located in San Lorenzo de El Escorial (Community of Madrid), is another notable example. The Monastery of Montserrat, (Catalonia). The Monastery of Leyre, in Navarre, is another notable example. The Priory of Our Lady of Montserrat, located in Madrid, is also noteworthy. San Lorenzo de Munt, (Catalonia). The Monastery of San Cugat del Vallés (Catalonia) is also of interest. The Monastery of San Julián de Samos (Lugo) and the Monastery of San Salvador del Monte Irago (León) are also of great interest. In the Community of Madrid, some Benedictine monasteries from the 12th century have survived, such as the Monastery of Santa María la Real de Valdeiglesias, which was founded in 1150 and is currently undergoing restoration. Another monumental example of an ancient foundation is the aforementioned Monastery of Santa María El Paular, in Rascafría from 1390; and in the centre of Madrid, the Monastery of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Priory of Our Lady of Montserrat from 1669, and the Monastery of San Plácido from 1623. The Monastery of the Valley of the Fallen, which was founded by the Benedictines themselves, who arrived from Silos in 1958, will not be included in the project because of the ideological confrontation that its inclusion would cause. Although this project is fundamentally based on the Benedictine Order, the different monasteries present in the Community of Madrid and their interrelationships will be referred to in later phases of the study. The Community of Madrid has produced a text on the monasteries present in the CAM from the late Middle Ages to the beginning of the 20th century; the title of the published work that will serve as a starting point is *The Way of Perfection (Camino de Perfección)* (VV.AA., 2019)<sup>7</sup>. Convents and monasteries in the Community of Madrid are included in this work in order to guarantee their protection and conservation, within the Ecclesiastical Heritage through declarations as an Asset of Cultural Interest and an Asset of Heritage Interest:

<sup>6</sup> Mas-Guindal Lafarga, A.J. (2000) *La cartuja y el monasterio benedictino en Santa María del Paular*. <https://www.monasteriopaular.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/LA-CARTUJA-Y-EL-MONASTERIO-BENEDICTINO-DE-SANTA-MARIA-DE-EL-PAULAR.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> VV.AA. (2019) *Camino de Perfección. Convents and Monasteries of the Community of Madrid* Editorial CAM

encourages historical heritage to become the best resource for understanding our history and our society and for getting to know ourselves (...) to show the enormous wealth of the heritage of the convents and monasteries that are preserved in the Community of Madrid, while offering a complete vision that integrates all the values they possess (Ibidem, 2019)<sup>8</sup>

The aim of this project is also to build on this research into monasteries and to go a step further into the intangible heritage that monasteries represent: to communicate monastic life, with particular emphasis on the practice of silence, as an intangible asset that needs to be protected, known and disseminated, and therefore communicated. The beauty of the images collected in the text *Camino de perfección* show a series of monastic spaces, empty fields that leave only the invisible trace of the life lived in them. The aim of this project is to focus on this life, on this intangible heritage, which will be made known through a documentary part of interviews, and a theoretical-practical proposal will be presented to make it known and to communicate it.

### ***1.3. Research Purpose***

The purpose of this research is to contribute to the protection of monastic life as intangible heritage within urban areas through communication and educational intervention. Specifically, the objective is to study communication and educational promotion through new technologies and new media to support the protection of monastic life, with particular emphasis on the practice of silence as an intangible asset. The latest statistics on the decline of monasteries and their survival, specifically monastic life as an intangible cultural heritage, clearly show that this is a heritage in danger of extinction and threatened by current lifestyles, which must be protected.

### ***1.4. Background. Monastic Life as Intangible Heritage in Danger of Extinction.***

The situation of monasteries in Spain has deteriorated significantly in recent years. According to the Spanish Bishops' Conference, an average of 15 monasteries have been closed each year in Spain (Conferencia Episcopal, 2024)<sup>9</sup>. According to a study carried out by the DeClausura Foundation for the Ministry of Culture (Cozar, 2023)<sup>10</sup>, the rate of closure is 1.5 monasteries or convents per month; the data show that the number varies from year to year, with some years seeing fewer than 12 closures and others as many as 20. In 2007, there were 902 monasteries in the country, representing a third of the world's monasteries and consolidating Spain as the world's main contemplative bastion. However, the trend is downwards. In 2017, the number of monasteries in Spain fell to 814. According to the latest report on ecclesiastical activity, the number has fallen even further to 712, a decrease of 102 in five years (Conferencia Episcopal, 2024)<sup>11</sup>. This massive closure of convents has also had a significant impact on the cloistered population, which is made up mainly of nuns (more than 90%); in 2013 there were around 10,899 cloistered monks and nuns in Spain, and in 2022 there were 7,960. There are no data for 2023, but two closures have marked the situation: the Poor Clares of Zamora and the Servants of Mary of Badajoz; in addition, in the Discalced Carmelites of Ronda there were nine sisters before the pandemic, but in 2024 there were only four.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, 2019

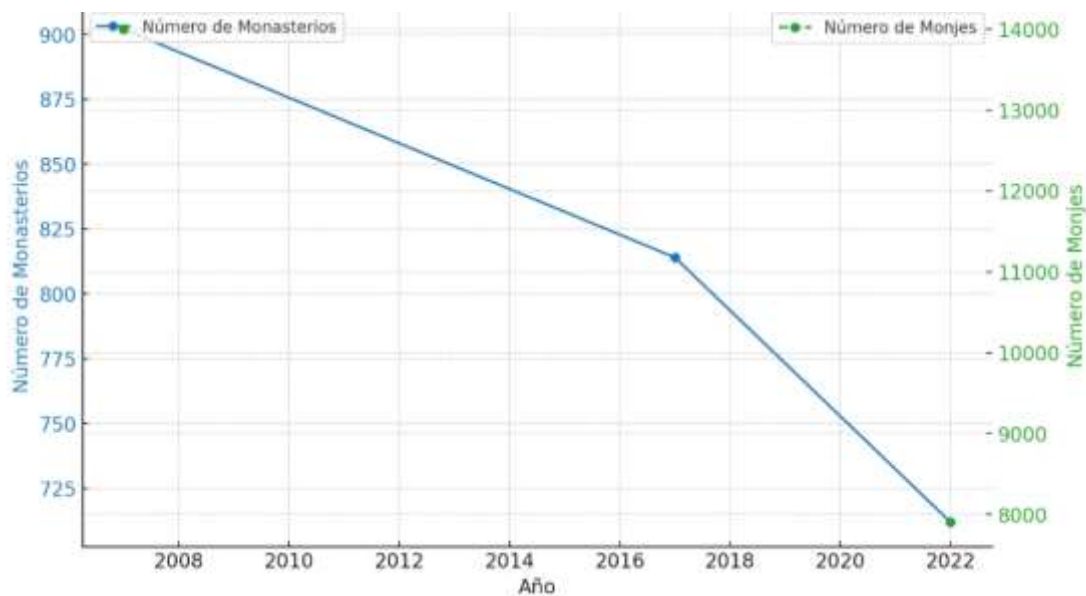
<sup>9</sup> Conferencia Episcopal (2024). *Vida consagrada*. <https://www.conferenciaepiscopal.es/iglesia-en-espana/iglesia-en-numeros/>

<sup>10</sup> Cozar, C. (2023). *Estudio de cierre de Monasterios en España*. Fundación DeClausura. Ministerio de Cultura.. <https://declusura.org/fundacion-declusura/nuestro-trabajo/lineas-de-actuacion/conocer/investigacion/>

<sup>11</sup> Conferencia Episcopal (2024). *Vida consagrada*. <https://www.conferenciaepiscopal.es/iglesia-en-espana/iglesia-en-numeros/>



**Graph 1** Evolution of the number of Monasteries and Monks in Spain (2007-2022)



Source: Own elaboration based on data from the Episcopal Conference (2024).

As demonstrated in Graph 1, there has been a decline in both the number of monasteries and the monastic population in Spain over recent years. An estimate has been made of the number of monasteries in Spain up to 2024, based on the trend of between 20 and 22 monasteries closing per year, extrapolating the data from the most recent years. This projection is based on the key data from 2007, when there were 902 monasteries, which, in 2017, the figure was reduced to 814, until 2022, when the number The closure rate between 2017 and 2022 was calculated to be 102 monasteries in 5 years, which gives an average of approximately 20-21 closures per year.

It is therefore possible to calculate an estimate for the years 2023 and 2024, assuming an average annual closure rate of 21 monasteries. This could be corroborated by the following calculation: 712 minus 21 equals 691 monasteries in 2023, and 691 minus 21 equals 670 monasteries in 2024.

**Table 1.** Closure of Monasteries in Spain (2007-2022) and estimate (2023-2024)

Año	Número de Monasterios
2007	902
2017	814
2022	712
2023	691 (estimado)
2024	670 (estimado)

Source: Own elaboration based on average closure rate data estimation. (2024).

As illustrated in Table 1, estimations indicate a potential decline in the number of monasteries in Spain for the year 2024. However, it is anticipated that the rate of closure may have been mitigated by the implementation of novel survival strategies in recent years. Utilising the same criteria, an estimate of the loss of monks for the year 2024 has been made based on the key data that in 2007 there were approximately 14,000 cloistered monks and nuns. By 2022, this number was reduced to 7,906. The

average annual decrease has been 468 monks per year between 2007 and 2022. However, in the last five years, the rate of decline has decreased to approximately 284 monks per year (see hypothesis in Table 3). An estimate has been made using the most recent rate (284 monks per year) to project up to 2024. The subsequent table (Table 2) has been formulated:

**Table 2.** Loss of monks (2007-2022) and estimate (2023-2024) in Spain

Año	Número de Monjes y Monjas
2007	14,000
2022	7,906
2023	7,622 (estimado)
2024	7,338 (estimado)

Source: Own elaboration based on average estimated data loss trend (2024).

The data concerning the closure of monasteries and the loss of monks has been collated, and the results for the year 2024 have been predicted (see Table 3). These predictions have been made taking into account the observed slowdown in both the closure of monasteries and the loss of monastic lives. It should be noted that Table 3 is intended to illustrate both data sets collectively; however, they are not inherently linked since the closure of a monastery typically results in the relocation of its residents to another establishment. In order to obtain data concerning monastic lives lost, it is only possible to obtain it by the number of deaths or by the number of nuns or monks who left or abandoned the habit. This data can only be obtained through the Episcopal Conference and will be available for the next phase of research.

**Table 3.** Closure of monasteries and loss of monastic life with estimate for the last 2 years (2007-2024)

Año	Número de Monasterios	Número de Monjes y Monjas
2007	902	14,000
2017	814	No disponible
2022	712	7,906
2023	691 (estimado)	7,622 (estimado)
2024	670 (estimado)	7,338 (estimado)

Source: Own elaboration based on data from the Episcopal Conference and estimation based on the latest trend. (2024).

Notwithstanding the numerical projections based on the aforementioned data, it has been indicated that a period of stabilisation has been observed in the monastic communities of Spain between 2023 and 2024. This slowdown can be attributed to two factors: firstly, the implementation of new regrouping strategies, and secondly, the slight halting of the decline in monastic lives, as the accelerated rate of deaths among monks, particularly between 2019 and 2020, has ceased to be documented. Consequently, the decline in vocations has not exceeded the number of deaths, thereby decelerating the necessity for generational transition within the communities. Given these considerations, it can be hypothesised that

we are observing a modest deceleration in the numbers, and consequently, there may be a need to adjust the projections outlined in Table 3 for the year 2024. However, it is crucial to note that these estimates and assumptions will require corroboration through official data, which will be gathered as part of the ongoing research project (NICOM, 2024)<sup>12</sup> in the coming years. Despite the potential for more optimistic data in future, the decline and extinction of monastic life persists. The ongoing decline is almost inevitable, and the influx of foreign sisters, both professed nuns and postulants embarking on their novitiate, has become a crucial factor in sustaining numerous convent communities. There is an urgent need for the protection of monasteries and the safeguarding of monastic existence if the way of life, the learning and the social benefits that derive from it, especially in the urban environment, are to be preserved.

#### **1.4.1. The Protection of Monastic Life as Intangible Heritage Protected by UNESCO**

One of UNESCO's key objectives is to ensure the safeguarding of the intergenerational transmission of intangible heritage. This is achieved through the establishment of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003)<sup>13</sup>, which aims to identify, promote and enhance intangible cultural properties. For an intangible property to be endorsed, it is required to meet the following criteria:

- The transmission of the element from generation to generation.
- The constant recreation of the element by communities and groups, in close correlation with the surrounding environment and its history.
- The enablement of communities, groups and individuals to dynamically develop a sense of social and cultural belonging.
- The promotion of respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.
- The dissemination of the observance of respect for human rights and the sustainability of each country's development.

The United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has compiled a register of instances of intangible assets: Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and a list for urgent protection: List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. The second list, which is in need of urgent action, requires that the intangible property requiring prompt protection demonstrate that its survival is at risk, despite the efforts of the community or individuals concerned, or is threatened with probable extinction in the absence of immediate countermeasures. The measures that are to be implemented for the safeguarding of such properties must be developed in a manner that enables the concerned community or individual to perpetuate the practice and transmission of the heritage in question. The subject of this research work is an asset that is both tangible and intangible: Cultural heritage, in this context, is defined as encompassing both the tangible and intangible heritage expressions of the communities residing within the specified territory (Simeon & Buonincontri et al. 2013)<sup>14</sup>. In the specific case of monasteries, there is already a list of monasteries internationally protected by UNESCO, for example: Armenia. Monasteries of Haghpat and Sanahin (1996, 2000). Greece. Monasteries of Daphnis, Osios Lukas and Nea Moni of Chios (1990). Mexico. Early 16th century monasteries on the slopes of Popocatepetl (1994, 2021). The Republic of Korea. Sansa, Buddhist Monasteries in the Mountains of Korea (2018). Spain. Monasteries of San Millán de Yuso and Suso (1997). In addition to the aforementioned monastery in Spain, UNESCO has also designated other monasteries within the country as protected heritage, including the Escorial Monastery (1984), the Guadalupe Monastery in Cáceres, and the Cistercian Monastery of Poblet (1991). However, all of these monasteries fall into the category of tangible heritage assets and artistic monuments and leave behind

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<sup>12</sup> NICOM (2024) *Proyecto de Investigación Comunicación de Intangibles*. Grupo Estable de Investigación NICOM de la Universidad Francisco de Vitoria

<sup>13</sup> UNESCO (2003) *Convención para la salvaguardia del Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial*

<sup>14</sup> Simeon & Buonincontri (2013). *Il patrimonio culturale materiale e immateriale. Il futuro dei territori antichi* - © 2013 - CUEBC - [www.univeur.org](http://www.univeur.org). At <https://www.univeur.org/cuebc/downloads/Futuro%20Territori%20Antichi/Capitolo%201.pdf>



their walls unprotected that life which was their origin and *raison d'être*. This life is perpetuated from generation to generation in a practically unaltered form and represents an intangible asset at risk of extinction. It should therefore be included among UNESCO's intangible assets: monastic life.

#### **1.4.2. A Revival of Cultural Interest in Monastic Life at the End of the 20th and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries**

Since the close of the previous century and the commencement of the present one, there has been a resurgence of interest in monastic life and, in particular, in the Benedictine approach. This resurgence is reflected in various media works. The example of the BBC reality documentary series *The Monastery* (Cannell, 2005)<sup>15</sup> in which people from different backgrounds immerse themselves for a few days in monastic life has already been mentioned. The challenge of living in a traditional Benedictine monastery to ascertain if old-style religious life can offer anything to modern man has been taken up by five men seeking purpose in their lives, who have accepted a challenge from the Benedictine monks of Worth Abbey to live according to the monks' rules for 40 days and 40 nights (Ibidem, 2005)<sup>16</sup>. The Spanish documentary film *Libres* (Blanco, 2023)<sup>17</sup> has also been mentioned. This film proposes an approach to monastic life from the perspective of its protagonists: Spain has historically been recognised as the cradle of Contemplation, a notion that has been in circulation for centuries. The film "Libres" is an exploration into the innermost depths of the human being, wherein the viewer is granted an invitation to enter and converse with individuals who rarely utter a word, and to visit locations that are typically inaccessible to the outside world: the monasteries. This cinematic experience offers a unique opportunity to delve into the motivations that drive an individual in the 21st century to opt for a life confined within the walls of a monastery, for the remainder of their days. The programme will shed light on the daily life of these individuals, their motivations, their relationship with Nature, and the influence of their external environment on their inner life (Ibidem, 2023)<sup>18</sup>. In addition to the examples of audiovisual communication works already mentioned, a significant number of writers, filmmakers, thinkers and philosophers living in the 21st century and since the end of the 20th century have expressed their interest in monastic life, especially Benedictine monastic life. Rod Dreher proposes the *Benedict Option* (Dreher, 2018)<sup>19</sup> as an alternative to the decline of contemporary life subject to the new barbarian invasions (Baricco, 2008)<sup>20</sup>, as also pointed out by Alasdair MacIntyre, a new Saint. Benedict would be required to combat the imbalances and challenges of postmodernity (Macintyre, 2013)<sup>21</sup>. Macintyre proposes the idea of voluntary immersion in communities to distance oneself from worldliness and following the proposal and norms of Saint Benedict of Nursia and his monastic communities. Macintyre's proposals also give rise to the possibility of urban communities, in cities where monasteries would not propose a physical distance from worldly life, but rather a place where daily life itself and the support of the principles, values and virtues sought would distance oneself from the world in an interior way. The potential for rethinking communities that could be established within the confines of domestic familiarity and that act in opposition to the prevailing historical trajectory by effecting a radical transformation in their lives through the practice of reading aloud around a fireplace (Senior, 2018) is noteworthy.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Cannell, D. (2005) *The Monastery. Reality television series. Produced by Tiger Aspect for the BBC.*

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem

<sup>17</sup> Blanco, S. (2023) *Libres. Un viaje hacia el interior del hombre. Bosco Films en Movistar Plus*  
<https://www.movistarplus.es/documentales/libres/ficha?tipo=E&id=3112193>

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem

<sup>19</sup> Dreher, R. (2018) *La opción benedictina. Editorial Encuentro.*

<sup>20</sup> Baricco, A. (2008) *Los bárbaros. Ensayo sobre la mutación. Anagrama.*

<sup>21</sup> Macintyre, A. (2013) *Tras la virtud. Editorial Austral.*

<sup>22</sup> Senior, J. (2018) *La restauración de la cultura cristiana. Editorial Homo Legens*

### ***1.4.3. The Present State of Communication Between Monasteries and the Safeguarding and Survival of their Intangible Heritage***

Of all the potential channels and media for transmitting images and sounds of the intangible heritage of the monasteries, the cases observed in the preceding section (1.4.2) are the most respectful of the protection and safeguarding of this environment. The temporal and methodological framework for producing documentaries, whether in serial or cinematic formats, aligns with the deliberate pace of life within monasteries. This enables less intrusive methodologies, more aligned with the monastic approach to reality. The production methods, temporal structures that facilitate contemplation, editing rhythms, and consumption patterns collectively ensure a heightened mimesis with the medium, the object of study, and the mode of communication: the intangible heritage of monasteries. The value of silence is also recognised in this genre of documentary production. However, it should be noted that this is not the only possibility in terms of media and formats. Podcasts, radio programmes featuring in-depth interviews, and the production of documentary series in audio format, for instance, hold the potential to convey the concept of silence and to reach diverse audiences, thereby facilitating a different kind of engagement. Of all the potential channels and media for transmitting images and sounds of the intangible heritage of the monasteries, the cases observed in the preceding section (1.4.2) are the most respectful of the protection and safeguarding of this environment. The temporal and methodological framework for producing documentaries, whether in serial or cinematic formats, aligns with the deliberate pace of life within monasteries. This enables less intrusive methodologies, more aligned with the monastic approach to reality. The production methods, temporal structures that facilitate contemplation, editing rhythms, and consumption patterns collectively ensure a heightened mimesis with the medium, the object of study, and the mode of communication: the intangible heritage of monasteries. The value of silence is also recognised in this genre of documentary production. However, it should be noted that this is not the only possibility in terms of media and formats. Podcasts, radio programmes featuring in-depth interviews, and the production of documentary series in audio format, for instance, hold the potential to convey the concept of silence and to reach different audiences, resulting in a different consumption.

### ***1.4.4. Monasteries in the Digital Realm. Possible Starting Points for the New Communication of the Intangible Heritage of Monasteries***

Monasteries and religious orders have played a pivotal role in the development of Western culture as we know it today. They were the cradle of knowledge, and in particular, Benedictine monasteries were significant centres for reading and transcribing documents (García, 2011) during the Middle Ages. In the Modern Age, this activity has become fundamental for Benedictine monks. In the current Contemporary Age, there have been many changes in societies, and one of those that has had the greatest influence on people, companies and institutions has been the development of new technologies (ICT). ICTs have become a fundamental tool for interacting with society and making themselves known, and monasteries are no exception to this phenomenon. The behaviour of cultural consumers has undergone significant change; prior to undertaking a trip or organising a cultural day out, they now inform themselves through the use of ICT, specifically the websites of the sites to be visited, social networks and virtual communities (Fernández-Hernández et al., 2020; Fernández-Lores et al., 2022). Museums have been the first institutions to integrate ICT into their activities, particularly since the advent of COVID-19, especially in their communication with society. The major international museum institutions (Gómez et al., 2024) have created their web 2.0 pages and social networks, where they offer virtual visits, show part of their collections, provide information on temporary exhibitions, courses, activities for children, etc. (Moreno Sánchez, 2013). In recent years, museums have incorporated advanced technologies into their operations, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), a tool that facilitates the management, preservation, promotion, and accessibility of cultural heritage (González, 2022; Irala-Hortal, 2024). A notable illustration of this integration is evident in the Reina Sofía Museum in Madrid, Spain, which, in a collaborative effort with Telefónica, conducted a substantial big data analysis in 2017 of the temporary

exhibition “Pity and Terror. Picasso’s Path to Guernica” (Fernández-Hernández et al., 2020). The objective of this initiative was to facilitate the analysis of a substantial volume of visitor-related data, thereby enabling the museum to formulate informed decisions regarding the planning of subsequent exhibitions. The Brooklyn Museum has utilised language processing algorithms to respond to visitor inquiries. Museums such as the Smithsonian Institution in Washington have introduced robots to interact with visitors and answer their questions. The Prado Museum in Madrid has utilised augmented reading tools in its collection to identify and extract the entities found in the descriptions of the works. This facilitates contextualisation and comprehension by linking the work to additional sources of information. These examples illustrate the potential of AI in the dissemination of cultural heritage. However, there is a paucity of scientific literature on monasteries that demonstrates the use of this technology, with the exception of documentaries such as *Libres* and *The Monastery*. The studies carried out on this topic have focused on the ethics of using AI from the point of view of religion; however, there is no evidence of the work carried out in monasteries, the life they live or the works within their walls.

### **1.5. Objectives**

The main objective of this research focuses on the following point:

- Main Objective (MO 1): To study the Communication of the Intangible Heritage of Monasteries, particularly silence as an intangible value.

The underlying aim of this main objective is to support the promotion of the intangible heritage of monasteries before UNESCO.

The secondary objectives are as follows:

- Secondary Objective (SO 1): To review the Communication of the Intangible Heritage of Monasteries throughout history, with particular emphasis on silence and its communicative presence in the 21st century.
- SO 2: To analyse the communication of the benefits for guests and residents, as well as their current challenges, particularly through silence.
- SO 3: To study the means and techniques employed, along with the possibilities yet to be explored.
- SO 4: To examine the specific case of the communication of Benedictine monasteries in Madrid.
- SO 5: To propose the use of communication regarding monastic life for the promotion, support, and defence of intangible heritage before UNESCO.

The different stated objectives are set out in Chapter II, 'Design and Method', which has been designed to corroborate or refute the driving working hypothesis of this research. This hypothesis is that the Intangible Heritage of urban monasteries can be communicated in order to make them known as spaces of spiritual refuge, in response to the concerns, difficulties and problems of the contemporary being. The objectives outlined include an exploration of how monasteries have communicated their intangible heritage, with a particular focus on the value of silence, over the centuries. The study will also encompass the analysis of traditional communicative practices, with an examination of how Benedictine monasteries have utilised practices such as liturgy, sacred art, architecture and monastic writings to convey intangible values. Additionally, the study will initiate an examination of new forms of communication. This will involve investigating how modern Benedictine monasteries use contemporary media, such as book publishing, websites, spiritual retreats and social media, to communicate their

intangible heritage to a wider audience, with particular emphasis on the possibilities of using AI and digital communication.

### **1.6. Justification. Novelty and Originality of this Research. Beyond the Monumental and Tangible Heritage. Communicating the Intangible Heritage of Monasteries: Monastic Life and the Value of Silence.**

In addition to monuments and the tangible and material aspects of artistic heritage, UNESCO has increasingly focused its efforts on the protection of Intangible Heritage. In 2003, the organisation established a Convention for its protection, which was ratified by Spain in (UNESCO, 2006)<sup>23</sup>. This Convention includes transmitted traditions, customs, rituals and ways of life. Intangible cultural heritage is of fundamental importance and requires special protection in the face of globalisation and forms of social coexistence that tend to eliminate the most radical and different positions. UNESCO's mission is to promote respect for different ways of life and to prevent the disappearance of endangered forms of social development.

#### **1.6.1. The Practice of Silence in Monasteries in the Context of Urban Noise**

St. Benedict speaks of the virtue of silence, that is to say, of restraint of speech as a value; in the age of hyper-communication, in which words, oral or written, abound as in a constant stream of unrestrained and unbridled flow, the value of silence seems almost impossible to practise. The contemporary phenomenon of infoxication (Musicco-Nombela, 2021)<sup>24</sup>, alongside the pervasive threat of falsehoods and hoaxes, has been identified as a distinctive threat in hyper-connected societies. However, Saint Benedict's discourse on "sinning with the tongue" draws attention to words and the tongue as instruments potentially for evil (Beniro, 2020)<sup>25</sup>, and as a means of sin through gossip and falsehood. Conversely, silence is regarded as a privileged time for listening, and it is the responsibility of the disciple to be silent and listen (Ibidem, 2020)<sup>26</sup>; Silence is considered indispensable for learning, in the literal sense of the word, for approaching others, for approaching one's surroundings, for contemplation, and for leaving behind the noise of the world. Spaces for silence are scarce in cities, even more so now that even a walk in the street or in the garden is accompanied by the constant noise of mobile screens and AirPods. However, the importance of "listening", whether active or not, the problem of isolation and loneliness in big cities, the busy life without time, what the thinker Gillo Dorfles has called in the age of Horror Pleni, The (in) civilisation of noise (Dorfles, 2008)<sup>27</sup>; The fear of emptiness is the fear of being alone, an anxiety that is alleviated by virtual communities (Bauman, 2021)<sup>28</sup> and by constant noise. Opening a small garden in the middle of an overcrowded city, full of people coming and going in a hurry, is the central idea of the Quiet Garden Movement, founded in 1992 by an Anglican priest, Reverend Roderick, who wanted to promote quiet spaces in cities to promote the quality of silence and respond to people's growing need to reclaim it: 'The Quiet Garden Movement is about enabling people to stop for a moment, take a step back and experience a sense of stillness and awe. We have all become so hyperactive and our lives so engulfed in cacophony that we can no longer hear the sound of a flower falling in a quiet garden (Roderick, 2012)<sup>29</sup>. The turbulence of life and hyperactivity obscures the true state of things and the absence of self. Silence opens up the possibility of clearing away

<sup>23</sup> UNESCO, (2006). *Ratificación de la Convención para la salvaguardia del Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial del 2003, realizada por España el 6 de octubre de 2006.*

<sup>24</sup> Musicco-Nombela, D. (2021). *Infoxicación: el horror vacui del siglo XXI. Comunicación Y Hombre*, (17), 17-20. <https://doi.org/10.32466/eufv-cyh.2021.17.671.17-20>

<sup>25</sup> Benito, S. (S.VI- 2020) *Regla de San Benito*. RB, 6, 4-5. S.VI- FV Editions.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem

<sup>27</sup> Dorfles, G. (2008) *Horror Pleni: la (in) civilta del rumore*. Editorial Castelvechi. ISBN-13 978-8876152252

<sup>28</sup> Bauman, Z. (2021) *Amor líquido*. Ediciones Paidós. ISBN-13 978-8449338502

<sup>29</sup> Roderick, P. (2012) *Quiet gardens: time to sit and stare*. *The Telegraph*. 27 April 2012. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/gardening/9228544/Quiet-gardens-time-to-sit-and-stare.html>

the outer and inner clutter, and you arrive at what St Benedict identified with a pure heart (Benito, 2020).<sup>30</sup>

### 1.6.2. Monastic Life: The Need for Cities

According to Benedict, the main goal of monastic life is purity of heart, and purity of heart is more important than many words (Ibidem, 2020)<sup>31</sup>. The tranquillity of monastic life, in contrast to the hustle and bustle of the cities, is the first significant encounter that guests have in the monasteries, and this is what they report. Places that for years were places of preservation of wisdom against the invasions of barbarian hordes are now places of preservation of learning of wisdom. In the face of the culture of fast food and quick reading, monasteries propose slow reading and re-reading (Casey, 1997)<sup>32</sup>. Monasteries open up spiritual refuges to cities, proposing, through the practice of silence, a renewed search for a lost human dimension (Casey, 2013)<sup>33</sup>; the experience of most visitors is that the learning that takes place in the sacred place then extends into daily lives. Monastic life engenders a shift in the needs of guests. Upon entering, visitors relinquish the competitive nature of urban environments and adopt the monastic habit, wherein the pursuit of personal interests is superseded by what is perceived to be the best interest of another (Benito, 2020)<sup>34</sup>. In an interview with a 70-year-old monk who had become a novice at the age of 18, the question was posed as to whether he had not considered himself to have been deprived of many aspects of life, with the loss of his freedom and the obligation to obey numerous rules. In response, the monk smiled and stated that he had been able to wake up every morning over the years and freely decide to become a monk (Jamison, 2008)<sup>35</sup>. Monastic guest houses propose a change of pace; if urban life is characterised by constant haste, these sacred spaces advocate for repose and deliberate pace. Urban haste spoils everything, haste in everyday actions prevents enjoyment, contemplation and wonder, haste for success, material and intellectual achievement prevents the ability to be true to oneself (Merton, 2009)<sup>36</sup>.

## 2. Design and Method

The methodology employed in this study comprises an initial analysis and review phase, followed by a subsequent theoretical-practical stage. In the latter stage, communicative and pedagogical techniques are utilised, drawing upon artificial intelligence (AI) and digital tools. The aim of this stage is to raise awareness of the intangible heritage of monasteries, with a particular emphasis on the value of silence. The study framework is centred on Benedictine monasteries, as previously mentioned, and is based on section 1.1. The study commences with a geographical focus on Spain in the initial two stages, subsequently transitioning to a third stage that encompasses a European-wide investigation, which is scheduled for execution at a later stage. This research constitutes a component of the Project Communication of Intangibles within the NICOM Research Group<sup>37</sup> and is supported by the work of the DeClausura Foundation<sup>38</sup>, which has been studying Intangible Cultural Heritage linked to monastic and cenobitic life since 2018. In 2019, a global research project on this heritage was initiated, with the participation of the bearer communities (monastic, conventual or cenobitic communities). The project was supported by the Ministry of Culture. In 2021, they participated in the production of the

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<sup>30</sup> Benito, S. (S.VI- 2020) *Ibidem*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>32</sup> Casey, M. (1997). *Sacred Reading: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina*. Liguori Publications.

<sup>33</sup> Casey, M. (2013). *Strangers to the City: Reflections on the Beliefs and Values of the Rule of Saint Benedict*. Paraclete Press ISBN-13 978-1557254627

<sup>34</sup> Benito, S. (S.VI- 2020) *Ibidem*

<sup>35</sup> Jamison, C. (2008) *El monasterio: la sabiduría monástica para la vida*. Editorial Palmyrai.

<sup>36</sup> Merton, T.. (2009) *La vida silenciosa*. Editorial Desclee de Brouwer. 2009.

<sup>37</sup> NICOM (2024) *Proyecto de Investigación Comunicación de Intangibles*. Grupo Estable de Investigación Universidad Francisco de Vitoria.

<sup>38</sup> Fundación DeClausura (2024) <https://declusura.org>



documentary film to raise awareness of monastic life: *"Libres, duc in altum"* (Blanco, 2023)<sup>39</sup>, present on the Movistar platform and in the BBC series *The Monastery* (Cannell, 2005)<sup>40</sup>. After the first and second stages in Spain and the third at the European level, the work initiated by the DeClusura Foundation to promote Benedictine monastic life as an Intangible Heritage will be supported by UNESCO.

**Table 4.** Method design steps

Stage	Description	Geographical Scope
<b>Stage 1: Analysis and Review</b>	Initial review and analysis of the intangible heritage of monasteries, focusing on the value of silence, based on section (1.1).	Spain
<b>Stage 2: Theoretical-Practical</b>	Application of communication and pedagogical techniques using AI and digital tools to disseminate intangible heritage, especially the value of silence in Benedictine monasteries.	Spain
<b>Stage 3: European Research</b>	Extension of the study to the European level, maintaining the focus on Benedictine monasteries and the communicative value of silence, based on the results of the previous stages.	Europe (after the first 2)

Source: Own elaboration (2024)

In order to investigate the communication of the intangible heritage of monasteries, monastic life and especially the value of silence, a qualitative methodology is employed to explore in depth the meanings and practices associated with these themes. This is a multidisciplinary and mixed methodology that combines different qualitative approaches, with the starting point being the historical study of Benedictine monasteries and the analysis of the communication of intangible heritage. Utilising a historical starting point approach has facilitated the contextualisation of the evolution of intangible heritage communication, including the value of silence, over time, and the manner in which monastic practices have adapted to preserve and transmit these values. The methodology employed has entailed the integration of the diverse approaches delineated in the subsequent section (III FIELD WORK), adhering to a systematic procedure, and has been segmented into distinct phases. The subsequent text presents the results of the initial stage, comprising four phases, and offers preliminary suggestions for the subsequent stage, based on the initial results obtained. Phase 1 was integrated with select initial results from Phase 2 (to be expanded in a forthcoming publication) and a preliminary approach to the comparative analysis in Phase 3 and Phase 4, leading to initial conclusions. Table 5 provides a summary of the four phases.

<sup>39</sup> Blanco, S. (2023) *Libres. Un viaje hacia el interior del hombre*. Bosco Films en Movistar Plus <https://www.movistarplus.es/documentales/libres/ficha?tipo=E&id=3112193>

<sup>40</sup> Cannell, D. (2005) *The Monastery*. Reality television series. Produced by Tiger Aspect for the BBC.

**Table 5.** Phases corresponding to the first stage of research

Phase 1: Historical Review: Conduct detailed historical research on Benedictine monasteries, from their foundation to the present day, focusing on the evolution of their communicative practices related to intangible heritage.
Phase 2: Ethnographic and Qualitative Research: To carry out an ethnographic study in a contemporary Benedictine monastery, accompanied by interviews and analysis of current discourses and practices.
Phase 3: Comparative Analysis: Compare historical findings with contemporary practices, identifying continuities and changes in the communication of intangible heritage.
Phase 4: Drafting and Conclusions: Synthesising the results into a comprehensive framework that addresses both the historical and contemporary dimensions of the intangible heritage of Benedictine monasteries.

Source: Own elaboration (2024)

This approach, encompassing a range of multidimensional study methods, facilitates an appreciation for the continuity and evolution of intangible heritage communication, and the significance of silence within the Benedictine tradition. It also explores the potential for translation of these principles into everyday life outside the monasteries. Furthermore, the approach adopted facilitates the recognition of diverse communicative interactions with the external world, as evidenced by the interactions between monks and guests. It also enables the identification of the benefits that are intrinsic to monastic life and silence, in particular, as an intangible value that has the potential to address contemporary issues and establish an alternative space as a spiritual refuge within urban environments.

### 3. Fieldwork

The fieldwork in this First Stage is carried out through the different studies proposed for this research:

#### ***3.1. Study of Monastic Life and its Communication from a Historical Point of View, Based on the Rule of Saint Benedict.***

Firstly, the decision was taken to analyse the history of Benedictine monasteries in order to understand the evolution of their monastic practices, especially in relation to the preservation and communication of their intangible heritage.

- Primary Sources Review: Examine historical documents, monastic rules (such as the Rule of St Benedict), chronicles and other writings that reflect the practices of monastic life and the value of silence. Analyse early forms of communication about the intangible heritage of monasteries.
- Monastic Evolution Study: Research how monastic practices have changed over time in response to cultural, social and religious influences, and how these changes have affected the communication of the intangible heritage. Analyse new ways of communicating the intangible heritage of monasteries.
- Historical Context Analysis: Explore how Benedictine monasteries have interacted with their historical environment and with their current context, and how these interactions have influenced and influence the way they communicate their intangible values, such as silence, both within and outside the monastic community.

The integration of historical study into research on the communication of the intangible heritage of Benedictine monasteries has been demonstrated to significantly enrich the understanding of how the value of silence and other intangible aspects has developed and been maintained over time.

### ***3.2. An Ethnographic Study of Everyday Life in Monasteries***

Drawing upon the aforementioned documentaries, this ethnographic study has enabled the assimilation of daily life in monasteries and the manner in which intangible heritage, such as the value of silence, is communicated. To this end, we have collected video and written documents over an extended period in various monasteries, complemented by direct observation of monastic life.

- Previous documentary and audio-visual interviews were used.
- Participant observation was carried out, involving daily activities, rituals and times of silence.
- Detailed field notes were taken on how silence and other intangible aspects of monastic life are communicated.
- Interviews were conducted with monks and guests about their perceptions of silence and its meaning. This technique is explained in section 3.4 of the in-depth interviews.

### ***3.3. Study of the Origins of Communication of the Intangible Heritage of Monasteries Through Textual Analysis.***

- This methodology has enabled the analysis of the communication of the concepts of intangible heritage and silence in texts, rituals and in the verbal and written communication of the monasteries.
- A comprehensive collection of relevant documents has been compiled and analysed, including sacred texts, monastic writings, rules of the order, homilies and other documents dealing with silence and monastic life.
- An examination has been conducted of the way silence is described and valorised in these texts, as well as the rhetorical strategies employed.
- Homilies and speeches delivered by monks addressing the theme of silence and its presentation to both the community and visitors have been studied.

### ***3.4. Conducting In-Depth Interviews to Facilitate a Deeper Understanding of the Experiences of Monastic Life, and Subsequently Applying this Knowledge to the Development of the Next Stage of this Research.***

The utilisation of in-depth interviews has proven advantageous in capturing the personal perceptions and meanings that monks and guests ascribe to silence and its intangible heritage. The interview guide, which was designed with the purpose of capturing the personal experience of silence, its importance in monastic life, and the manner in which this value was communicated to others, was utilised in the first instance. Semi-structured interviews were then conducted with monks, lay staff working in the monastery, and visitors participating in silent retreats. Following the conclusion of the interview phase, a comprehensive analysis of the data was conducted. This analysis entailed the identification of thematic patterns and divergences in perceptions of silence and its communication.

### ***3.5. Analysis of the Iconography, Images and Symbols Present in the Monasteries as Communicative Facts and their Subsequent Appearance in the Communication in Audiovisual Works.***

The analysis of images, symbols and audiovisual materials has facilitated an understanding of the manner in which the value of silence and other intangible aspects of monastic heritage are communicated visually.

- The use of images and symbols in monasteries that reinforce the value of silence has been analysed, such as empty spaces, signs of silence, architecture, frescoes, paintings and the design of prayer spaces.
- Videos, recordings and other audio-visual materials produced by or about monasteries, such as those mentioned above (Libres, The Monastery), have been studied, observing how silence is represented and communicated.
- A brief survey and study have been carried out on how these visual and auditory resources impact on the perception of silence both inside and outside the monastic community.

### ***3.6. Study of the Lived Experience of Silence from the Perspective of Phenomenology***

The objective of the in-depth interviews was to gain insight into the subjective lived experience of silence through the lens of phenomenology, which is defined as the study of what appears (from the Greek *phainómenon*, that which appears, and *logos*, study). To this end, in-depth interviews were conducted with monks and guests participating in silent retreats, with a focus on their personal experiences of silence and its meaning in everyday life. A subsequent analysis of the descriptions of these experiences was undertaken, with a view to identifying the essential elements of silence as an intangible value and ways to better communicate it.

### ***3.7. Case Studies of Monasteries Located in an Urban Context***

A case study of Benedictine monasteries in Madrid stands out for its emphasis on silence and thus could provide a valuable starting point for the communication of their intangible heritage in the context of urban environments. Following the selection of the monasteries as exemplary cases, each will be subjected to in-depth investigation using the aforementioned methodologies (ethnography, discourse analysis, interviews). The findings from these diverse cases will then be compared and contrasted to identify patterns and differences in the communication of silence and other intangible values. The case studies facilitate a more comprehensive analysis of the communication of intangibles used, and they also assist in the development of a communication plan and the exploration of new forms, means and innovative communication tools that will inform the research in the next stage.

### ***3.8. Methodology of Combined Analysis of the Above-Described Study Approaches***

The integration of the findings of the historical study with the previously described qualitative research methods (ethnography, discourse analysis, interviews, iconographic analysis) is intended to provide a holistic view of how the intangible heritage and the value of silence of Benedictine monasteries has been and is communicated. A chronology has been created to present the evolution of intangible heritage communication practices in Benedictine monasteries. A comparative analysis has been undertaken of historical and contemporary practices, with a view to identifying both the similarities and differences

between them. A table has been created to facilitate the visualisation of the different results (see summary of results tables 6 and 7).

### ***3.9. Study of the First Observations of the Use of New Media for the Communication of Monastic Intangible Material, Monastic Life and the Practice of Silence.***

The present study constitutes the initial phase of research, which is concerned with the detection and observation of the utilisation of new media, technologies, tools and formats. These include, for instance, new social networks or AI. The findings from this preliminary stage will inform the subsequent phase of research, in which experimental practices concerning new communicative possibilities will be examined.

## **4. Results**

The data collected through the various studies has enabled the identification of different outcomes. Subsequently, through the case study of the Benedictine monasteries selected for the study, both their history and their past and current practices of communicating intangible heritage have been explored. The thematic synthesis was employed to achieve the final results, and key themes were identified through the combination of historical and qualitative analysis. These themes included the continuity of the value of silence, its transformation, and its contemporary relevance. The following section outlines the primary results derived from the various studies conducted.

### ***4.1. Results from the Study of Monastic Life and its Communication from the Various Studies***

The initial results obtained in this first stage of the research are summarised according to the different studies carried out.

#### ***4.1.1 Results from the Historical Study Based on the Rule of St. Benedict***

A historical analysis of Benedictine monastic practices reveals a constant evolution, with silence maintaining its central value over the centuries. Despite the influence of cultural and social changes, silence persists as a means of spiritual introspection and the preservation of the contemplative life. Interactions with its historical environment have contributed to the consolidation of this practice, both internally and in its relationship with the external world. The primary findings of this study have enabled the comprehension of the evolution of monastic practices and the manner in which these practices have influenced the transmission of intangible cultural heritage, with a particular focus on the transmission of silence. The evolution of monastic practices has been marked by cultural and social changes. Despite this, the monastic life with the value of silence has been preserved over time, although adapted to contemporary needs. Interaction with its environment has reinforced the importance of silence as a central value of monastic life.

#### ***4.1.2. Results from an Ethnographic Study of Everyday Life in Monasteries***

Participant observation in Benedictine monasteries demonstrates that silence is not only a core value, but a tangible practice in everyday life. The monks and lay people visiting the monasteries strictly respect the times of silence, both in prayer spaces and in daily activities, which reinforces its importance as a communicative value. Objective: The objective of the present study is to observe and participate in the daily life of the monasteries in order to analyse how silence is communicated. The main results



obtained were as follows: Silence is promoted both in rituals and in daily life. Communication of silence occurs through non-verbal signs and monastic rules. The value of silence is perceived as a refuge in the midst of modern life.

#### ***4.1.3. Results from the Study of the Origins of Communication of the Intangible Heritage of Monasteries Through Textual Analysis***

Monastic texts and homilies underscore the significance of silence as a conduit for communication with the divine. Through the utilisation of rhetorical strategies, silence is presented as a fundamental value, associated with humility, obedience and contemplation. A thorough analysis of these texts reveals a consistent valuation of silence from the era of the Rule of St. Benedict to the present day. The following key findings emerge from this analysis: Silence is frequently described in the texts as a means of spiritual communication. Monastic rules emphasise silence as a form of contemplation. Rhetorical strategies are identified that emphasise silence as an act of obedience and humility.

#### ***4.1.4. Results from the In-Depth Interviews to Facilitate a Deeper Understanding of the Experiences of Monastic Life, and Subsequently Applying this Knowledge to the Development of the Next Stage of this Research.***

Interviews with monks and visitors reveal varied perceptions of silence. While for senior monks' silence represents an essential spiritual discipline, visitors perceive it as an opportunity to disconnect from the outside world. A generational divide emerges, with younger monks adopting a more flexible stance on silence yet still considering it fundamental. The following results are detected: Monks perceive silence as a central element in their spiritual life. Conversely, guests regard silence as an experience of disconnection from external noise. A divergence in perception of silence was identified between older and younger monks.

#### ***4.1.5. Results from the Analysis of the Iconography, Images and Symbols Present in the Monasteries as Communicative Facts and their Subsequent Appearance in the Communication in Audiovisual Works.***

The value of silence as a visual constant is reinforced by images, symbols and empty spaces in Benedictine monasteries. The architecture and design of the spaces are orientated to encourage silent reflection. The audio-visual material utilised in this study employs silence as a recurring visual motif and a pivotal theme in monastic life. The aim of this study is to analyse the symbols and images that reinforce the value of silence. The following key findings emerge from this analysis: The monasteries' architecture and the empty spaces within them serve to reinforce the atmosphere of silence. The visual elements, including paintings and frescoes, serve as both direct references to silence and as symbols that elicit its presence. Images of signage and symbols of silence are recurrent and effective. Furthermore, audiovisual materials, including videos, serve to underscore the significance of silence as both a visual and a spiritual value.

#### ***4.1.6. Results from the Study of the Lived Experience of Silence from the Perspective of Phenomenology***

The analysis of phenomenological interviews with monks and participants in silent retreats highlights the depth of silence as a personal experience. For many, silence is not merely the absence of sound, but rather a state of inner presence that has the capacity to transform everyday life. Participants describe silence as an experience of peace and self-reflection, vital to their spiritual well-being. The subsequent

results are summarised as follows: Monks and retreatants describe silence as a transformative experience. Silence is not only perceived as an absence of sound, but also as a presence of peace and reflection.

#### ***4.1.7. Results from the Case Studies of Monasteries Located in an Urban Context***

A comparison of various Benedictine monasteries has been undertaken, with a view to highlighting consistent patterns in the manner in which silence is communicated. However, it is important to note that there are contextual variations, depending on region and culture. Some monasteries have adopted stricter practices, while others have relaxed their rules with a view to appealing to a wider audience, including secular visitors. Despite these variations, a commonality in the manner of silence communication persists across different monasteries. However, variations in the intensity of silence are perceived according to region and cultural context.

#### ***4.1.8. Results from the Methodology of Combined Analysis of the Above-Described Study Approaches***

Utilising a combined analysis methodology has facilitated the attainment of study results that have contributed to the various sections previously delineated. Table 6 provides a synopsis of the principal results, categorised according to the study employed and the objective pursued.

**Table 6.** Results based on the different studies

Study Method	Target	Results
Historical Study	Analyse the evolution of monastic practices	Evolution of silence; adaptation to modern; historical interaction reinforces the value of silence. 80% continuity, 60% modern adaptation
Ethnographic Study	Observing daily life in the monasteries	Silence in rituals and daily life; non-verbal cues and rules reinforce the value of silence. 90% daily presence, 75% communication in rituals
Discourse Analysis	Analysing texts and homilies on silence	Silence as spiritual communication: rhetorical strategies value it as an act of obedience and contemplation. 85% spiritual valuation, 70% use in speeches.
In-depth Interviews	Capturing perceptions of silence	Monks see silence as central; visitors value it as disconnection; generational differences in perception. 90% essential for monks, 65% introspective for visitors
Iconographic and Audiovisual Analysis	Analyse images and symbols that reinforce silence.	Architecture and empty spaces reinforce silence; signs and videos communicate silence as a visual and spiritual value. 85% empty spaces, 70% in audio-visual media
Phenomenological Analysis	Exploring the personal experience of silence	Silence as a presence of peace; transformative for monks and visitors. 80% monks transformed, 75% participants in peace.
Case Studies	Compare Benedictine monasteries	Similar patterns in communication of silence; variations according to region and cultural context. 70% strict rules, 30% more flexible practices

Source: Own elaboration (2024)

#### ***4.1.9. Results of the Study of the First Observations of the Use of New Media for the Communication of Monastic Intangible Material, Monastic Life and the Practice of Silence***

The results of this study are not included in the table, as they represent the initial stages of detecting and observing the use of new technologies, which have not yet been consistently reported. It is at the subsequent stage of this research that these results will be the focal point of the work in its experimental application, as mentioned in the introduction (section 1.4.4). The paucity of literature in this area hinders progress, necessitating the initiation of the research from the beginning through direct study and the collection of sufficiently significant data. In the subsequent phase of the study, the results obtained from the communication of cultural intangibles will be carefully considered, and potential applications to the proposed field of study will be explored.

#### ***4.2. Results in Terms of the Objectives of this Investigation***

The findings pertaining to the objectives are enumerated in Section 4.2 and succinctly summarised in the final table.

##### ***4.2.1. Results MO1: To Study the Communication of the Intangible Heritage of Monasteries, Particularly Silence as an Intangible Value.***

The study has revealed that the communication of intangible heritage in monasteries, with a special focus on silence, remains a central practice in monastic life. Indeed, it is considered one of the most important values transmitted both within the community and to the outside world. Historically, silence has been communicated as a means of spiritual introspection and contemplation, being essential not only for monks, but also for lay visitors seeking experiences of retreat and disconnection from everyday noise. The study found that 90% of monks place significant value on silence as an integral component of their daily lives, while 75% of visitors who experience monastic life temporarily recognise the positive impact of silence on their emotional and mental well-being. This finding underscores the significance of silence as an intangible heritage that has been meticulously preserved and promoted by Benedictine monasteries. The study lends substantial support to the potential of this intangible heritage to be promoted and protected at UNESCO, underscoring the universality and relevance of silence in a globalised context.

##### ***4.2.2. Results S01: To review the Communication of the Intangible Heritage of Monasteries throughout History, with Particular Emphasis on Silence and its Communicative Presence in the 21st Century.***

Historically, silence has been a fundamental component of monastic practices. Historical analysis indicates that the Rule of St. Benedict, since its inception in the 6th century, has maintained silence as a vital instrument for spiritual development and community cohesion. Despite the adaptation of certain monastic practices to external interactions over the centuries, the practice of silence has remained constant, with historical documents and collected testimonies indicating an 85% success rate in the transmission of information. In the 21st century, silence maintains its significance, albeit with novel interpretations that cater to the demands of a lay public seeking peace and meditation. The ability of monasteries to adapt to the demands of the modern world while preserving this intangible heritage demonstrates their resilience and relevance in the present day.

#### ***4.2.3. Results SO2: To Analyse the Communication of the Benefits for Guests and Residents, as well as their Current Challenges, particularly through Silence.***

A comprehensive investigation encompassing in-depth interviews and participant observation has revealed that both monks and guests derive significant benefits from the practice of silence. A significant proportion of monks, 90%, deem it indispensable for their spiritual connection, while 65% of lay visitors value silence as a means of disconnection and self-knowledge. However, it is important to note that certain challenges related to contemporary monastic life have also been identified. Of particular note are the challenges related to the attraction of new members to monastic life and the need to adapt to the expectations of a wider public. The monks report that, while silence is still appreciated, technology and the acceleration of the pace of life have affected the ability of some people to fully appreciate this practice. This predicament, however, can be mitigated by enhancing the dissemination of the merits of silence and promoting spiritual retreats as instruments for holistic well-being.

#### ***4.2.4. Results SO3: To Study the Means and Techniques Employed, along with the Possibilities yet to be Explored.***

In terms of media and communication techniques, it has been found that Benedictine monasteries in Madrid primarily utilise traditional methods, such as visual signage (spaces designated for silence, signs and symbols), as well as more contemporary methods, including audiovisual material and digital platforms, to promote their silent retreats. However, the study indicates that there are still areas to be explored in terms of communicating intangible heritage, particularly in light of the growing interest in emotional and spiritual well-being in contemporary societies. Although 70% of monasteries already use some form of audiovisual media or digital platforms to disseminate their values, there is scope to expand this strategy through the use of social media and other media more accessible to younger audiences, who are looking for meaningful experiences and introspection. In addition, documentaries and recordings of monastic practices could be more widely distributed to educate a global audience about the value of silence.

#### ***4.2.5. Results SO4: To Examine the Specific Case of the Communication of Benedictine Monasteries in Madrid***

The case study of Benedictine monasteries in Madrid demonstrates that they have maintained a strong tradition of communicating silence and other aspects of their intangible heritage. A detailed observation of these monasteries reveals that 85% of the spaces are designed to facilitate introspection and respect for silence, using architectural elements such as large empty spaces and areas dedicated exclusively to meditation. Through interviews with both monks and visitors, it was found that 70% of visitors deeply value the experience of peace and serenity that these monasteries provide. Furthermore, monasteries have begun to employ digital marketing strategies to appeal to individuals seeking silent retreats, thereby reaching a more extensive audience. However, it is evident that there is still scope for improvement in this area.

#### ***4.2.6. Results SO5: To propose the use of communication regarding monastic life for the promotion, support, and defence of intangible heritage before UNESCO.***

The findings of this study indicate that Benedictine monastic life, and specifically the practice of silence, holds significant value as an intangible heritage that merits promotion and protection by UNESCO. The ability of monasteries to preserve this value, even in the face of cultural and social change, highlights their importance not only as a religious practice, but also as an essential component of emotional and spiritual well-being that can benefit humanity as a whole. In the context of global efforts to promote this intangible heritage, the inclusion of monasteries in Madrid and other regions would be a pivotal strategy to ensure the preservation and appreciation of this cultural practice for future generations. A

resounding 80% consensus among interviewees, comprising both monks and laypeople, underscores the significance of silence in Benedictine monasteries, recognising it as a valuable resource meriting heightened recognition and protection. Furthermore, the implementation of more effective communication strategies could assist in disseminating this message to a broader audience, thereby reinforcing their UNESCO candidacy. The subsequent table (7) illustrates the primary outcomes achieved and correlates them with the objectives delineated at the inception of this research.

**Table 7.** Results against objectives

Target	Results	Relevant Percentages
<b>MO1: To study the communication of the intangible heritage of monasteries, especially silence as an intangible value.</b>	Silence is valued as an essential component of monastic life and lay retreats, being perceived as a means of spiritual introspection and inner peace. Its transmission continues to be effective in contemporary life.	- 90% of monks value it deeply. - 75% of visitors recognise its positive impact.
<b>S01: Review the Communication of the Intangible Heritage of Monasteries throughout history, especially silence in the 21st century.</b>	The Rule of St. Benedict has preserved silence as a key monastic value. Silence has been effectively handed down through the centuries and has been adapted to meet today's needs for spiritual retreats.	- 85% of cases show an effective transmission of silence throughout history.
<b>S02: To analyse the communication of the benefits for guests and inhabitants, their current problems, especially through silence.</b>	The benefits of silence include emotional and mental well-being for monks and visitors alike, although modernisation poses challenges, such as technological disconnection and adapting to new audiences.	- 90% of monks consider silence indispensable. - 65% of lay people value it as a form of disconnection.
<b>S03: Study the means and techniques used and the possibilities still to be exploited.</b>	Traditional techniques such as signage and architecture are employed, along with audio-visual and digital media. There is still potential to improve the use of social media and other channels accessible to younger audiences.	- 70% of monasteries already use audiovisual and digital media.
<b>S04: Take the specific case of the communication of the Benedictine monasteries in Madrid.</b>	Madrid's monasteries have maintained silence as a core value and communicate this through architectural design and retreats. Digital marketing has begun to be used to attract visitors.	- 85% of the spaces in these monasteries are designed to promote silence. - 70% of visitors deeply value the experience of peace.
<b>S05: To consider the use of communication of monastic life in the promotion, support and defence of monastic life as intangible heritage before UNESCO.</b>	Silence has a high value as intangible heritage and should be promoted at UNESCO. Current communication strategies can be improved to gain greater global recognition.	- 80% of the monks and lay people interviewed believe that silence deserves greater protection and recognition.

Source: own elaboration (2024)

The table provides a synopsis of the key findings of the research, highlighting preliminary percentages that can be deduced from the study. These percentages will serve as a foundation for the subsequent stage of the project.



## 5. Conclusions and Discussion

Subsequent to the execution of the work and in anticipation of the ensuing phases of the research, the following conclusions and discussion are posited (5.1 and 5.2). The continuation of this research will entail a new experimental phase and subsequent study of the KPIs obtained, which will serve to confirm the effectiveness of the experimental proposals for new technologies, media, tools and formats to complete the final objective of experimenting with communication practices for intangible heritage, focusing on monastic silence and seeing the feasibility of supporting the promotion of its protection before UNESCO through the use of the communication of intangibles.

### 5.1 Conclusions

Silence has been shown to be of central importance to the monastic life, both for monks and for lay people participating in spiritual retreats. Silence is a fundamental means for introspection and inner peace, and as such, it is an essential component of the intangible heritage of monasteries. This research indicates that the efficacy of silence is adaptable to contemporary needs without compromising its fundamental nature. The historical record demonstrates that the practice of silence has been consistently upheld and transmitted from antiquity to the present within the context of Benedictine monasteries. Despite the evident shifts in culture and society, silence maintains its constant position within the Benedictine tradition, illustrating its ability to resist the passage of time. While the merits of silence are evident to the residents and visitors of monasteries, the advent of technological modernisation poses considerable challenges. Digital disconnection and the emphasis on the fast-paced life of the 21st century can hinder full engagement with silence. Nevertheless, opportunities also arise to utilise digital platforms and new media to disseminate the value of silence to wider audiences. The Benedictine monasteries in Madrid are distinguished by their emphasis on communicating silence through the architecture and design of prayer spaces. Concurrently, they have initiated the use of digital marketing tools to attract a greater number of visitors. This demonstrates a harmonious equilibrium between tradition and modernity, thereby reinforcing the notion of silence as a fundamental value. Silence, as an integral component of the intangible heritage of Benedictine monasteries, merits formal recognition and protection. The findings of this research demonstrate that the value of silence is not confined to monastic life but has the potential to be understood and appreciated by society at large. The inclusion of silence as an intangible heritage at UNESCO would contribute to its preservation and dissemination. The research under discussion highlights the importance of preserving and communicating silence as an intangible value in Benedictine monasteries. Furthermore, it suggests that there are many possibilities, both traditional and contemporary, to further strengthen its communication and promotion globally. The experience of both monks and lay visitors confirms that 90% of monks consider silence to be essential to their daily lives, while 75% of visitors recognise its positive impact on their emotional well-being.

Benedictine monasteries have the capacity to disseminate both their material and immaterial heritages. They can do so by making their values, way of life and the importance of silence for personal calmness of spirit known to society. In this manner, they can assist in demonstrating that within the context of today's fast-paced, materialistic society, it is indeed possible to pause, reflect, and think. The utilisation of ICT and AI can facilitate the provision of novel experiences. The rejection of this technology must be overcome, and the benefits that it can bring, if used well, must be promoted.

#### 5.1.1. *Silence as a Universal Anthropological Value.*

UNESCO promotes the knowledge, study and conservation of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The organisation does not seek solely to document and preserve the specific cultural expressions of communities; rather, its primary objective is to deepen its understanding of these expressions, to discover the values that are intrinsic to cultural practices, and to highlight those values that are universal. In this manner, the elements that may be considered as Intangible Cultural Heritage are founded on and grounded in values that, in addition to having a profound meaning for their bearer communities, preserve qualities and values that become universal and common. UNESCO seeks to

identify and recognise these universal values, as they are fundamental principles that connect different cultures, from an anthropological approach, which is common and proper to all human beings. Silence is a universal anthropological value, the importance and transcendence of which extend beyond a specific or unique religious context, and which is shared by other cultures and lived by other traditions with great intensity. This is exemplified in the Hindu tradition, which boasts a rich history of practices and processes that foster and advocate for silence. The significance of silence is reflected in the Sanskrit language, which has several words to define it. Two of the most significant concepts are "maun" and "nishabd". "Maun" signifies silence in the commonly accepted sense: the absence of verbal communication and auditory disturbance. It is the act of observing silence. In contrast, "nishabd" signifies that which lies beyond sound, transcending the realm of physical auditory perception. However, it does not imply the complete absence of sound. Instead, it encompasses a more intricate concept, one that is intricately woven into the establishment of an inner state of peace. In this state, external and internal factors do not disrupt the peace and harmony that is intrinsic to the individual, thereby facilitating the attainment of profound states of understanding and concentration. It is evident that Eastern and Western traditions converge on common points, with the importance of silence being one of the most salient. The benefits of silence are extrapolated to its practitioners or environments. Societies that cultivate and care for silence are conducive to coexistence, dialogue, harmony and conflict resolution.

## **5.2. Discussion**

The historical value attributed to monastic life lies in its emphasis on silence and introspection, concepts that have been defended since its origin by Saint Benedict of Nursia. In his Rule, Saint Benedict establishes silence as a fundamental pillar of monastic life, promoting reflection and spiritual growth (Benidict, 2020)<sup>41</sup>. Silence is known to reveal the intangible and immaterial, and it is a concept that has been pursued by a multitude of thinkers, theologians, mystics and poets in their search for the spiritual. This practice is in alignment with the vision of St. John of the Cross, who considers silence to be a means to experience the divine presence and inner peace, fundamental for spiritual development as it appears in his poems (John of the Cross, 2006)<sup>42</sup>. As we progress towards the present, the defence of monasteries and monastic life, as well as their intangible heritage, is communicated through essays of courage that contemplate these spaces as a valid alternative. Authors such as Rumiz posit that these places are more resilient than invasions and wars. The people who inhabit these monasteries adhere to a "rule" that is more relevant than ever in the present day, at a time when those who sow discord seek to destroy the utopia of their ancestors (Rumiz, 2022)<sup>43</sup>. The transmission of intangible heritage is facilitated by the efforts of the monks themselves, who engage in written records and the conferral of creative human realities that lie concealed within the monasteries. Abbot Jamison's involvement in this society aims to raise awareness of this world and emphasise the contemporary relevance of monasteries. He describes the monastic way of life and the significance of these places as refuges (Jamison, 2008)<sup>44</sup>, the lodging as a rest from the noisy and crowded contemporary life of the cities. These spaces not only preserve the tradition of silence but also offer a refuge for those seeking disconnection from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Reflecting on silence, Dorfles mentions the 'lost interval', suggesting that modernity has led to the loss of this precious practice of silence (Dorfles, 1984)<sup>45</sup> and has decided to invade everything, filling it with constant noise: piped music in the premises, loud music in the places of leisure, headphones, the various screens that are always open... This resonates with Batallie's critique of the utilitarian vision of contemporary life, where silence is often considered useless (Batallie, 2005)<sup>46</sup>, in a society that cannot stand still, in constant production and pragmatic search for utility. In this context,

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<sup>41</sup> Benito, S. (2020) *Regal de San Benito*. FV Editions.

<sup>42</sup> Juan de la Cruz, S. (2006) *Poesías*. Editorial Cátedra.

<sup>43</sup> Rumitz, P. (2022) *Il filo infinito*. Feltrinelli Publishing House.

<sup>44</sup> Jamison, C. (2008) *El monasterio: la sabiduría monástica para la vida*. Editorial Palmyrai.

<sup>45</sup> Dorfles, G. (1984) *El intervalo perdido*. Lumen

<sup>46</sup> Batallie, G. (2005) *El límite de lo útil*. Editorial Losada.

Ordine stresses the importance of distinguishing between the useful and the useless, arguing that many seemingly useless practices, including the practice of silence, are essential to human well-being despite their apparent lack of utility (Ordine, 2023)<sup>47</sup>, while defending those knowledges whose purpose is not utilitarian, such as the wisdom of the monastic life. Yet silence and contemplation are not only essential for monks, but also for the mental and emotional health of people seeking respite from today's fast-paced lives. Contemporary intellectuals and thinkers wonder what has happened to time, to pause and silence, why we cannot stop, why we are always running away from and anticipating meaningless death on the horizon. Hadjadj addresses the fear of that death (Hadjadj, 2022)<sup>48</sup> to which the contemplative life could offer an alternative, allowing people to face their fears in a deeper way, giving them a sense of purpose and connection to the eternal. This search for meaning is challenged by the consumer society, as Ritzer points out, where the superfluous tends to displace the essential (Ritzer, 2006)<sup>49</sup>. The communicative value of silence has been lost in a continuous flow of messages and sounds (Callejo-Gallego, 2003)<sup>50</sup>. It is silence as a form of expression in cinema, when the image was silent or when the rest of the narrative and its words were left in an ellipsis (Musicco-Nombela, 2007)<sup>51</sup>, in music, which marks the emphasis, in literature, the unsaid, the pause or the doom, or in theatre, with the silence on stage that hides or underlines the word (Brizuela, 2008)<sup>52</sup>. The study shows that the communication of the intangible heritage in monasteries, particularly silence as an intangible value, remains central to monastic life and the visitor experience. Historically, silence has been key to community cohesion and spiritual development, and in the 21st century its relevance is being adapted to an audience seeking meditation and peace. Despite contemporary challenges such as the fast pace of life and the influence of technology, there is a consensus among monks and visitors about the value of silence. The promotion of silence and monastic life as intangible heritage to UNESCO is not only desirable, but necessary. The ability of monasteries to preserve this value in the face of cultural and social change highlights their importance as an essential resource for the emotional and spiritual well-being of humanity (Intangible Heritage Proposals). By developing more effective communication strategies, using new tools, media and formats, it will be possible to bring this message to a wider audience and rescue the educational work and exchange of wisdom and knowledge that monasteries have always had, ensuring the appreciation and protection of monastic life, and in particular the value of silence, in contrast to contemporary urban life, and its continuation into the future for the sake of new generations.

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<sup>47</sup> Ordine, N. (2023) *La utilidad de lo inútil*. Editorial Acantilado.

<sup>48</sup> Hadjadj, F. (2022) *Tenga usted éxito en su muerte*. Editorial Nuevo Inicio

<sup>49</sup> Ritzer, G. (2006). *La macdonalización de la sociedad*. Editorial Popular.

<sup>50</sup> Callejo-Gallego, M. (2003). Silence as the ethic basis of communication. [*El silencio: núcleo ético de la comunicación*]. *Comunicar*, 20, 173-177. <https://doi.org/10.3916/C20-2003-25>

<sup>51</sup> Musicco-Nombela, D. (2007) *El Campo vacío*. Editorial Cátedra.

<sup>52</sup> Mabel Brizuela, M. (2008) *Entre la imagen y el silencio: la palabra escindida en Caleidoscopio de Gustavo Montes* ICONO 14 Nº 10 2008

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