

A Rule for Hermitages  
(1217–1221)

[This text can be found in the oldest manuscript collection of the writings of Francis, the Assisi Codex 338, and in the manuscript tradition of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Names of hermitages are spread throughout the early biographies of the saint suggesting that the eremitical spirit of the primitive fraternity was quite strong. While reflecting many of the expressions of the monastic hermitage, e.g., separation from the world, private cells, the tradition of Martha and Mary, this text expresses a distinctly Franciscan character, i.e., the fraternal dimension, the begging of alms, the role and visit of the provincial minister and the custodian.]

<sup>1</sup>Let those who wish to stay in hermitages (*in eremis*="in the woods") in a religious way be three brothers or, at the most, four; let two of these be "the mother" and have two "sons" or at least one.<sup>a</sup> <sup>2</sup>Let the two who are "mothers" keep the life of Martha <sup>Lk 10:38-42</sup> and the two "sons" the life of Mary <sup>Lk 10:38-42</sup> and let one have one enclosure in which each one may have his cell in which he may pray and sleep.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>3</sup>And let them always recite Compline of the day immediately after sunset and strive to maintain silence, recite their Hours, rise for Matins, and *seek first the kingdom of God and His justice.* <sup>Mt 6:33</sup> <sup>4</sup>And let them recite Prime at the proper hour and, after Terce, they may end their silence, speak with and go to their mothers. <sup>5</sup>And when it pleases them, they can beg alms from them as poor little ones out of love of the Lord God.<sup>c</sup> <sup>6</sup>And afterwards let them recite Sext, None and, at the proper hour, Vespers.

<sup>7</sup>And they may not permit anyone to enter or eat in the enclosure where they dwell. <sup>8</sup>Let those brothers who are the "mothers" strive to stay far from everyone and, because of obedience to their minister, protect their "sons" from everyone so that no one can speak with them.

<sup>9</sup>And those "sons" may not talk with anyone except with their "mothers" and with the minister and his custodian when it pleases them to visit with the Lord's blessing.

<sup>10</sup>The "sons," however, may periodically assume the role of the "mothers," taking turns for a time as they have mutually decided.<sup>a</sup> Let them strive to observe conscientiously and eagerly everything mentioned above.