

“Those who Live in Hermitages”

Contrary to popular understanding of him Francis of Assisi was primarily a contemplative who drew his spiritual strength for travelling, preaching the gospel and serving the poor, by frequent withdrawal to the mountains and caves of central Italy to live as a hermit. He encouraged his followers in the same path - hence the treasure we call "A Rule for those Living in Hermitages", which brings together both solitude and community. In a time when vocations to the religious life in the Western world have sharply diminished it is noticeable how becoming a hermit has been a "growth industry". But perhaps it is not surprising that in a consumerist, noisy and stressful world people are discovering their need for withdrawal and prayer which can take many different forms. If you would like to explore further both the history and contemporary expressions of Franciscan hermit life we recommend "Franciscan Solitude" edited by Andre Cirino OFM and Josef Raischl (ISBN 157659 006 2) obtainable from the Franciscan International Study Centre, Canterbury, Kent.