

Pilgrimage Reflection

A Desire for Prayerful Solitude

Francis imitated Jesus in two very significant ways: 1) he served the needs of others and 2) he took refuge in solitary places. One of his favorites, a place you visited on your pilgrimage, was the Carceri, located outside Assisi on Mount Subasio. Francis didn't go there simply because he needed a break from the strains of public ministry. And he didn't only enjoy solitude whenever his schedule permitted it. He deliberately sought it out as a vital means of drawing closer to God. He knew that lonely, quiet prayer was just as critical as was seeing the Lord in the many people he met each busy day. In Francis, we learn that solitude and service to others are not only complementary; they are integral to a true encounter with Christ. As a way of furthering our ministry to others, we, also, need to find our own Carceri and "schedule" time to be alone with God.



Early Writings

From The Second Book of Celano's *The Life of Saint Francis*, regarding the Saint's desire for solitude

At one time the blessed and venerable father Francis, with worldly crowds gathering eagerly every day to hear and see him, sought out a place of rest and secret solitude. He desired to free himself for God and shake off any dust that clung to him from the time spent with the crowds. It was his custom to divide the time given him to merit grace and, as seemed best, to spend some of it to benefit his neighbors and use the rest in the blessed solitude of contemplation.

Regis Armstrong, Wayne Hellmann and William Short, eds., *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, The Saint*, Vol. I (New York: New City Press, 2000), 261.



Prayer

My Lord and my God, You did call from their daily lives, Your servants Moses, Elijah, John the Baptist, Mary of Nazareth, Your Son, Jesus, and Francis and Clare of Assisi, to come apart and to spend time in solitude. Some You have called to the desert, some to mountain peaks, others to the hidden hermitage within their own homes. I have heard the ancient call to solitude and seek to be alone with You. . . . May my prayer be one with that of all persons and creation, who throughout this earth are in solitude and stillness, forming a luminous and silent hymn of glory to You.

From *Pilgrim's Companion to Franciscan Places*,
"Blessing Prayer to Begin a Day of Solitude."

Scripture

Luke 5:15-16

Now more than ever, the word about Jesus spread abroad; many crowds would gather to hear him and to be cured of their diseases. But he would withdraw to deserted places and pray.

