

CONGREGATION
FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE
AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE

The hermit life form in the particular Church

I will set the way in the desert (Isaiah 43:19)

Guidance



Text formatted by the journal *Vies Consacrées* © 2022

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SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION.....	3
I. THE TRADITION OF THE EREMITIC LIFE	3
II. VOCATION AND IDENTITY OF THE EREMITIC LIFE (CAN. 603)	5
<i>II. 1. Ecclesiastical Recognition</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>II. 2. In the silence of loneliness.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>II. 3. In Praise of His Glory</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>II. 4. Separation from the world</i>	<i>10</i>
III. THE HERMITIC LIFE IN THE LOCAL CHURCH	11
<i>III. 1. Typology of hermits</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>III. 2. Vocation to the hermit life</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>III. 3. According to a vivendi ratio</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>III. 4. The work and the space of the hermit</i>	<i>17</i>
IV. THE HERMITAGE AND DIOCESAN INSERTION	17
<i>IV. 1. The member incorporated into an Institute of Consecrated Life or a Society of Apostolic Life.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>IV. 2. The hermit cleric</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>IV. 3. Transfer to another diocese</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>IV. 4. Abandonment of hermit life.....</i>	<i>18</i>
CONCLUSION.....	19
APPENDIX	20
I. EXAMPLE OF THE FORM OF THE PROJECT AND THE LA PROFESSIONAL	20
<i>Purpose</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Profession.....</i>	<i>20</i>
II. LIFE PROJECT DIAGRAM PROPOSAL	21



Introduction

1 "I will open a way in the desert" (Is 43,19). The Prophet's verse offers us the suggestive horizon of the desert - dear to the imagination of hermit life - and, at the same time, recalls the metaphor of the path traced by God, on which the disciple sets out in search of His face. From East to West, the Christian tradition has been traversed by the luminous presence of men and women who have lived, with singular radicality, the *sequela pressius Christi* in the form of hermit life. From the beginning, the first testimonies recall what is typical of a life given to God, *to the praise of the glory of his grace* (Eph 1,6).

The hermit life is expressed in the choice to live an intense and exclusive search for the gaze of God, stimulated by the desire for intimate union with Him, giving oneself up to Him alone in the most rigorous separation from the world. The life of the *solus Deo*¹ is rooted in the very heart of the Church and of humanity, opening up to fruitful intercession.

The Church wishes to give thanks for this "precious pearl" (Mt 13:44), placed at the same time at the center and on the margins of the life of Christian communities and seen with respect by the Pastors of particular Churches, aware of their duty to preserve its authenticity and support it in its development.

The *Orientations* of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, in line with the tradition of hermit life and within the framework of can. 603, particularly concern the hermits, men and women, who depend directly on the diocesan bishop and observe, under his guidance, the form of life which is proper to them².

I. The tradition of hermit life

2 Since the earliest times of Christianity, the hermit or anchorite form of life, which can be considered the most ancient and rigorous form of separation from the world, has represented a strong call to evangelical radicalism. Antoine³ and after him, Paul, Hilarion and many others, obedient to the Word, withdrew into the desert to give themselves completely to the Lord in solitude, assiduity in prayer, living continence, in the freedom of themselves and things, signified by fasting, renunciation of possessions and a life poor.

3 The Rule of Saint Benedict (480-547) has a strong impact on hermit life. She holds it in esteem, as we read in the first chapter⁴, focusing how hermit life is defined in its canonical status, hermit life loses consideration in the ecclesial landscape, while remaining close to the people. In the West, during the period of the barbarian invasions, hermit life experienced a revival. In addition, the phenomenon of Irish missionary hermitage developed, which played a non-secondary role in the evangelization of Europe. In the East, the Novellas of *Justinian* (527-

565) initiate a change by which the hermit life will no longer be admitted, except in

1 Cf. Teodoro Studita, *Parva catechesis*, ed. E. Auvray, Paris 1981, 141-142.

2 Cf. can. 603 § 2; Jean-Paul II, Ex. apost. Post-Synodal *Consecrated Life* (March 25, 1996), 7

3 Cf. Athanase, *Vita Antonii*: PG 26, 835-976.

4 Cf. *The Rule of Benedict*



dependency of a community. The passage to a solitary life appears almost as the crowning of the monk's journey.

Over time, the need for a probationary period with an experienced hermit (*abba*) or a spiritual mother (*amma*) is perceived, who can guide the first steps of the new solitary. Groupings of hermits around a spiritual guide are at the origin of many cenobitic communities. For a long time, anchoritism coexisted with Cenobite monasticism, to which it was assimilated by canonical legislation⁵.

4 The 11th and 12th centuries saw on the one hand the flowering of eremitism, and on the other hand, its displacement towards new forms such as the anchoritic Orders (e.g., the Camaldules, the Carthusians, the Hermits of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel), new cenobitic foundations that incorporate certain characteristic elements of hermit life, such as separation, also physical, from the world, austerity, manual labor, to the point of being able to say that the Gregorian Reform itself, promoted by these new Orders, was inspired in its most radical aspects by the spirituality of the desert.

5 From the 14th to the 16th century, as the organization of society into social classes was reinforced, anchorism, with its characteristic traits of freedom, essentiality and humility, diminished and the contemplative and solitary orientation seemed to pass out. The strong propensity to consider religious status as the only call to a life of perfection, also established by the Council of Trent, does not, however, lead to the total disappearance of the eremitic experience, which continues to represent a path of freedom and gospel authenticity. Indeed, we also know for this period cases of true eremitic professions.

6 In the following centuries, especially in the 18th century, despite the general discredit that religious life suffered due to the decline of the great monastic orders and the exaltation of reason typical of illuminism, eremitism continued to subsist, offering to modern man, enthusiastically centered on himself and on the potentialities of science, the truth of his being created in the image and likeness of God. For its part, the great season of revival and missionary impulse of religious life, in the 19th and 20th centuries, with the appearance and multiplication of charisms dedicated to evangelization, to apostolic action and to the integral promotion of man, has not extinguished the irrepressible need for the presence of men and women who, through a life hidden in the solitude of the desert, in prayer and essentiality, recall "this interior aspect of the mystery of the Church which is personal intimacy with Christ"

7 In the process of renewal of religious life which marks in particular the 20th century and culminates in the Second Vatican Council in the decree *Perfectae caritatis*, we recognize how, from the earliest times, the Spirit has raised up in the Church men and women who, in a solitary form or within a religious family founded by them, consecrated their lives to God, following Christ with greater freedom and more closely imitating his form of life. Ever more united to Christ, in a gift of self that embraces all of life, they continue to enrich the vitality of the Church and make her apostolate fruitful⁷.

8 The universal call to holiness, affirmed by the Second Vatican Council, "is manifested and must be manifested by the fruits of grace which the Spirit produces in the faithful" and "of different

⁵ See on this subject: Council of Chalcedon (a. 451), cann. 3 and 4.

⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 921.

⁷ Cf. Conc. œcum. Vatican II, Decree on the Renewal of Religious Life *Perfectae caritatis*, 1.

manners, it (holiness) is expressed in each of those who tend to perfect charity, in their own line of life, by edifying others”⁸. The Council Fathers, summoned to discern the steps to accomplish in obedience to the voice of the Holy Spirit, remembered the solitary life⁹ among the first forms of following Christ. *The accomodata renovatio* of religious life launched by the Council also favored, especially in the Latin Church, a significant *revival* of hermit life.

II. Vocation and identity of hermit life (can. 603)

II. 1. Ecclesiastical recognition

9 With the promulgation of the Code of Canon Law of 1983, canon 603 formulates a profound theological and ecclesial synthesis of the fundamental characteristics of hermit life, through a definition chiselled over a bimillennial tradition. It gives a legal status to the faithful who wish to embrace this particular vocation without belonging to an Institute of consecrated life¹⁰ and therefore admits the possibility of a vocation to the consecrated life in the form hermit¹¹.

By affirming that “the Church recognizes the eremitic or anchoretic life”, canon 603 §1 outlines a form of life conforming to Christ, reducible to the figure of the solitary Christ on the mountain¹²: ecclesially accredited and relationally configured. It's not so much a hermit or a hermit recognized by the Church, but a Christological trait which, taking shape in separation from the world, proposes to reserve for silence, solitude and prayer, a space which as such opens up to “the praise of God and the salvation of the world”.

10 The hermit individuality is never such, because it is not that which it affirms, but that it refers to the Other, to God, in a gift of self which takes the form of *being alone*. *with the Alone*. Each particular hermit makes his own a *form of life* which precedes him and transcends, by incarnating it historically, in docility to the action of the Holy Spirit. In this sense, eremitic individuality is in itself incomplete, it is a partial restitution of the multiform *forma Christi* and figures in an open relationship with the ecclesial body and the body of history. It is therefore necessary to go beyond the historical heritage and the theological-spiritual imagination which considered the hermit as the “individual” summit of a totally given life.

“This life ‘in the desert’ – as the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata*, number 7 reminds us – is an invitation for the ecclesial community never to lose sight of the supreme vocation, which is to remain always with the Lord. 13. The figure of Blessed Charles de Foucault (1858-1916) is emblematic in this regard: “This desert is deeply sweet to me ; it is so sweet and so healthy to place oneself in solitude in the face of eternal things; we feel

⁸ See Conc. oecum. Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, 39.

⁹ Cf. Conc. oecum. Vatican II, Decree on the Renewal of Religious Life *Perfectae caritatis*, 1.

¹⁰ Cf. can. 603.

¹¹ Cf. can. 603 §2.

¹² See Conc. oecum. Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, 43.46; Decree on the renewal of religious life *Perfectae caritatis*, 1.

¹³ Cf. Jean-Paul II, Ex. apost. Post-Synodal *Consecrated Life* (March 25, 1996), 7

invaded by the truth” 14. The “hermit of the Sahara” “undoubtedly guessed, like few others, the scope of the spirituality that emanates from Nazareth [...], fascinated by the mystery of the Holy Family” 15. Mystery of interior recollection and abnegation. A solitary life witnessed in the extreme gift of self, not by being-hidden from the eyes of men, but by being-hidden in the midst of men.

11 In canon 603 §1, the Church places the eremitic life *praeter*, in addition to the other institutional forms of consecrated life, indicating their specificity and identifying their *proprium* in the typical features of this form of life:

"In addition to the institutes of consecrated life, the Church recognizes (*agnoscit*) the eremitical or anchoritic life, by which the faithful dedicate their lives to the praise of God and to the salvation of the world in a stricter withdrawal from the world, in the silence of solitude, in assiduous prayer and penance”.

Drawing on the wisdom of ecclesiastical tradition, the canon highlights the hermit's *modus vivendi* : he practices the separation of the world, *arctiore*, his silence is in solitude, *solitudinis silentio*, he "puts on the garment" of the prayer and penance, in the continuous and progressive rhythm of praise to God and intercession for mankind. The vocation of the hermit is to remain with God alone, *the Unum necessarium*, through paths of liberation, of evangelical conversion, in which the fatigue of the spiritual struggle is experienced, to reach the purification of the heart.

These dimensions, in the life of the hermit, are dynamically enriched: in solitude the desert of the strictest separation flourishes and, in prayer and penance, silence echoes the voice of each man, in a separate life to be completely *dedicated*.

12 As a charismatic reality, the *vocation* to the hermit life is the fruit of the cooperation of human freedom with divine grace and is recognized by the Church to be able to express itself in its authenticity.

Ecclesial recognition (*agnoscit*) implies acceptance into the particular Church, through confirmation, direction and accompaniment by the diocesan bishop. It is a delicate process of discernment which postulates, for its full realization, the ecclesial exercise of synodality, in which faithful and Pastors, together, choose the steps of communion to be accomplished for the building up of the Kingdom of God. , so that each may know the hope of his own vocation. The link with the Pastor of the local Church takes on particular canonical value in the case of the public profession of the evangelical counsels:

"The hermit is recognized by law as dedicated to God in the consecrated life, if he makes public profession of the three evangelical councils sealed by a vow or by another sacred bond in the hands of the diocesan bishop, and it keeps, under the guidance of the latter, its own program of life. ¹⁶

13 Hermit life is therefore situated between two poles of reference: the Church and the world. The Church, maternal womb which engenders this particular vocation and at the same time, vital context in which it flourishes and is fulfilled in authenticity and fullness. The world, from which the hermit separates and for which the hermit chooses a life of marginality. Church and world are the framework that preserves the hermit from individualistic subjectivity and places him as a sentinel

14 Cf. De Foucauld, Letter to Marie de Bondy, July 15, 1906, *Letters to Mme de Bondy, from La Trappe to Tamanrasset*, DDB, Paris, 1966, p. 150.

¹⁵ Francis, *prayer vigil for the family*, October 3, 2015.

¹⁶ Can. 603 §2.

of hope which “walks the roads of this time, its gaze fixed on the future recapitulation of all things in Christ” 17, aware that time and eternity are no longer one after the other, but intimately linked.

II. 2. In the Silence of Solitude

14 The expression *solitudinis silentio*, dear to the Carthusian tradition, emphasizes that the hermit's own silence is not reduced to the absence of voices or noises deriving from physical isolation, and can no longer be an imposed condition of the outside: it is the attitude

fundamental which expresses a radical availability to listen to God; the fact of focusing totally on the search for union with Him, letting oneself be drawn into the paschal dynamic of the death and resurrection of Christ; the experience of the mysterious fruitfulness of a totally given life and of the paradoxical and eloquent testimony of silence, when it is inhabited by Love.

15 In radical solitude, wrote Pierre Damien (1007-1072) in one of the works – *Dominus vobiscum* – which, in the Latin tradition, most carefully defines the ecclesial role of this form of life, the hermit is like a microcosm, a world and a Church in miniature. He cannot therefore forget the Church and the world he represents as a whole.

The more someone is alone before God, the more he discovers in himself (the solitary) the deepest dimension of the world.

Pierre Damien underlined this openness with an evocative formula:

“[...] By virtue of the Holy Spirit, who is in the singular and fills them all, one perceives on the one hand a singularity which carries within itself the plurality [*solitudo pluralis*], and on the other a multiplicity which carries in itself the singularity [*moltitudo singularis*].” 18

16 The first of the two expressions, *solitudo pluralis*, is often recalled to characterize the eremitic experience: the formula is particularly suggestive in the modern climate strongly marked by spiritual subjectivism, provoked however -

inevitably and perhaps fortunately - to confront a globalized reality. Reducing the intuition of eremitism to this first expression of Pierre Damien, paying less attention to the *moltitudo singularis*, would however be incorrect. Indeed, it is precisely this tension which gives depth, dignity and critical awareness to the need for identity, which demands to be adequately elaborated in order not to succumb in a time rich in worries and poor in certainties. The life of the hermit is not a life in which singularity, and therefore subjectivity, rises as the criterion of the whole, but a life in which plurality - that which we carry within us and that of the world - finds its meaning in the light of *the necessary Unique*, integrating the complexity in the self of each one as in a microcosm. True identity rooted in a vital tradition neither excludes nor rejects, but includes, integrates and recomposes.

II. 3. In Praise of His Glory

17 Canon 603 evokes the Pauline exhortation to *pray without ceasing* (1 Th 5,17), by showing that the hermit is called to be “assiduous”, that is to say prompt and constant in dialogue with God. Prayer demands of the hermit an assiduity which is not static, but

dynamic and multifaceted: not because it would be necessary to accumulate prayers and devotions, but because

17 Jean-Paul II, Ex. apost. Post-Synodal *Consecrated Life* (March 25, 1996), 59

18 Pierre Damien, *Letter 28* (our translation).

that the relationship with God involves the praying person in all his dimensions - corporeity, intelligence, affectivity - and illuminates the meaning of his whole existence. Recalling that prayer consists above all in making oneself available to perceive the desires of the Spirit (*Rm* 8,26-27), each hermit will have to find a regulated harmony of this multiformity: each with its accentuations, but within a framework of reference, of which it seems appropriate to recall the essential features.

18 The hermit's prayer is an assiduous path between adoration and praise. She realizes, in a special way, "the *confessio Trinitatis* which characterizes all Christian life, recognizing with admiration the sublime beauty of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and joyfully witnessing to his loving condescension for every human being" ¹⁹. adoration is the first attitude of a man who recognizes himself as a creature before his Creator. It exalts the greatness of the Lord who created us and the omnipotence of the Savior who frees us from evil. It is the prostration of the spirit before the "King of glory" and the respectful silence in the presence of God, always greater than us.

All disinterested praise is addressed to God. She sings it for Him and gives Him glory, beyond what He does, because He is. "Man, made in the image of the Creator, redeemed by the blood of Christ and sanctified by the presence of the Holy Spirit, has as its *ultimate end* of existence *to be 'to the praise of the glory' of God* (cf. *Eph* 1,12)" ²⁰. "A praise of glory – recalls, in a suggestive reflection, Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity selfless, without seeking herself in the sweetness of this love, who loves her above all her gifts and even though she would have received nothing from Him, and who desires good for the Object thus loved." ²¹

Adoration and praise rise in the supplication of intercession, gift of the Spirit of God, which leads the believer to enter into the mystery of the intercession of Christ in favor of all humanity (*Rm* 8,3-4 ; *1 Jn* 2,1-2; *Heb* 7,25), by agreeing to "stand in the middle", between the creature, fragile and threatened by evil, and the merciful Father, source of all good.

19 Prayer must therefore always have as constant attention the form of intercession, in particular with the **Liturgy of the Hours**²². Called to give himself to God in solitude for the salvation of the world, the hermit finds in intercessory prayer a powerful antidote against the dangers of self-referentiality. In fact, he is aware that intercession is possible because, in God's plan, all creatures are interdependent²³ : through his prayer, he participates in the difficulties and dramas of each human being, he suffers within himself from drama of man, distant from God and in conflict with his brothers, and in faith he nourishes the hope of reconciliation, as a free gift from God offered to our freedom. Prayer, says Pope Francis, "will be more pleasing to God and more sanctifying if, through it, through intercession, we try to live the double commandment that Jesus gave us.

Intercession expresses fraternal commitment to others when through it we are able to integrate the lives of others, their most pressing anxieties and their greatest dreams.

Using biblical words, we can say of the one who generously devotes himself to intercede: "This is the friend of his brothers, who prays much for the people" (*2 Mk* 15,14)" ²⁴

¹⁹ Jean-Paul II, Ex. apost. Post-Synodal *Consecrated Life* (March 25, 1996), 16.

²⁰ John Paul II, Letter Enc. *Veritatis splendor* (August 6, 1993), 10.

²¹ Elizabeth of the Trinity, *Heaven in faith*, 10th day, 2nd prayer.

²² Cf. Jean-Paul II, Ex. apost. Post-Synodal *Consecrated Life* (March 25, 1996), 95

²³ Cf. François, Letter enc. *Laudato si'* (May 24, 2015), 86.

²⁴ François, Ex. apost. *Rejoice and rejoice* (19 March 2018), 154

By interceding, the hermit brings into this world the image of the world to come, in which God *will wipe away every tear* (Rev 21.4) and the communion of saints will be accomplished.

20 Food for prayer, **the Word of God** “is the first source of all Christian spirituality. It nourishes a personal relationship with the living God and with his salvific and sanctifying will”²⁵. Each hermit will take care to set aside adequate time for *Lectio divina*, the place par excellence of listening and dialogue. According to the teaching of the Fathers, in fact, the adjective “divina” - of God - means that God is the object of the reading - the Word of God is also the subject, when one allows oneself to be read and *praised* by God who speaks in our heart. As Pope Francis reminds us, “in the contemplative life, God often announces his presence unexpectedly. By meditating on the Word of God in *lectio divina*, we are called to remain a religious listening to his voice in order to live in constant and joyful obedience.

26

21 “The spiritual path knows no progress if it does not open up to the action of the Spirit of God through the labor of asceticism and, in particular, of spiritual combat”²⁷

27

The interior life, in fact, requires the asceticism of time and body, which helps to dominate and correct the tendencies of human nature wounded by sin, and is indispensable for remaining faithful to one's vocation and following Jesus on the path of the Cross²⁸. This logic also includes ascetic practices as exercises in inner and outer detachment and self-control, radically contesting the logic of worldliness, while avoiding pushing lifestyles to the extreme: vigils express the prayerful expectation of the Lord who is coming (Rev 22,6); fasting, sobriety in daily life. The hermit undertakes to affirm the absoluteness of God in his own existence, to renounce his own projects, such as transforming the hermitage into a “centre” of spirituality or hospitality, or to take pastoral initiatives not consistent with his status in life.

22 This original loneliness becomes a struggle against vainglory, the need for recognition, the search for approval and the consideration of others.

The Imitation of Jesus Christ warns: “Man sees the face and God sees the heart. The man considers actions, God weighs intentions. Doing well and not believing yourself is a sign of a humble soul. Not seeking consolation in any creature is a sign of great freedom and great inner confidence. He who does not seek any external testimony in his favor proves that he surrenders himself totally to God. *He who praises himself is not more recommendable*, says Saint Paul, *but he whom God praises* (2 Cor 10,18). To live hidden in God and to be bound by no attachment without, such is the state of the spiritual man.

29

23 **The Eucharist** is the summit and source of Christian life and of the liturgy³⁰. In the life of the hermit, she must preserve her primacy, even if this cannot always be exercised in participation in the daily Eucharistic celebration. “The Church has received the Eucharist from Christ his Lord not as a gift, precious as it is among many others, but as *the gift par excellence*, for it is the gift of himself, of his person in his

25 Jean-Paul II, Ex. apost. Post-Synodal *Consecrated Life* (March 25, 1996), 94

26 Francis, *Address to the monks of the Benedictine confederation*, Vatican City (April 19, 2018).

27 Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Contemplate. To Consecrated Men and Women in the Footsteps of Beauty*, Rome, LEV, 2015, 29.

28 Jean-Paul II, Ex. apost. Post-Synodal *Consecrated Life* (March 25, 1996), 38

29 Thomas a Kempis, *The Imitation of Jesus Christ*, II, 6, 2.

30 Cf. Conn. œcum Vatican II, Const. on the Liturgy of the Holy Council, 10; Id., Const. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church sur l'Église *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

holy humanity and his work of salvation" 31. In the Eucharist, the Son of God desires to be united with us: "it is Christ who offers himself" and "we renew our covenant with him and allow him to carry out more and more his work of transformation" 32

"The destiny of all creation passes through the mystery of Christ, who has been present from the beginning: "Everything was created by him and for him" (Col 1,16)" 33, he who pacified by the blood of his cross, both things on earth and things in heaven (Col 1:19-20). The hermit, by virtue of his vocation, is called more than any other to develop a profound Eucharistic spirituality, giving thanks for the gift received, being aware of doing so "in the name of all creation, thus aspiring to sanctification of the world and working intensely to this end" 34. The Christian life celebrates the Eucharistic Mystery and lives in the eschatological perspective of the coming of the Lamb, which it awaits, "like a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev 21, 2).

In the Eucharist therefore, the gaze of the heart recognizes Jesus and welcomes him as "spouse and friend" 35, through the prayerful contemplation of his saving presence, in a continuous conversion to his love, in the light of the Holy Spirit. , until "the end of time, when the Son will give all things to the Father and "God will be all in all" (1 Cor 15,28)36, to the praise of his glory (Eph 1,6).

II. 4. Separation from the world

24 Separation from the world, in its various variations, is an original characteristic of forms of monastic life, even more eremitic, in its radical search for an ever more interior desert. The hermit who puts himself on the margins of the world expands, so to speak, space: from the center, he puts himself on the margins. This marginal position is certainly also a sign of renunciation and deprivation of words and relationships. This is the meaning of what the ancient Fathers called *xeniteia*. Renunciation and estrangement imply discipline and a form of burial, but not being a stranger.

The hermit who distances himself from the world does not flee out of fear or contempt. He lived in the world and is called, Christianly, to seek to love it and to look at it with the eyes and the love that God revealed to us in Jesus, who loved the world until the end. Without the world, one cannot conceive of an exit from the world: one separates oneself from the world to save it, one moves away to integrate it. The exterior thus becomes interior, the distant becomes near, the excluded is desired included. This is why separating does not mean fleeing.

The hermitage is not a place where one could preserve one's own living space. The hermit takes to heart the invitation of Jesus, who came to save and wants to involve the disciple in this project of all-encompassing love (cf. Jn 17:26). In strict similarity to one of the meanings that tradition has given to the word monk, the hermit is also the one who pursues unification, adjustment to the love of Christ, to whom nothing is preferred³⁷ .

25 The fact of remaining on the margin recalls *the imaginary of the desert*, understood by the ancient Fathers as an emblematic place above all to express the separation from the world and the

31 John Paul II, Letter enc. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (April 17, 2003), 11.

32 François, Ex. apost. *Rejoice and rejoice* (19 March 2018), 157

33 François, Enc. *Laudato si'* (May 24, 2015), 99.

34 Benoit XVI, Ex. apost. *Post-Synodal Sacrament of Charity* (22 February 2007), 92

35 THOMAS A KEMPIS, *Solitude and silence. A need for everyone*, San Paolo Edizioni, 2015 (II, 33).

36 François, Letter enc. *Laudato si'* (May 24, 2015), 100.

37 Cf. Rule of Saint Benedict, IV, 21.

harshness of spiritual combat, which hermits often experience. The Latin Church has taken a particular look at the spirituality of the desert. Indeed, it has been observed that in the West, at the end of antiquity and in the Middle Ages, the imagination linked to the religious value of the desert underwent a profound transformation which was not without consequences for the very idea of hermitage and hermitage cell. The place where one withdraws, and which, for this reason, one continues to call desert, first becomes the island (for example Lérins), then the forest, which is, for its part, certainly a place of separation from the world, but so to speak in an excess of nature, of disproportionate and disordered fecundity. Living within a nature that seduces and confuses, the hermit is called to bring order, to transform the environment in which he lives into a garden. This should be understood above all as a metaphor for spiritual research. It can also contribute to connoting the hermit life with an ecological perspective, in particular in the fact of assuming new styles of life compatible with a right relationship to creation. This attention, as the encyclical of Pope Francis *Laudato Si'* 38 indicates to us, can and must take on an important dimension in the style of life, to bear witness to an interior simplicity which is reflected in sobriety of life.

26 Marginality – as has been said – marks a distancing from a centre, but is also a frontier, the possibility of finding points of contact, exploration and dialogue. One of the hallowed places of marginality in this sense is monastic hospitality. On this subject, Saint Benedict spoke of “honoring all men” 39. Hospitality which is not only physical but also spiritual. However, for the hermits, it should be rare, if one wants to maintain the condition of prayerful separation. In fidelity to their charism, made up of solitude and communion in Christ Jesus, hermits can become “experts in humanity” . 40 Hermitism, as an expression of a search for interiorization and unification, can be a point of rapprochement and awareness of certain dimensions of the search for meaning for oneself and for the world that the hermit shares with our brothers in faith and in humanity. This is why many hermits, from their experience of contemplative or monastic life, have been, after the Council, protagonists of openness and dialogue with monastic forms of other Churches and religions, and with other expressions of culture, in the search for the Name of God and his Face. For these relationships to be fruitful and stimulating for the whole church, they must be cohesive with seriousness in relationships, attentive study and assiduous prayer.

III. Hermit life in the local Church

III. 1. Typology of hermits

27 In the current ecclesial context, we can identify several types of hermits:

- a) members (clerics/lay) of Institutes of eremitic or semi-eremitic life whose life is regulated by universal and proper law;
- b) members (clerics/lay) of Institutes of consecrated life, monastic or apostolic, which provide for the possibility of leading the hermit life according to proper law;

³⁸ François, Letter enc. Praised Yes (May 24, 2015).

³⁹ Benedict's Rule

⁴⁰ Cf. Paul VI, Address to the United Nations, New York, October 4, 1965.



c) the faithful (clerics/lay) who lead the hermit life without professing the evangelical counsels⁴¹ ;

d) the faithful (clerics/lay) who profess the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience by vow or other sacred bonds, in the hands of the diocesan bishop⁴² .

28

Canon 603 recognizes the *hermit life form* and presents its constituent elements. In the two paragraphs that make up the canon, the verb *agnoscere* is used : by recognizing hermit life, in fact, the Church becomes its guardian and guided by the ministry of care and accompaniment of the diocesan bishop. "It is up to him to recognize and respect the different charisms, to promote and coordinate them"⁴³

The second paragraph of canon 603 states that the hermit is recognized in *the consecrated state of life* when he makes public profession of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience by a vow or other sacred bond .

The bishop, in his pastoral charity and according to his prudent judgment, will welcome the charism of hermit life as a grace which does not only concern the specific vocation of a baptized person, but contributes to the building up of the whole Church.

He will thus seek to support and help those who – after careful discernment – express the will to dedicate their lives to God in the form of hermit life, so that, rooted in the particular Church and *working in full communion with the bishop*, he responds generously to the call according to his strength and respecting his own charism⁴⁵ .

29

The same canon states that the hermit professes in the hands of the diocesan bishop - *professio in manibus* of the particular Church. At the same time, the hermit professes with the Pastor recognizes the Church as a *communio hierarchica*⁴⁶, especially in his relationship with the diocesan bishop, to whom he reserves "filial respect and obedience"⁴⁷. The relationship with episcopal authority stems from the responsible freedom of the hermit who, welcomed in a Diocese, can not say "foreign" to his life, to the territory in which he lives, to a history of holiness embodied in spiritual and pastoral traditions, to the institutions of a community concrete.

In fact, in the relationship with the bishop, the hermit, in the double dimension mentioned above, manifests his sense of belonging to the particular Church and inserts himself in its journey towards salvation, with the particularities of its specific vocation. One could say that the hermit's dependence is an *obedience in solidarity* with the path of the People of God and with its Pastor, in order to make reciprocal understanding grow effectively. The hermit therefore pays constant attention to the Episcopal Magisterium and carries in his prayer the needs of the Diocese and in particular the intentions of the bishop.

⁴¹ Cf. can. 603 §1.

⁴² Cf. can. 603 §2.

⁴³ Jean-Paul II, Ex. apost. Post-Synodal *Consecrated Life* (March 25, 1996), 49

⁴⁴ Cf. Ecumenical Council. Vatican II, Const. dogm. on the Church *Lumen gentium*, 43-44; cann. 573-574.

⁴⁵ Cf. Jean-Paul II, Ex. apost. Post-Synodal *Consecrated Life* (March 25, 1996), 49

⁴⁶ Oecum Council. Vatican II, Const. dogm. on the Church *Lumen gentium*, 8; 21-22.

⁴⁷ Expression taken from the rite of presbyteral ordination. Reformed Roman Pontifical according to the decrees of the Ecumenical Council Vatican II promulgated by Paul VI revised by John Paul II, *Ordination of the Bishop, Priests, Deacons*, 138.

III. 2. Vocation to hermit life

a) Discernment and formation

30 The vocation to the eremitical life, which the masters of monastic life have usually presented as an *exceptional way*, in reference to its radicality, requires careful discernment, to verify personal aptitudes and the suitability to assume them. the engagements. Indeed, life in solitude, while providing advantages from the point of view of meditation and inner concentration, can be the occasion of trials, discomforts, unforeseen events, which require to be approached with balance and responsibility. We therefore need an attentive and respectful discernment, being aware of the risks that we can encounter in assuming this form of life.

The Second Vatican Council and the subsequent Magisterium – right up to the last documents of this Congregation, the Orientations *To new wine, new wineskins* and *The gift of fidelity, the joy of perseverance* – reminded us that formation cannot be limited to selected areas or at specific times. It is the daily experience of the *sequela Christi*, which engages the whole person to protect *the gift of fidelity* and grow in *the joy of perseverance*⁴⁸.

31 The experience matured over the course of the history of this vocation suggests that those who feel the inclination be asked for a time of discernment and formation in a monastery or another community of consecrated life under the guidance of an experienced person, or scheduled meetings with the person or persons entrusted by the bishop to accompany in continuity a specific path of formation. The objective is that of a formation which takes into account all the most important aspects of human, spiritual, cultural and relational commitment.

In this perspective, the hermit will not fail to give particular importance to a continuing education program that corresponds to his lifestyle. It will therefore be necessary to maintain a confrontation and verification with the spiritual guide and the diocesan bishop, who will follow the evolution and the maturing of the path.

In particular, the hermit will draw from the vast spiritual heritage of the Fathers of the desert and from the heritage of the Christian tradition, from the Magisterium and from the testimony of the Saints.

b) L'admission

32 Verification should also concern certain aspects for which, in the absence of a specific discipline, it will be useful to adapt the standards provided for admission to religious institutes, in particular with regard to:

- health, suitable temperament and sufficient maturity, with particular attention to psycho-affective balance⁴⁹ ;
- age, to be determined above all in relation to the challenges and demands of solitary life;

⁴⁸ Cf. Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Orientations *To new wine, new wineskins* (January 6, 2017), 33-42; Orientations *The gift of fidelity, the joy of perseverance* (February 2, 2020), 46-93.

⁴⁹ Cf. can. 642.



- verification of previous experiences in a formation community (diocesan/religious) and the reasons for leaving or dismissal;
- the absence of debts or other pending cases of a civil, criminal and canonical nature.

If it concerns persons who were members of an Institute of Consecrated Life or of a Society of Apostolic Life, or admitted to a seminary, the written opinion of the Major Superior of the Institute or of the Society, or the Rector of the seminary⁵⁰ .

c) The public profession of the evangelical counsels

33 “The evangelical counsels [...] are offered to every disciple of Christ”⁵¹. “In reality, whoever is regenerated in Christ is called to live, by the strength that comes from the gift of the Spirit, the chastity corresponding to his state. of life, obedience to God and to the Church, a reasonable detachment from material goods, because all are called to the holiness which resides in the perfection of charity”⁵². Vocation lived by the hermits who “without always publicly professing the three evangelical counsels”⁵³, in fact, practice them (cf. 1 Cor 7,29-31), in witness to “the supreme vocation, which is to remain always with the Lord”⁵⁴, anticipation of the beatitude of the Kingdom of Christ.

Hermits who choose to consecrate their entire existence to God according to the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience, by public profession in the hands of the diocesan bishop, by vow or some other sacred bond⁵⁵, are recognized, as has already been said, in the state of consecrated life. The vow, by definition, is a promise made to God, well balanced and free, accomplished, according to the classical doctrine, *ex virtute religionis*⁵⁶; another sacred bond could be an oath⁵⁷, a promise. By such an act, the hermit expresses the firm will to follow Christ more closely in order to imitate him more faithfully in the solitary life.

34 Chastity for the Kingdom of Heaven is “a sign of the world to come and a source of greater fruitfulness”⁵⁸, to engender a new humanity according to the measure of the *fullness of Christ* (Eph 4,13). The hermit undertakes to live chastity by means of the obligation of perfect continence in celibacy⁵⁹ and specifies, in the plan, the spiritual understanding, according to the requirements of his form of life. The hermit's chaste life, separated and hidden, solitary and silent, will be nourished by asceticism, self-defiance, mortification, guarding of the senses and of the heart, as well as an orderly organization of the day and the work, adequate rest, sufficient and moderate food, healthy attention to the state of health.

⁵⁰ Cf. can. 645 §2.

⁵¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 915.

⁵² Jean-Paul II, Ex. apost. *Consecrated Life* (March 25, 1996), 7.

⁵³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 920.

⁵⁴ Jean-Paul II, Ex. apost. *Consecrated Life* (March 25, 1996), 7.

⁵⁵ Cf. can. 1192 §1: the vow is *public* if it is received in the name of the Church by the legitimate Superior; otherwise, it is private. In this regard, it is appropriate to recall that the public character of the vow does not depend on the fact that it was made publicly or is known to others (moreover, the vows made in a secular Institute are "public" even when members are bound to a strict reserve on consecration and therefore known only to members of the Institute itself), but only by acceptance of a legitimate superior on behalf of the Church.

⁵⁶ Cf. can. 1191 §1.

⁵⁷ Cf. can. 1199.

⁵⁸ Can. 599.

⁵⁹ Cf. *idem*.



Chastity chosen as a requirement of a universal love lived with an undivided heart, infinitely broadens the person's horizon and expands his sense of responsibility, an indicator of the person's maturity. It forms in him a plenitude and a delicacy of feelings, which are for him a superabundant richness .

35 The evangelical counsel of poverty, assumed by public vow, is one of the essential features of following Christ more closely. The foundation of the evangelical counsel is the poor Christ, who did not jealously retain the rank which made him equal to the Father and made himself poor for us (cf. *Phil* 2,6-11). It implies, therefore, an evangelically poor lifestyle, which translates into poverty in fact and poverty in spirit.

Through poverty, the hermit bears witness to a truly human quality of life which relativizes goods and designates God as the absolute good⁶¹ ; simplicity, sobriety and austerity of life lead him to total freedom in God⁶² .

36 Following the example of Christ obedient to the Father, the hermit undertakes by the vow of obedience to depend on the bishop, his legitimate superior, according to the project of life⁶³. The vow of obedience reveals the mystery of human freedom as a path to adherence to will of the Father. It presupposes and promotes the experience of the dynamism of the Spirit which animates the communion and the mission of the Church.

37 The public liturgical act, presided over by the diocesan bishop, by which the hermit makes profession of the evangelical counsels, manifests the ecclesial meaning of this consecration. This is why the celebration can take place in a church of the diocese, so as to highlight the belonging to the local Church and the commitment that the hermit makes towards the community, or in the church of the parish in which the hermitage is located, or in the hermit's church. It is the particular diocesan rootedness of this form of life which is thus recalled, a charism capable of awakening and nourishing the life of faith of the People of God⁶⁴ .

If the hermit wishes to wear a particular habit as a sign of his consecration⁶⁵, he will decide this in agreement with the bishop.

38 The *marvelous firmness* in God⁶⁶, to which the hermits bear witness through the public profession of the evangelical counsels, is a visible self-surrender, a living memory⁶⁷ of the good and beautiful life of the Gospel, " *silent preaching* of Him to whom the hermit delivered his life" ⁶⁸. In its marginality and its sobriety, hermit life is a luminous sign for the whole Church and humanity of our time, reminding us that it is beautiful to dwell in God alone.

60 Paul VI, Letter enc. *Priestly Celibate*, June 24, 1967

61 Cf. Jean-Paul II, Ex. apost. Post-Synodal *Consecrated Life* (March 25, 1996), 89

62 Cf. Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Economics in *the Service of Charism and Mission, Boni dispensatores multiformis gratiae Dei*, Guidelines (January 6, 2018), 8.

63 Cf. can. 601.

64 Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter *Iuvenescit Ecclesia* (May 15, 2016), 1.

65 Cf. Jean-Paul II, Ex. apost. Post-Synodal *Consecrated Life* (March 25, 1996), 25

66 Paul VI, Exod. apost. *Evangelical Testimony*, June 29, 1971, 3

67 Cf. Jean-Paul II, Ex. apost. Post-Synodal *Consecrated Life* (March 25, 1996), 22

68 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 921.

III. 3. According to a *vivendi ratio*

39

The canon recalls another fundamental aspect, namely the fact of living according to a *ratio vivendi*, a life project or *propositum* which presents, in a sober and essential way, the spiritual and normative principles of the specific vocational identity.

The project of life implies the attitude of one who constantly places himself in the school of the Gospel, the *supreme rule* of the consecrated⁶⁹, a constant call to vigilance regarding the coherence of the vocation and to the fidelity of the commitment made.

The text can be elaborated in the form of a statute, regulation or plan of life, and it is thought out to protect the gift of the vocation received from the Lord⁷⁰ and to tend, by a firm decision, to the perfection of charity⁷¹.

In the elaboration of the project of life – drafted in tune with universal and particular law, the Magisterium and the tradition of hermit life – will be clarified, in a wise balance, the fundamental aspects of the form of life proper to a hermit. . In the personal itinerary of the search for God⁷², the hermit specifies the obligations and commitments resulting from the engagement/profession of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience by a vow or another sacred bond⁷³.

The hermit's life project determines the essential conditions for living the council of poverty, which involves "dependence and limitation in the use and disposal of goods" ⁷⁴. It also establishes how the hermit is accountable of his economic management to the bishop, referring both to the income from his work and to what he receives from other sources, in particular from the ecclesial institutions which eventually contribute to his subsistence.

In particular, the guidelines will be specified in the project which must be submitted to the discernment and decision of the diocesan bishop as legitimate Superior. The principles to be followed in the relations with the bishop and the commitments towards the Diocese will also be defined.

If the hermit is bound by vows, it is necessary to provide, preferably in the project: the duration of the periods of absence from the hermitage; insertion or service in the diocesan environment; the possibility of time and space for reception and hospitality; in which cases the authorizations of the bishop are required.

To this end, it is appropriate that the hermit concerned by the drafting of the project and the diocesan bishop called to approve it consult experts, capable of judging the real coherence between the established values and the specific requirements of life. hermit.

Ecclesiastical caution suggests proceeding in stages, using *ad experimentum approval* of the project, for a determined time, before the final commitment. As the years pass, it is possible that a revision will be necessary. In this case, the modifications will be submitted to the bishop for their necessary approval.

69 Cf. Conc. œcum. Vatican II, Decree on the Renewal of Religious Life *Perfectae caritatis*, 2; can. 662.

70 Cf. Can. 587.

71 Cf. can. 598.

72 Cf. Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Instruction *The Service of Authority and Obedience. Faciem tuam, Domine, requiram* (11 mai 2008), 9.

73 Cf. can. 599-601.

74 Can. 600.



III. 4. The hermit's work and space

40 The life of the hermit is therefore characterized by a laborious sobriety, foreign to earthly riches, and by the commitment to follow the common law of work, participation in the creative work of God.

Ordinarily, the hermit provides for his needs by work compatible with the demands of hermit life, in particular solitude and prayer. In the case of the hermit priest, the pastoral exercise of the priestly ministry must be occasional and not prevalent. This is why the bishop also undertakes to protect the particular vocation of the hermit and not to consider him entirely at the disposal of the pastoral demands of the local Church.

Before the reception in the Diocese and the eventual profession, the diocesan bishop will take care to check that the resources can assure the hermit an adequate maintenance, real means of subsistence, health coverage and social security. In case it is necessary to resort to resources further, the Ordinary will assess the situation with careful judgment.

41 The hermitage must respond to the requirements of a more rigorous separation from the world and of a solitude that favors silence and prayer. At the same time, this place should not be too isolated, inaccessible or difficult to access. The place chosen should not be too far from a place of worship if the aspiring hermit is not a priest. The places must ensure, in addition to the minimum requirements of personal life, the possibility of a space suitable for prayer, for the preservation of the Eucharist, with the permission of the bishop, and, if he is a priest, for the Eucharistic celebration. When the property does not belong to the diocese, it is the duty of the bishop, personally or through a delegate, to verify the suitability of the place chosen.

IV. The hermit and diocesan insertion

IV. 1. The member incorporated into an Institute of consecrated life or a Society of Apostolic Life

42 The member of an Institute or of a Society can recognize in his path of *following Christi* a special vocation to the hermit life through the profession of the evangelical counsels. In this case, after finding a bishop willing to welcome him into the Church

local, he will communicate his intention in writing to the Supreme Moderator of the Institute or the Society, with a certificate from the bishop willing to welcome him in the Diocese for a period of probation⁷⁵.

The Supreme Moderator will be responsible for transmitting the request to the Holy See, together with his own observations on this subject. The passage to the hermit life will take place according to the provisions which will be given, in the particular case, by the Apostolic See.

In the case of a religious cleric, the norms concerning incardination will also apply.

43 The link between the diocesan bishop and the hermit requires particular attention and vigilance on the occasion of the change of Ordinary of the Diocese. If on the one hand, indeed, it is necessary to take note of the various sensitivities in relation to this form of life, on the other hand,

⁷⁵ Cf. can. 684-685.

it is necessary to prevent the hermit and the diocesan Church from lacking the guarantee of continuity in this vocation.

IV. 2. The Hermit Cleric

44 The diocesan cleric who, after careful discernment and with the consent of his bishop, intends to embrace the eremitic life, remains incardinated in the same diocese.

In the event that a diocesan priest intends, with the consent of his bishop, to embrace the eremitic life in another diocese than that of his incardination, an agreement between the two Ordinaries will be needed which regulates the aspects relating to the rights and duties of incardination and of the form of eremitic life.

In the project of life, the hermit priest will establish with the bishop the terms of the exercise of his priestly ministry and the modalities of his presence in communion with the diocesan presbyterium, according to the usefulness of the Church and the good of the priest himself⁷⁶ and in respect of the new vocational condition.

IV. 3. Transfer to another Diocese

45 Given the link that exists between the hermit and the diocesan Church, the possible transfer, justified, to another diocese must be established with the bishops of the two dioceses concerned. In particular, the bishop who will welcome the hermit will make a careful discernment for his insertion in the diocesan context. In the case of a cleric hermit, one will also observe what is provided for in canons 267 to 272 relating to excardination and incardination.

IV. 4. Abandonment of hermit life

46 With regard to the situations which lead to leaving the hermit life, the diocesan bishop will demonstrate paternal vigilance, prudent accompaniment and attentive pastoral care. On this subject, we will apply, by analogy, for whoever has professed, the norms provided for the different cases of separation of members of religious institutes. In particular, it is up to the diocesan bishop to grant dispensation from vows or sacred bonds, or to dismiss from the state of eremitic life for serious and well-founded causes, observing by analogy and with the adaptations to the case, which is provided for by canons 691 to 704, paying particular attention to procedures and the right to defence.

...

⁷⁶ Cf. can. 270.

Conclusion

"The filial relationship with Mary constitutes the privileged way of fidelity to the call received and a very effective help to progress in one's response and to live one's vocation to the full" ⁷⁷

The Mother of God "allowed herself to be led by the Spirit, in a journey of faith, towards a destiny of service and fruitfulness" ⁷⁸. She professes her *fiat* to the plan of salvation (cf. *Lk* 1,38). She hastens on the path of service (cf. *Lk* 1,39). It magnifies the mercy of the Lord (cf. *Lk* 1,46-55). She treasures the Word in her praying heart (cf. *Lk* 2:19), "faithfully keeping union with her Son until the cross" ⁷⁹.

"From the Annunciation to the Resurrection, passing through the pilgrimage of faith culminating at the foot of the cross, Mary remains in contemplation of the Mystery which dwells in her" ⁸⁰. She "contemplates the mystery of God in the world, in the history and in the daily life of each one of us and of all" ⁸¹.

It is to her that we ask to accompany the hermit brothers and sisters on the way to holiness. May a spirit of holiness "imbue solitude as well as service [...], so that each moment may be the expression of a devoted love under the gaze of the Lord" ⁸², holiness made up of "a habitual openness to transcendence, which is expressed in prayer and adoration." ⁸³

May they always turn their gaze to Mary, the *Stabat Mater*, who, at the hour of Redemption, became Mother of all, by the word of the Eternal Word; let them listen to her when she shows us, in this "do as he tells you" (*Jn* 2,5), the measure of love with which to respond to the One who loved us to the end (*Jn* 13.1); may they invoke him with all their hearts, like faithful children, preserving his words which "agree marvelously with those of the Father in the *theophany* of Tabor: Listen to him! (*Mt* 17.5)" ⁸⁴

The Holy Father approved the publication

in the Hearing of July 31, 2021

Vatican City, on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, September 14, 2021

ÿ John B. Card. of Opinion

Prefect

ÿ José Rodríguez Carballo, OFM

Archbishop Secretary

⁷⁷ Jean-Paul II, Ex. apost. Post-Synodal *Consecrated Life* (March 25, 1996), 28.

⁷⁸ François, Ex. apost. *The Joy of the Gospel* (24 November 2013), 287

⁷⁹ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Const. dogm. on the Church *Lumen gentium*, 58.

⁸⁰ François, Const. apost. *In Search of the Face of God* (June 29, 2016), 10

⁸¹ François, Ex. apost. *Joy of the Gospel* (24 November 2013), 288

⁸² François, Ex. apost. *Rejoice and rejoice* (19 March 2018), 31

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁸⁴ Paul VI, Exod. apost. *Marian worship* (2 February 1974), 57



Appendix

I. Example of the formula of the purpose and the professional

1. This is an example of the formula of the *propositum* and the adapted *professio*, *servatis servandis*, from the text of the formula of the *Rite of Religious Profession*.
2. The drafting of the *propositum* respects the *ratio* of canon 603 in the elements that identify the eremitic life.
3. The formula of the rite of profession must respect the elements required by the letter of the SCRIS of February 14, 1973, published in SCRIS, *Informationes* 1 (1975), 1, 49.
4. The formula of the *propositum* and that of the *profession* must be approved by the diocesan bishop.

Purpose

Me, ***,
 in your hands and under your guidance,
 Reverend Father, [*** Name of Bishop],
 Pastor of the Church who is at ***,
 I dedicate my life to
 the praise of God and the salvation of the world,
 in a stricter withdrawal from the world,
 in the silence of loneliness,
 in assiduous prayer and penance.
 I promise to observe
 life *plan*
 approved by you,
 giving thanks to the Lord,
 for the gift of welcome in this Church
 presided over by you.
 I entrust myself to the grace of the Holy Spirit,
 through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
 *** [title of the *devotio proper* to the Diocese]
 and our Patron Saint ***,
 to respond faithfully to the eremitical vocation,
 accompanied by the prayer of the Holy People of God.

Profession

Me, ***,
 for the glory of God, in
 the firm will to consecrate myself more intimately to Him
 and to follow Christ more closely throughout my life,
 before you, brothers and sisters,
 in your hands, Reverend Father *** [bishop's name],



Pastor of the Church who is in

***, I make a vow of chastity, poverty and obedience forever, in the form of hermit life, according to the plan of life approved by you.

I wholeheartedly entrust myself to this

Church, so that, by the grace of the Holy

Spirit and the help of the Blessed Virgin Mary ***, [title of the Patroness of the Diocese], in a stricter withdrawal from the world, in the silence of solitude, in assiduous prayer and penance, I consecrate my life to the praise of God, for the salvation of humanity.

II. Proposed Life Project Diagram

The schematic elements indicated here are suggested for the drafting of a Project of hermit life (*ratio vivendi*, can. 603 §2), to be submitted for the approval of the diocesan bishop.

Preamble

Brief *narration* of the personal call to hermit life.

1. The vocation to hermit life

1.1. Vocation to hermit life according to a life plan 1.2.

Vocation to the hermit life according to the constitutive aspects foreseen by can. 603 §1

1.3. Profession of the evangelical counsels (by vows or other sacred bonds) foreseen by can. 603 §2

2. Training

2.1. Continuous training program 2.2.

Diocesan referents

3. Space and

place 3.1. Insertion in a solitary environment

3.2. Proximity to a community/monastery or parish 3.3. Oratory

(conservation of the Eucharist: can. 934 sv.) or adjoining chapel 3.4. Spaces

reserved for reception and/or hospitality **4. Spiritual life** 4.1. Celebration or

participation in the Eucharist 4.2. Time of Eucharistic adoration 4.3. Lectio divina

4.4. Liturgy of the Hours

4.5. Sacrament of Reconciliation

4.6. Spiritual accompaniment

4.7. Vigil – Fasting – Abstinence

5. Evangelical counsels

5.1. Evangelical Counsels and *Propositum*

5.2. Profession of the three vows of chastity, poverty and obedience (cf. cann. 599-601)

5.3. Other Sacred

Bonds 6. Relationship

with the Bishop 6.1. Conditions for reception and stay in

the Diocese 6.2. Conditions and obligations for admission to the public profession of the evangelical counsels



6.3. Conditions and obligations of incardinated clerical hermits in the Diocese **7.**

Relationship with the local Church 7.1. The parish community 7.2. Communion with the presbyterium (if cleric)

7.3. Experience of sharing with hermit sisters and brothers **8. Means of communication** **9. Work and means of subsistence** 9.1. Income from salaried activities

9.2. Contributions from diocesan institutions

9.3. Subsidies or other

10. Social contributions and assistance

10.1. Health assistance (public and/or insurance)

10.2. Pensions

Epilogue (ad libitum)