

Eremitic Life Formation in the Light of the Statutes of Tarragona and Regensburg and the Indications of the Polish Bishops' Conference

KATARZYNA BUJALSKA 

Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław, 10292@student.pwt.wroc.pl

Abstract: The article presents the issue of formation for hermits, which is currently experiencing a specific heyday in the Church. Recently, more and more people have chosen one of the forms of individual consecrated life as their vocation path. Therefore, the life of the hermit is very popular. In order to take up this specific path of life, one needs an appropriate formation that will allow the future hermit to be correctly formed. In the article, the synthesis contains three selected documents: *Hermit Life in the Tarragona Archdiocese. Statutes*; *The Basic Order of Hermit Life in the Diocese of Regensburg* and *The State of Hermits. Auxiliary Materials for the Church in Poland* and an appendix to this document: *Selected Pastoral Guidelines for Consecrated Hermits*, which have a valuable full view of formation for this form of consecrated life. These documents are not only to be understood through their application in Can. 603 of the CCL, the spiritual and legal elements, but also unique elements inscribed in the history and spirituality of a given region, are indicated, which can serve the entire community of the Church and constitute a valuable source of the exchange of experiences on the subject of formation.

Keywords: hermit, formation, consecrated life

One of the sayings of the Desert Fathers is, “The beginning of salvation is to know oneself.”¹ Self-knowledge, the knowledge of our strengths and weaknesses, is an important aspect of life. Self-knowledge empowers us to make decisions, ensuring our development in harmony with ourselves. Human life is a series of choices. Every day we make minor or major decisions that determine our existence. Therefore, choosing a way of life, a vocation with which man can fully realize himself is of great significance. Preparatory formation paves the way for pursuing a vocation, especially for religious life. Beata Zarzycka believes, “The aim of formation is to develop a higher quality of religious life and the maturity of personality.”² Good formation makes the one who has been called aware of the specifics of the life taken up and the role in the Church.

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¹ *Apoftegmaty*, 226. It is a saying of Abba Evagrius; the Polish text reads, “Początkiem zbawienia jest poznanie siebie samego”; cf. “To go against self is the beginning of salvation” in *The Desert Fathers*, 153.

² Zarzycka, *Osobowość*, 22.

The Second Vatican Council triggered a growing interest in individual forms of consecrated – also eremitic – life. The Church seriously concerns herself with the formation of hermits. As for individual forms of consecrated life, each diocese offers a different understanding and implementation, not excluding the elements characteristic of the eremitic identity defined in Can. 603 of the Code of Canon Law. Dioceses or whole countries can adopt formation statutes. In this article, I wish to present an overview of the formation of hermit life in the light of three selected documents: *Hermit Life in the Archdiocese of Tarragona. Statutes*³ published on January 10, 2006, by the then Archbishop of Tarragona, Jaume Pujol Balcells; *Grundordnung eremitischen Lebens im Bistum Regensburg* [Basic Rules for Hermit Life in the Diocese of Regensburg] published *ad experimentum* on January 17, 2008, by order of the then Bishop of Regensburg, Gerhard Ludwig Müller,⁴ and a document approved by the Polish Bishops' Conference: *Stan pustelnic i pustelników. Materiały pomocnicze dla Kościoła w Polsce* [The State of Hermits. Auxiliary Materials for the Church in Poland] and an appendix to this document by Rev. Henryk Śmiarowski: *Niektóre wskazania duszpasterskie dotyczące konsekrowanych pustelników i pustelnic* [Selected Pastoral Guidelines Concerning Consecrated Hermits]. The indicated documents provide a better understanding of what this formation should look like and what stages it should consist of, which cannot be omitted when admitting the candidate to the eremitic life. The article aims to synthesize the most important legal and spiritual elements (requirements, formation stages, and the diocesan bishop's role), allowing us to see the specificity of formation for this form of consecrated life. Thanks to them, we will be able to discover the importance of proper formation for future hermits fully.

1. Requirements

In approaching the topic of eremitic formation, at the outset, it is necessary to indicate the requirements that the candidate must meet to apply for starting proper formation. The documents from Poland and Germany include the greatest number of requirements, as opposed to the Statutes of Tarragona, with far fewer and less precise requirements. In terms of human requirements, the candidate for the eremitic life must

³ The document comes from my private archives and was given to me by courtesy of the Archdiocese of Tarragona in two language versions: Catalan and English.

⁴ The document comes from my private archive and was given to me in the original language (German) courtesy of the Diocese of Regensburg. All passages of this document given in English are by Marcin Połomski. The document has not been officially approved in the Diocese of Regensburg (although it still serves as an auxiliary material), but it deserves attention due to its rich content.

be a member of the Roman Catholic Church.⁵ This is emphasized in Polish and German statutes. The candidate should be at least 35 years of age, and the German document even provides an age limit of 50 years. Of course, dioceses have the right to “set their own age limits.”⁶ The candidate must be in good health, both physically and mentally. The future hermit should be a sexually integrated person, steadfast in work, and able to cope with emotions and problems. Life in the desert is not an easy path; it requires of the hermit a great and constant work on himself, “perseverance in spite of difficulties and solitude.”⁷ Therefore, it is crucial for the person concerned to be examined by a psychologist and a physician and submit a relevant certificate. The Statutes of Regensburg point out another important aspect, “A person who is in any way addicted, whether by drugs, alcohol, or any other substance, may not be admitted to start formation.”⁸ The candidate must also be single, although members of an institute of consecrated life or a society of apostolic life, as all three documents insist, are not excluded.⁹ The consent of the competent superior is then required. The Polish guidelines state only that divorced persons may also become hermits, but only with an appropriate dispensation from the diocesan bishop and under certain conditions, “the other party does not claim marital rights, either in civil or canon law, and the children have reached full legal capacity and are independent.”¹⁰ Anyone interested in taking up the eremitic life should also have their financial affairs in order since the hermit is required to maintain the hermitage according to the tradition of the Desert Fathers. The candidate must therefore indicate the type of work that will ensure their subsistence and the ownership of the hermitage – whether it belongs to the hermit, the diocese, or other natural or legal persons. It is also vital to settle social obligations (e.g., health and pension contributions). According to the Tarragona document, the bishop should discuss this matter with the hermit making sure that the commitments undertaken are not burdensome for anyone.¹¹ The candidate should also submit a written statement from the parish priest, spiritual director, or someone who knows them well and can provide the necessary facts about their spiritual life.

⁵ The Code of the Eastern Churches promulgated in 1990 distinguishes between two forms of eremitic life. In the light of Can. 481, the first one concerns, a hermit who “is a member of a monastery *sui iuris* who has given himself or herself totally into heavenly contemplation and who is totally separated from people and the world.” In the Eastern Church, this means a hermit in the full sense of the word. However, according to Can. 570, “Particular law can establish other kinds of ascetics who imitate eremitical life, belonging or not to an institute of consecrated life” (CCEO).

⁶ *Stan pustelnic*, 2.

⁷ Müller, *Grundordnung*, 20.

⁸ Müller, *Grundordnung*, 20.

⁹ Looking at the experience of the Church in Poland, Spain, and Germany, this phenomenon is quite common. For example, most Polish hermits were previously members of institutes of consecrated life and even diocesan priests.

¹⁰ *Stan pustelnic*, 2.

¹¹ Balcells, *Hermit Life*, 9.

Invariably, the spiritual requirements remain crucial. The documents often bring the candidate's motivation into focus, providing a number of obstacles that do not fit into the spirituality of the desert, with the candidate's attitude to the world coming to the fore. The hermitage cannot be an escape from the world, people, and responsibility. The hermit is not a fugitive who despises their neighbors and hates the whole world. Although living in the world, the hermit is not of the world and, with their prayer, stands at the heart of the Church,¹² surrounding it with a heart full of love, understanding, and wisdom acquired precisely in the experience of the desert. "Through prayer, the future hermit shares the sufferings of the People of God and announces the coming of the Kingdom of God with their silent preaching."¹³ The eremitic life, as the Tarragona document interestingly puts it, is not a temporary cure for people who are lost, immature, unstable, or dissatisfied with life.¹⁴ It is a call from the Lord Himself who calls a man to this specific form of consecrated life. The candidate should have inner peace and freedom because "All men seek peace first of all with themselves. That is necessary because we do not naturally find rest even in our own being. We have to learn to commune with ourselves before we can communicate with other men and with God. A man who is not at peace with himself necessarily projects his interior fighting into the society of those he lives with, and spreads a contagion of conflict all around him."¹⁵ Another obstacle may be spiritual pride, haughtiness, or the inability to accept the authority of another person. The candidate should also not be motivated by the desire for an easy and average way of life, only outwardly poor and lonely, or the desire to stand out in society. It is essential to verify that the person concerned does not have a romantic vision of life that does not in any way fit in with eremitic spirituality. The candidate must remember that the only motivation for going into the desert should be Christ Himself and the desire to follow Him perfectly in silence, solitude, and prayer. The candidate interested in formation for the eremitic life should love God above all else and embody piety, deep prayer and devotion to the liturgical life, and public involvement in the life of the Church. The candidate must go to confession regularly, participate daily in the Eucharist, read the Scriptures, and recite the Liturgy of the Hours. All this should testify to the spiritual maturity of the candidate, immersed in contemplative prayer, silence, solitude, the austerity of life, poverty, and chastity. The requirements are of great importance because the eremitic life remains a specific form of consecrated life; it is difficult and demanding but also extremely beautiful, inscribed in the centuries-old tradition of the Church. These demands should discourage any pseudo-hermits.¹⁶

¹² Balcells, *Hermit Life*, 3.

¹³ Müller, *Grundordnung*, 20–21.

¹⁴ Balcells, *Hermit Life*, 7.

¹⁵ Merton, *No Man*, 121.

¹⁶ Of course, the Church allows free or independent hermits. This is clearly expressed by Can. 920 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "Without always professing the three evangelical counsels publicly,

2. Initial Formation

The candidate, having collected the necessary documents, submits them along with a written request, a curriculum vitae,¹⁷ and the baptismal and confirmation certificates to the diocesan bishop or his delegate.¹⁸ Next, the documents are reviewed, and the candidate is interviewed. Afterward, the bishop decides to accept or reject the application. If the application is accepted, the initial formation begins. This often consists of two stages, although each country has its specific characteristics. For example, in the Diocese of Regensburg, the initial formation is divided into three stages. In the first stage, the candidate is placed in a chosen monastery to test their vocation. “This stage serves as an introduction to the consecrated life and may use elements of the religious postulancy with the necessary modifications.”¹⁹ The stay in the monastery should not last one year; it can be one or three months. This practice is especially important for lay people with no previous experience of consecrated life. This stage seems very reasonable in the whole process of formation since it allows the candidate to learn the richness of the consecrated life in the community, drawing from the experience of monks and nuns. In Poland, this stage is not included, but it is part of the first stage of formation in the Archdiocese of Tarragona; however, it is not separated into separate stages. During their stay with the religious order, the candidates deepen their theological knowledge and form themselves in ascetic practices and prayer. Of course, this stage can take place outside the monastery. The first stage of initial formation in the Archdiocese of Tarragona and Poland is very similar. It lasts three years,²⁰ takes place outside the hermitage, and is guided by the diocesan bishop or his delegate. During this time, the candidates stay in their own environment and

hermits ‘devote their life to the praise of God and salvation of the world through a stricter separation from the world, the silence of solitude and assiduous prayer and penance.’” The eremitic life, however, does not then take on a canonical form and therefore has no legal status. Nowadays, there are many such hermits, but unfortunately, in most cases, they arouse controversy and ambiguity, and the Church does not approve of their activity. For example, Poland has recently seen two such cases in the diocese of Czestochowa: the activities of Sr. Bruna of Mary and Rev. Daniel Galus from the hermitage in Czatachowa were denied the approval of the Church.

¹⁷ The Polish document provides detailed information on what should be included in the curriculum vitae. In addition to personal information, the document should include a biography with family relationships, events that have strongly influenced the candidate (e.g., the death of a loved one), and information on how the candidate lives now and how they envision their life in a few years. Also, the guidelines recommend including information related to their spiritual and sacramental life, theological education, and spiritual goals. The candidates must also describe their health, strengths of character, and attitudes towards family, friends, and the world. It is, of course, essential to refer to the eremitic life itself, the motivation for taking up this vocation, the vision of life, and financial independence.

¹⁸ This is the most common practice. The bishop appoints a delegate who, in his name, is responsible for the eremitic life in the diocese concerned. The Archdioceses of Tarragona and Regensburg, as well as most dioceses in Poland, have such delegates.

¹⁹ Müller, *Grundordnung*, 22.

²⁰ In Poland, it can be extended to five years; the first stage applies only to the lay faithful.

undertake intellectual, psychological, and spiritual formation. In the intellectual formation, it is very important to know the spirituality of the Desert Fathers, the history of eremitic and monastic life, Sacred Scripture, theology, the various schools of spirituality, and “the documents of the Magisterium of the universal and particular Church.”²¹ The intellectual formation is naturally adapted to the candidate’s knowledge and experience. Special attention is paid to the person’s psychological formation, “If one runs away from the world and one’s neighbors, one cannot run away from oneself. In the face of natural horizons and in the limited field of action, one’s own ‘I’ emerges. It often becomes restless and especially imposes itself on the mental consciousness. Inactivity is annoying. Loneliness and silence increase distraction. The movements of the soul and their powers, thoughts, images, feelings, and impressions awaken quickly, and impose themselves with such insistent and sometimes even painful sharpness that they almost obscure the supernatural realities which the soul expects to contemplate in itself and in God. The soul, while in the desert to find God, often finds only itself.”²² The hermit must be mentally strong, balanced, and able to cope with extreme emotions, silence, and solitude. This formation is critical because the hermits must not concentrate on themselves but on God. Hence, at this stage, the care of an experienced and wise spiritual director is a must, as both documents emphasize. The Archdiocese of Tarragona also points out that it is helpful to meet with hermits at this stage to draw on the richness of their life in the desert. The spiritual formation of the candidates should deepen their prayer life and be a time of listening to the voice of God in silence and solitude. The candidate should attend the Eucharist daily and often participate in the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. At this stage, the candidate should also find a suitable place to lead the eremitic life; the hermit, however, may also live in a city.²³ During this stage of formation, regular meetings with the bishop or his delegate are essential in order to help the hermit discern their vocation. The meetings should take place in a fraternal atmosphere, facilitating sharing of experiences and insights. This stage is different in the Diocese of Regensburg – after the time spent in the monastery, the candidate attempts to live in the hermitage, in solitude, doing work that would not drown out their chosen way of life. The introduction of the candidate to the hermitage should be a modest ceremony without the participation of the faithful. It should “begin with a solemn celebration of Vespers, after which the would-be hermit, assisted by the local parish priest, will be led into the hermitage.” This stage ends with a temporary profession for a period of three years.

After the appropriate education and discernment in Poland and Tarragona, the second stage of initial formation takes place: an attempt to live in the desert.

²¹ Śmiarowski, *Niektóre wskazania*, 5.

²² Maria Eugeniusz, *Chcę widzieć Boga*, 419.

²³ This practice is very popular in Germany (Leenen, *Współcześni pustelnicy*).

In Poland, this lasts five years,²⁴ while in the Archdiocese of Tarragona, it usually lasts three years. In Poland, the vows are renewed every year for five years, in Tarragona for three years, and in Regensburg for three years. The second stage in Poland and in the Archdiocese of Tarragona is the same as the third stage of initial formation in the Diocese of Regensburg. In the second phase, the hermit has the task of creating a rule of life to follow. It should take into consideration the elements of eremitic identity contained in Can. 603 (1) of the *CCL*, “In addition to institutes of consecrated life, the Church recognizes the eremitic or anchoritic life by which the Christian faithful devote their life to the praise of God and the salvation of the world through a stricter withdrawal from the world, the silence of solitude, and assiduous prayer and penance.” The hermit must indicate how they personally understand these elements. The rule may also draw inspiration from the richness of other religious rules or from other writings on spirituality. Prayer should occupy an important place in the rule since the hermit turns the whole day into prayer.²⁵ The rule should specify the time given to prayer, the types of prayer, and the ascetic practices to be undertaken. The rule must also define how the three evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience are to be pursued. Additionally, since the hermit earns their living and is not dependent on the diocese or parish, the hermit needs to specify the type of work, the source of subsistence, and the ownership of the hermitage. The rule must also define the hermit’s contacts with the world, family, and friends. The hermit should indicate when and for what reason they will leave the hermitage, whether they will use the telephone or the Internet. Furthermore, hermits may receive people who want spiritual advice, which should also be specified. The rule must include a reference to the relationship between the diocesan bishop and a spiritual director; it must regulate the time for rest. The hermit should attach to the rule a detailed daily schedule, which may change with the liturgical periods of the Church. The diocesan bishop approves the rule.

In the second stage of initial formation, the hermit enters a deepened life in the desert, experiencing the hardships and everyday activities of this form of life. At this stage, the hermit may still resign from this way of life, which should be the fruit of long reflection and discussion with the spiritual director and the bishop. A written request should be then submitted to the bishop. Resignation can also be made after perpetual profession; in this case, a dispensation is needed. Finally, the bishop may expel the hermit if the latter has seriously infringed on the beliefs of the Church or their vocation of the eremitic state.²⁶

²⁴ It can be shortened to four years.

²⁵ Balcells, *Hermit Life*, 4.

²⁶ A hermit may also be removed for committing offenses against life, liberty, and the sixth commandment of the Decalogue, as mentioned in canons 1397, 1398, and 1395 of the Code of Canon Law.

3. Perpetual Profession

The stages of initial formation culminate in the solemn perpetual profession in the hands of the diocesan bishop. Therefore, the eremitic life is subject to legal norms, as indicated in Can. 603 (2) of the CCL, "A hermit is recognized by law as one dedicated to God in consecrated life if he or she publicly professes in the hands of the diocesan bishop the three evangelical counsels, confirmed by vow or another sacred bond, and observes a proper program of living under his direction." The profession should take place in a cathedral, as the Polish and German documents indicate, or in a parish church where the hermitage is located, as the Spanish statutes emphasize. Both cases are justified since the eremitic life is an event for the entire local Church community. Hence the perpetual vows can occur in a cathedral or other important church in the diocese. On the other hand, the vows made in the parish where the hermit lives emphasize their bond with that local community. All the documents also permit perpetual profession to occur in the hermitage itself. The Statutes of Regensburg and Tarragona do not specify the rites or wording of the hermitic profession, while the documents from Poland provide very valuable information in this regard. The hermits draft the vows themselves, which are to be approved by the bishop. They should be written in the first person and begin with an invocation of God. The hermit should include a reference to their rule of life, define the time of the profession (temporary/perpetual), "ask for the bishop of the diocese to accept the profession, ask for the bishop's blessing for their ministry in the Church, include the place and date of his profession."²⁷ If the hermits wish, they may also invoke their patron saints. The vows should be handwritten, with the signature of the hermit, the diocesan bishop, and two witnesses. As all documents indicate, the hermits may wear an appropriate monastic attire,²⁸ which will testify to their vocation, and use the abbreviation OVE (*ordo vitae eremiticae*) after their names.

4. Continuous Formation

The aforementioned documents do not devote much space to continuing formation, even though it is of utmost importance. They only state that "the hermit is obliged to continue their spiritual and intellectual (theological) formation until the end of their life"²⁹ as indicated by all three statutes. The perpetual profession does not end the hermit's formation because the whole Christian life should be devoted to striving

²⁷ Śmiarowski, *Niektóre wskazania*, 7.

²⁸ However, it is not a religious habit.

²⁹ *Stan pustelnic*, 6.

for holiness and constant development. With all their strength, the Desert Fathers emphasized that temptation must be expected till the last breath.³⁰ Therefore, it is important to be constantly vigilant and to control the body, thoughts, and desires. This is a difficult challenge because the desert is, above all, a decision of the heart. “Many solitaries living in the desert have been lost because they lived like people in the world. It is better to live in a crowd and want to live a solitary life than to live in solitude and long all the time for company.”³¹ Continuous work on oneself, however painful and difficult it may be, is the means to a deeper surrender to Christ. As Thomas Merton wrote, “We cannot be ourselves unless we know ourselves. But self-knowledge is impossible when thoughtless and automatic activity keeps our souls in confusion.”³² The work on oneself, therefore, should be well thought out, under the watchful eye of a spiritual director and a constant confessor. The hermits must remember that they have entrusted their entire life to God, He is their Friend and Master. Only by constantly looking at Christ will the hermit be able to properly perform their vocation and love God with “an undivided heart” (VC 21). The continuous formation aims at deepening the inner life and finding in the experience of the desert the glory of Jesus Crucified and Risen (CCC 921). It should include the constant reading of Sacred Scriptures, the documents of the Magisterium, the works of the saints, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. Everyday work and keeping the hermitage tidy and in good order, which teaches humility, patience, and simplicity, are also essential for continuous development. All these aspects are also crucial for maintaining psycho-physical balance. Permanent formation should also include the psychological one. As Andrzej Muszala points out, “Loneliness brings with it certain dangers. A woman is affected by it slightly differently than a man.”³³ Women hermits should pay attention to their sphere of feelings, emotions, and the experience of the hormonal cycle. On the other hand, men must emphasize putting the sexual sphere in order or not falling into idleness and sloppiness. This does not change the fact that the indicated aspects, although specific to a particular group, may apply to any gender. For example, controlling one’s sexuality is challenging for both women and men. Hermits should always retain inner freedom.

³⁰ *The Desert Fathers*, 148; *Apoftegmata*, 131. “Anthony said to Poemen, ‘Our great work is to lay the blame for our sins before God, and to expect to be tempted to our last breath.’”

³¹ *The Desert Fathers*, 10; *Apoftegmata*, 473. Amma Syncletica.

³² Merton, *No Man*, 125.

³³ Muszala, “Formacja do życia pustelniczego,” 6.

5. The Role of the Diocesan Bishop

The diocesan bishop plays an important role in the whole process of eremitic life formation. The mentioned statutes bring the duties of the bishop into focus, as well as the bishop's responsibility for the proper development of eremitic life in his diocese. A hermitic vocation is a specific form because it enjoys great autonomy and freedom. The hermit has an influence over many aspects of the formation itself or of later life. However, "by the power of his authority, the bishop helps to recognize the authenticity of the vocation and to discern it carefully."³⁴ The diocesan bishop, it must be noted, remains the legitimate superior of the hermit. The bishop discerns the candidate's vocation to the eremitic life, supervises their formation, approves their rule of life, and allows and takes the vows. The hermit is obliged to meet regularly with the bishop; the meetings should be conducted in a friendly atmosphere and offer an opportunity to share experiences and mutual support. The hermit is also obliged to submit annual reports and accounts of managing the hermitage and financial matters to the bishop. As the Statutes of Tarragona state, this is important to discern whether poverty is practiced in the proper evangelical spirit.³⁵ The documents also state that the hermit cannot change the place of residence without the bishop's permission. The bishop's role in the eremitic life should spring from the spirit of paternal concern³⁶ and should also be exercised in this way.

Conclusions

The above analysis of the documents issued in Poland, Tarragona, and Regensburg clearly shows what the hermit life formation should look like and what elements cannot be omitted from it. First, it is important to set the appropriate requirements for the candidates, which are imposed by the specifics of this life. The requirements, whether purely human or spiritual, allow for the full recognition of the candidate, which will be valuable not only for those responsible for formation in the diocese but also for the person concerned. The main place here is, of course, the motivation guided by the aspirants because at the beginning of the formation, it can be determined whether a given person is actually called to be a hermit or whether their decision is only a misguided attempt to escape from the world, oneself and the desire to lead a comfortable life devoid of the spirit of the desert. Carrying out the next stages of formation, up to the perpetual profession, as shown in the presented documents,

³⁴ Müller, *Grundordnung*, 19.

³⁵ Balcells, *Hermit Life*, 9.

³⁶ *Stan pustelnic*, 5.

is a highly tedious and lengthy process that takes many years. What is needed here is extraordinary prudence and patience so that these indicated stages run in a spirit of sacrifice, prayer, growth in faith, and confirmation in the undertaken path. It must be remembered that a great responsibility rests with the diocesan bishops. They must be the promoters as well as the guardians of this individual form of consecrated life. Many dioceses still lack the relevant statutes and aids that are valuable to bishops. Hence, it is worthwhile to produce more documents helping bishops discern the life of a hermit in an appropriate understanding of its spirituality and role in the Church. It must not be forgotten that this responsibility also rests on the hermits themselves because the formation of hermit life is essential in order to be able to fully discover the beauty and phenomenon of the life that they have chosen. "Therefore, this discovery of ourselves is always a losing of ourselves – a death and a resurrection [...]. The discovery of ourselves in God, and of God in ourselves, by a charity that also finds all other men in God with ourselves [...] is the realization that 'I live now not I but Christ liveth in me.'"³⁷ This is what formation in eremitic life is supposed to achieve. The hermits come to self-knowledge in order to lose themselves, to die every day for everything that is not God. In this total *kenosis*, the hermits will be able to give themselves fully to Him whom they loved above all things. The hermits are to rediscover this truth every day. Finally, it is worth taking a closer look at the document recently published by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life: *La forma di vita eremitica nella Chiesa particolare. Ponam in deserto viam (Is 43, 19). Orientamenti*. The indications given by the Congregation should be incorporated into the above-mentioned statutes and adapted to them.

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