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## EXHORTATIVE AND SPIRITUAL WRITINGS

### 3.1 The Way of Life given to Clare and the Poor Ladies of San Damiano (1212)

Clare of Assisi (1193-1253), in her *Rule*, c.6, gives us the Way of Life, or *Forma Vitae*, which Francis wrote to her and the first Poor Ladies of San Damiano in 1212:

“After the Most High Heavenly Father saw fit by His grace to enlighten my heart to do penance according to the example and teaching of our most blessed Father, Saint Francis, I, together with my sisters, willingly promised him obedience shortly after his own conversion. When the Blessed Father saw we had no fear of poverty, hard work, trial, shame, or contempt of the world, but, instead, regarded such things as great delights, moved by compassion he wrote a form of life for us as follows: *Because by divine inspiration you have made yourselves daughters and servants of the Most High King, the heavenly Father, and have espoused yourselves to the Holy Spirit, choosing to live according to the perfection of the Holy Gospel, I resolve and promise for myself and for my brothers to always have that same loving care and solicitude for you as I have for them.* As long as he lived he diligently fulfilled this and wished that it always be fulfilled by his brothers.”<sup>24</sup>

In her *Testament*, 33, Clare also says: “Afterwards he wrote a form of life for us, especially that we always persevere in holy poverty.”<sup>25</sup>

This *Way of Life* was written in 1212, at the very beginning of the evangelical life of Clare, her sister Agnes, and probably other sisters who joined her at San Damiano, after her brief stay at the two Benedictine monasteries of San Paolo delle Abbadesse, at Bastia, and Sant’Angelo di Panzo, on the flanks of Mount Subasio. This *Way of Life* was to mark the initial experience of the Gospel life for the Poor Ladies of San Damiano, and was considered so important by Clare that she inserted it right at the heart of the *Rule* which was approved by Innocent IV on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1253, two days before her death.

Other witnesses to the authenticity of the *Way of Life written to Saint Clare*, include Thomas of Celano. In his *Life of Saint Francis*, he writes: “He is without question an outstanding craftsman, for through his spreading message, the Church of Christ is being renewed in both sexes according to his form, rule and teaching, and there is victory for the triple army of those being saved. Furthermore, to all he gave a norm of life and to those of every rank he sincerely pointed out the way of salvation.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Clare of Assisi. Early Documents*, revised and expanded by R.J. ARMSTRONG, (Franciscan Institute Publications), St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, NY 1993, 71-72.

<sup>25</sup> *Clare of Assisi. Early Documents*, 58.

<sup>26</sup> 1C 37.

In *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul*, Celano writes: “The virgins of Christ had begun to gather in that place (San Damiano), assembled from diverse regions of the world, professing the greatest perfection in the observance of the highest poverty and the beauty of every virtue. Though the father gradually withdrew his bodily presence from them, he still offered in the Holy Spirit, his affection to care for them. The saint recognized that they were marked with many signs of the highest perfection, and that they were ready to bear any loss and undergo any labour for Christ and did not ever want to turn aside from the holy commandments. Therefore, he firmly promised them, and others who professed poverty in a similar way of life, that he and his brothers would perpetually offer them help and advice. And he carried this out carefully as long as he lived, and when he was close to death he commanded it to be carried out without fail always, saying that one and the same Spirit had led the brothers and those poor little ladies out of this world.”<sup>27</sup>

In his letter to Saint Agnes of Bohemia, *Angelus Gaudium* (11<sup>th</sup> May 1238), Pope Gregory IX refers to *The Way of Life written to Saint Clare*: “When We were yet established in a lesser office, and that beloved daughter in Christ, Clare, the Abbess of the Monastery of San Damiano in Assisi, and certain other devout women in the Lord cast aside worldly vanity and chose to serve Him under the yoke of religious obedience, Blessed Francis gave them, as new-born children, not solid food but rather a milk drink, a *formula of life*, which seemed to be suited for them.”<sup>28</sup>

This short note which Francis gives Clare in 1212 contains some important elements, namely, the insistence upon the *divine inspiration*, which prompted Clare to embrace the Gospel way of life, just as it did in the case of Francis; the Trinitarian dimension of the document; the mention of the *perfection of the Holy Gospel*; and Francis’ promise to take care of Clare and the Poor Ladies, personally and through his brothers.

### **3.2 A Rule for Hermitages (1217-1221)**

The title given to this *opusculum* might be misleading, since here we are not dealing with a rule in the juridical sense. This document, which does not have any title in the Assisi Codex, contains some precise dispositions regarding the life and daily routine of those brothers who lived in the hermitages.

The term “hermitage” indicates the early Franciscan places in which the brothers would periodically dwell together. Jacques de Vitry, writing in 1216 from Genova, on the life of the first Friars Minor, says: “They live according to the form of life of the primitive Church, about whom it was written: *The community of believers were of one heart and one mind* (Acts 4,32). During the day they go into the cities and villages

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<sup>27</sup> 2C 204.

<sup>28</sup> *Clare of Assisi. Early Documents*, 372.

giving themselves over to the active life in order to gain others; at night, however, they return to their hermitage or solitary places to devote themselves to contemplation.”<sup>29</sup>

Examples of these early Franciscan hermitages are still to be found in the Italian peninsula. One of the most famous is the hermitage of Le Carceri, just above Assisi. Others include the hermitages of the Rieti Valley, namely, Fonte Colombo, Greccio, La Foresta and Poggiobustone. Another important hermitage is La Verna, the place where Francis received the stigmata in 1224. Le Celle, near Cortona, is reputed to be the place where Francis could have dictated his *Testament*. Other hermitages include places hallowed by the presence of Francis and the first brothers: Monte Casale, Monteluco, Speco di Sant’Urbano. In the gradual unfolding of the history of the Order, the hermitage became known as *locus*, to be distinguished from the *conventus*, or large friary in the town. These early hermitages are given great importance in the Franciscan Sources of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. The *Later Rule* was written in the hermitage of Fonte Colombo; Francis celebrated Christmas in 1223 in the hermitage of Greccio; at the same hermitage he also gave the brothers an example of true poverty in begging alms on Easter Sunday; he received the stigmata in the hermitage of La Verna. These same hermitages became the centres of reform in the Franciscan Order, particularly during the early years of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, during the time of the Spirituals and Fraticelli, and during the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century, with the reform of the Regular Observance.

The *Earlier Rule* provides a clue as to the various places in which the brothers lived, including the hermitages: “Wherever the brothers may be, either in hermitages or other places, let them be careful not to make any place their own or contend with anyone for it.”<sup>30</sup>

In *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul*, Thomas of Celano gives us a proof of Francis’ predilection to the way of life in the hermitages: “Once a Spaniard, a devout cleric, happened to enjoy some time seeing and talking with Saint Francis. Among other news about the brothers in Spain, he made the saint happy with this report: ‘Your brothers in our country stay in a poor hermitage. They have set up the following way of life for themselves: half of them take care of the household chores and half remain free for contemplation. In this manner each week the active half moves to the contemplative, and the repose of those contemplating returns to the toils of labor.’”<sup>31</sup>

The contents of *The Rule for Hermitages*, provide us with a clear insight into the way of life of the first brothers. The whole structure of the Franciscan *locus* is based on the Gospel text of Luke 10,38-42, namely, Jesus being welcomed into the house of Martha and Mary. The role of Martha is compared to the active life, while that of Mary

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<sup>29</sup> JACQUES DE VITRY, *Letter I (1216)*, in *Francis of Assisi. Early Documents*, Vol. I, The Saint, 579.

<sup>30</sup> *Earlier Rule*, c. 7,13.

<sup>31</sup> 2C 178. For a good analysis of *The Rule for Hermitages*, see K. ESSER, “The *Regula pro Eremitariis data* of Saint Francis of Assisi”, in *Franciscan Solitude*, edited by A. Cirino and J. Raischl (Franciscan Institute Publications), St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure NY 1995, 147-205; O. SCHMUCKI, “Place of Solitude: An Essay on the External Circumstances of the Prayer Life of St. Francis of Assisi”, *Greyfriars Review* 2,1 (1988) 77-132; O. SCHMUCKI, “*Mentis Silentium*. Contemplation in the Early Franciscan Order”, *Greyfriars Review* 4,2 (1990) 35-71.

to the contemplative life of the brothers. The material structure of the hermitage reflects the description we find in *The Mirror of Perfection*, 10 (Sabatier edition). The Franciscan hermitage would normally be located on the flanks of a mountain, preferably in a wooded area, but close enough to the arterial roads as to render it fairly easy for the brothers to go into the towns.

The way of life is described as “staying in hermitages in a religious way”, an expression indicating, at least in the Latin *religiose stare in eremis*, a well-structured, regular life, which is, to all intents and purposes, a way of consecrated life in fraternity. The roles of the brothers are described as being those of “mothers” (role of Martha) and “sons” (role of Mary).

The daily routine of the Franciscan hermitage rotates round the canonical hours of the Divine Office, beginning with Compline, after which the brothers are to maintain strict silence all night long until after Terce the following morning. In the middle of the night they rise for Matins, and early in the morning they pray Prime and then Terce. After breaking the silence the “sons” can go and beg for alms from their “mothers”, and afterwards meet again for prayers at Sext, None, and Vespers.

The place in which the brothers live is described as an “enclosure”. In it nobody is allowed to enter, except the Minister or Custodian. The “mothers” have the duty to protect the “sons” from any inopportune intrusions which might disturb their contemplation. Lastly, the role of “mothers” and “sons” is interchangeable, according to the model which Thomas of Celano presents when speaking about the brothers in Spain, in the text we have quoted above.

Regarding the date of *The Rule for Hermitages*, it comes definitely after 1217, simply because it speaks about the office of Custodian. Now, from 1217 onwards, the Order had Ministers and Custodians in the various entities, just like this document states. There is no proof that the Ministers existed before 1217. Regarding the other end of the time-scale for dating *The Rule of Hermitages*, Esser proposes 1222. By this date the term “hermitage” had been accepted in *The Earlier Rule*, as we have seen above. Furthermore, it is strange that *The Rule for Hermitages* makes no mention of the Eucharist. This is to be understood in the light of what happened in the Order in 1222. In fact, it was only on 29<sup>th</sup> March 1222, that the brothers were allowed to have their own oratories in which to celebrate the Eucharist and the Divine Office, with the Bull *Devotionis vestrae* of Pope Honorius III. Therefore *The Rule for Hermitages* comes from a period immediately preceding this date, during which the brothers still had to go out of their houses in order to celebrate or assist at the Eucharist, and could only have oratories for private prayer.

*The Rule for Hermitages* is a truly inspiring document for Franciscan life. The Order is nowadays encouraging the brothers, and indeed, all those who would like to experience Franciscan life, to undertake a period of contemplative prayer in the simple settings of a Franciscan hermitage.

### 3.3 The Testament (1226)

After the *Later Rule*, the *Testament* of Saint Francis is the *opusculum* which is found in the greatest number of manuscripts, and which is among the best known of the Writings. The *Testament*, dictated by Francis probably at the Porziuncola, during the last weeks before he died in 1226 (although some scholars believe that it was dictated some time before, at the hermitage of Celle at Cortona), is definitely the most autobiographical among the Writings of Saint Francis. The textual analysis of the Testament has been the result of the expert work of Kajetan Esser.<sup>32</sup>

The word *Testamentum* (*Testament*) is also translated by the term *ultima voluntas* (*last will*). It is Francis himself who defines the nature of this document and its significance to the fraternity of brothers: “And the brothers may not say: ‘This is another Rule’. Because this is a remembrance, admonition, exhortation, and my testament, which I, little brother Francis, make for you, my blessed brothers, that we might observe the Rule we have promised in a more Catholic way.”<sup>33</sup>

The intentions of Francis had been the object of speculation on the part of the brothers ever since the first years immediately following upon the death of the founder. It is surprising that, just four years after Francis’ death, the Order gathered at the General Chapter in 1230 felt the need to make recourse to Pope Gregory IX, in order to have an interpretation of the saint’s intentions as proposed in his *Testament*, and to understand this document in the light of the only document they knew as legally binding, namely, the *Later Rule* of 1223. We know from the Pope’s answer in the Bull *Quo elongati*,<sup>34</sup> that the *Testament* had no legally binding moral force upon the brothers, for the simple reason that Francis dictated it at a time when he was no longer responsible for the Order, and could not bind his successors to its observance. However, the *Testament* remained the document which could best explain the genuine intentions of Francis when he wrote the *Later Rule* of 1223. It was a centuries-old tradition in the Order to read the *Testament* together with the *Later Rule* during Chapters, and even weekly, even though this practice was fixed as a rule by the General Constitutions of 1506. All Franciscan reforms regarded the *Testament* of Saint Francis as an inspirational document of utmost importance in their rediscovery of the Gospel values which Francis embraced.

Regarding the relationship between the *Testament* and the *Later Rule*, Kajetan Esser writes: “The Testament is not a ‘flag of freedom’, for it certainly does not free one from the binding precepts of the Rule. Rather, it was written to safeguard the Rule, to have it observed better and more faithfully. The stricter part of the Order treasured the Testament because of its prohibition of privileges and its prohibition of the glossing of

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<sup>32</sup> K. ESSER, *Das Testament des Heiligen Franziskus von Assisi. Eine Untersuchung über seine Echtheit und seine Bedeutung*, Münster/Westf. 1949; English edition: *The Testament of Saint Francis. A Commentary* by Kajetan Esser, Translated by M. Karecki, (Franciscan Publishers, Pulaski), Wisconsin, USA 1982.

<sup>33</sup> *Testament*, 34.

<sup>34</sup> H. GRUNDMANN, “Die Bulle «Quo elongati» Papst Gregors IX”, *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 54 (1961) 1-25. English text in *Francis of Assisi. Early Documents*, Vol. I: The Saint, 570-575.

the Rule and the Testament; not, as Sabatier would have liked, for the secret knowledge that supposedly the Testament grants to the splinter-groups of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Francis was not advocating freedom from the Order and thereby from the Church.”<sup>35</sup>

Raoul Manselli describes the reasons which prompted Francis to write the *Testament* in 1226: “Saint Francis was aware of the closeness of his death, of the evolution of the Order, and of human weakness which could intervene to change or modify his ideal. Against this complex psychological background he was anxious to condense his life-experience so that it would not be lost, so that it could be summarized and so that it could be passed on to those who were to come.”<sup>36</sup>

The circumstances of composition of the *Testament*, as we have seen, take us to the last weeks of the life of Saint Francis at the Porziuncola. Some months earlier, in April 1226, after a night in which he felt very ill and thought that he would die, Francis dictated a shorter version of his last will, known as the *Testament of Siena* (see section 6, on the *Dictated Writings*). In that occasion he had called brother Benedict of Pirato and commanded him to write the words he was dictating.<sup>37</sup> The same thing could have happened at the Porziuncola during the last weeks of Francis’ life. The fact that the *Testament* was dictated spontaneously is best seen in the simple construction of its phrases, in the frequent use of Italian idioms in the Latin, in the near absence of biblical quotations, and in the passing on from one theme to another without any logical sequence. These factors make the *Testament* all the more authentic as an autobiographical document of Saint Francis.

The *Testament* portrays various images, or thoughts, which were racing in Francis’ mind. They take us back to the humble beginnings of his vocation, to his process of initial conversion, to his experience of the poor and suffering Christ, to his loving care of the brothers, to his sense of obedience to the Church. The major themes of the *Testament*, which throw light upon various events mentioned in the Franciscan Sources, can be summarized as follows:

- The vocation to a life of penance. The leper image (v. 1-3).
- The faith in churches and the prayer in the churches (v. 4-5).
- The faith in priests who live according to the rite of the Roman Church (v. 6-11).
- The Lord’s most holy names and written words, and honouring theologians (v. 12-13).
- The brothers and life according to the form of the Gospel (v. 14-18).
- Work and begging alms (v. 20-22).
- The salutation of peace (v. 23).
- The brothers are pilgrims and strangers without property (v. 24).
- The brothers are not to seek privileges from the Roman Curia (v. 25-26).
- Obedience to the Minister, Guardians, and faithfulness to the Divine Office (v. 27-33).
- This is my Testament (v. 34-41).

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<sup>35</sup> K. ESSER, *The Testament of Saint Francis*, 16.

<sup>36</sup> R. MANSELLI, “From the Testament to the Testaments of Saint Francis”, Translated by P. Colbourne, *Greyfriars Review* 2,2 (1988) 91-99.

<sup>37</sup> *Assisi Compilation* 59; *Mirror of Perfection* (Lemmens), 30; (Sabatier) 87.

The *Testament* probably shows Francis holding on fiercely to his personal belief in the form of life of the Gospel which was revealed to him. “No one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel.”<sup>38</sup> This belief was enhanced and supported by the experience of twenty years of living out those same words which prompted him and the brothers to embark upon their evangelical adventure. This experience cannot be ignored if we are to question ourselves about the dilemma which Francis was facing at the end of his life. It is this experience, as expressed in the various images which were passing in front of the spiritual vision of Francis at the point of death, which we must come to grips with, in order to try to understand why Francis is so categorical in his *Testament*, when he knew that he no longer had any legal authority to oblige the brothers to share his own dream.

### 3.4 The Last Will written to Clare and the Poor Ladies (1226)

In her *Rule* of 1253, Saint Clare mentions this Writing of Saint Francis: “Shortly before his death, he once more wrote his last will for us that we or those, as well, who would come after us would never turn aside from the holy poverty we had embraced. He said: *I, little brother Francis, wish to follow the life and poverty of our most high Lord Jesus Christ and of His holy mother and to persevere in this until the end; and I ask and counsel you, my ladies, to live always in this most holy life and poverty. And keep most careful watch that you never depart from this by reason of the teaching or advice of anyone.*”<sup>39</sup>

Thomas of Celano gives us a proof regarding the contents of the *Last Will written to Clare* in his *Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul*: “Therefore, he firmly promised them, and others who professed poverty in a similar way of life, that he and his brothers would perpetually offer them help and advice. And he carried this out carefully as long as he lived, and when he was close to death he commanded it to be carried out without fail always, saying that one and the same Spirit had led the brothers and those little poor ladies out of this world.”<sup>40</sup>

The expression “when he was close to death” shows that this *Last Will* was written in 1226. We know that Francis had resided at San Damiano during the spring months during 1225, when he composed *The Canticle of Creatures*, and *The Canticle of Exhortation “Audite Poverelle”*. After that, he only sent messages to Clare, promising her that she would see him once more. Clare did see Francis, but only after his death, when the funeral cortege paused for some time at San Damiano on its way up to Assisi, so that Clare and the Poor Ladies could pay their last respects to their holy founder.

The *Mirror of Perfection*, 108 (Sabatier edition), shows how, shortly before he died, since he could not go to San Damiano, and Clare also was very ill and was very sad

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<sup>38</sup> *Testament*, 14.

<sup>39</sup> *Clare of Assisi. Early Documents*, 72.

<sup>40</sup> 2C 204.

to know that Francis would soon die: “Realizing that what she wanted, that is, to see him, could not be done, he wrote his blessing in a letter to console her and her sisters and also absolved her from any failings against his admonitions and against the commands and counsel of the Son of God.” This letter, which is lost, is not the *Last Will*, which has a different content, but is a proof that there was correspondence going on between Francis and Clare during the last weeks before he died.

Paul Sabatier considered this *Last Will* as a document which Francis addressed Clare in 1220, just after his return from Damiata, in order to encourage her to keep steadfast in her resolve to be faithful to the Gospel way of life, in front of the crisis which was gripping the Order at that moment. But the *Last Will* gives no indication as to the concrete circumstances of composition, and the indications of Celano are more trustworthy. The concluding expression of the *Last Will*, exhorting Clare to hold on to the evangelical way of life, in spite of any contrary advice or indications, reminds us of what Saint Clare himself writes to Agnes of Prague in her *Second Letter* (1235):

“In all of this, follow the counsel of our venerable father, our Brother Elias, the Minister General, that you may walk more securely in the way of the commands of the Lord. Prize it beyond the advice of the others and cherish it as dearer to you than any gift. If anyone would tell you something else or suggest something that would hinder your perfection or seem contrary to your divine vocation, even though you must respect him, do not follow his counsel.”<sup>41</sup>

### 3.5 The Admonitions

The *Admonitions* are a group of 28 sayings attributed with a great degree of certainty to Saint Francis by the majority of manuscripts. They are undated, for the simple reason that we do not know when Francis actually composed these words of exhortation and admonition to the brothers. The circumstances of composition of the *Admonitions* could very well have been the General Chapters of the Order, in which Francis would deliver words of encouragement and exhortation to the brothers, which would eventually have been written down by some of the brothers and transmitted in a *corpus*, or group, in the manuscript tradition, as we know it today.

Kajetan Esser describes the *Admonitions* thus: “The Admonitions of Saint Francis are the Magna Charta of a life in the Christian spirit of brotherhood, which is firmly rooted in a life of sublime poverty. On the basis of the Admonitions, the often terse words of the Rules are to be interpreted, so that they may begin to glow in the typical meaning Francis gave them. We are also shown in them again and again that the Christian spirit of brotherhood is to be lived, not only within the communities of the Friars Minor themselves, but in the whole range of man’s relationships to man. In his words of admonition Francis very often puts the biblical expression «servant of God» at the beginning of his beatitudes. The Lord himself likes to use this expression in his parables of the kingdom of God. Hence, this reveals an awareness in Francis that the

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<sup>41</sup> *Clare of Assisi. Early Documents*, 41.

kingdom of heaven is promised to that poverty of spirit which is made perfect in the spirit of brotherhood.”<sup>42</sup>

The oldest witness to the existence of the *Admonitions* is to be found in a sermon held at the University of Paris in 1231 by an unknown Dominican friar, who quotes Francis in the sixth *Admonition*: “Therefore, it is a great shame for us, the servants of God, that the saints have accomplished great things and we want only to receive glory and honour by recounting them.”

In his *Major Legend of Saint Francis*, c.6,1, Bonaventure also quotes the nineteenth *Admonition*: “Therefore as Christ’s disciple, he strove to regard himself as worthless in his own eyes and those of others, recalling what had been said by his supreme Teacher: *What is highly esteemed among mortals is an abomination before God* (Lk 16,15). He used to make this statement frequently: ‘What a person is before God, that he is and no more.’”

Angelo Clareno knew of the existence of a *corpus* of *Admonitions* of Saint Francis, in the early years of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, because he quotes them, together with some Letters and Words of Saint Francis. Some references to the *Admonitions* are also found in his *History of the Seven Tribulations of the Order*.

The *Assisi Compilation*, 103, also quotes the *Admonitions*: “And because of this he wrote the meaning of these words in his *Admonitions*, saying: ‘The saints have done these deeds, and we want to receive honour and glory by recounting and preaching about them,’ as if to say: ‘Knowledge puffs up, but charity builds.’”

The style of the *Admonitions* is exhortative, and some scholars have seen in them an influence from monastic circles, particularly from the conferences, or *collationes*, which are common in monastic literature. If we accept the theory that these *Admonitions* were composed as a result of some exhortations which Francis would give during the General Chapters of the brothers, then we could very well consider the *Admonitions* as being influenced by this monastic tradition.

Examples of this trend can be clearly seen in the first *Admonition*, entitled “The Body of Christ”. It reflects the influence of the *Tractatus de Corpore Domini* written by an anonymous Cistercian monk, known as the Pseudo-Bernard. The same theory applies in the use of the term *praelatus* (prelate) to indicate the superiors of the fraternity. We know that Francis would have preferred the term “minister”, or “custodian”. The name “prelate” comes from the Cistercian monastic tradition, and refers to the abbot or prior.

A group of *Admonitions* are short commentaries on the beatitudes of the Gospel. These are *Admonitions* 13 to 26. Some of them even begin with the Gospel references

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<sup>42</sup> K. ESSER, *Origins of the Franciscan Order*, (Franciscan Herald Press), Chicago 1970, 247-248. A good study of the contents of each and every *Admonition* is also the work of K. ESSER, “The Admonitions of Saint Francis”, *Greyfriars Review*, Vol. 6, Supplement (1992), 1-174.

from Matthew 5,3-9. *Admonition 27* is a hymn to virtue, which is quite similar to another of the Writings of Saint Francis, namely, *A Salutation of the Virtues*.

The *Admonitions* are a remarkable programme of the following of Christ in humility and poverty. They extol the virtue of minority, which destroys pride and selfishness, and unites the brothers together with Christ crucified. They are also a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to God for the dignity of the human person, created in the image and likeness of Christ. As Esser rightly points out, the *Admonitions* are truly a “magna charta” of Gospel perfection.

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