

The Carceri



Until the 13th century there as only a small chapel here of the top of Monte Subasio. It belong to the comune (town of Assisi). It is about an hour and a half walk straight up the mountain from the town. Francis came here often for solitude and renamed the chapel in honor of Mary.

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Br. Leo often said mass here for Francis. Francis renamed the chapel in honor of Mary. There were hermits here before Francis, so Francis knew of the caves and the chapel. Not long after the death of Francis, the town granted the use of the chapel and the woods to the brothers. The comune (town) decreed that no one should interfere with the reclusive life of the brothers living there, and that no one could cut or burn the forest at the Carceri. The town still owns the land, and the forest service cares for the surrounding area.

The time Francis spent in prayer and solitude was critical in his initial and ongoing conversion.

The cave entrance about 15 inches wide and 4 feet high.

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Francis spent about one-half of his converted life in hermitages. This practice of solitude has been rooted in the Franciscan psyche for all time.

The caves.

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A view from one of the caves.

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The cave floor on which the brothers slept.

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In ca.1420, St. Bernadine of Siena (you saw his body in the first part of the pilgrimage) was the novice master and provincial here. He enlarged the place in order to give accommodations to more brothers.

The refectory.

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Additional cells.

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The choir. Note the one big book so that all could read from it.

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Stairs and more stairs.

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The tree where Francis preached to the birds.

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Another cave.



The development of a regular rhythm of solitude gives birth to a sense of listening and depth in one's life.

What does this say to those of us involved in a very active ministry or life?

What is the contemplative aspect of Franciscan life for your expression of Franciscan charism?