



Ressort: Kunst, Kultur und Musik

## De vita solitaria (Life of Solitude) by Francis Petrarch

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The De vita solitaria was written in 1337 when Petrarch (1304-1374) retired in Vaucluse. Its original core was composed during the Lent of 1346 when the author spent meditation days by Philip de Cabassolles's, Bishop of Cavaillon, Vaucluse.

The work remained for many years unfinished and in 1356 it was completed and only in 1366 its copying was concluded and it could be presented to Philip.

During the last years of his life Petrarch, in peace with his moral, joined the notes concerning the life of Romualdino.

De vita solitaria has a different style in comparison with Secretum and De otio religioso.

We know through the words of the poet he intended to write a letter and then he wrote a treatise "putabam epistulam scribere, librum scripsi".

It's general opinion that in 1346 Petrarca composed the Book I and only later the Book II. An autobiographical value have the last chapters of this work. They reveal us a lot about the spiritual life of the Italian poet, i.e. the wandering, and about the doubts which tortured his life.

From the words of the poet we suppose he'd like to create a brotherhood by Philip de Cabassolles's. With the poet and Philip had to live Socrate, Ponzio Sansone, Guido Settimo.

Petrarch wished to carry out in practice the ideal life he longed for.

A few years before he declared his ideal life in a letter to Giacomo Colonna: ascetic loneliness encouraged by learning and studies.

That dream could not be carried out because Philip de Cabassolles was more a political than an ascetic character. But when his dream of retiring in Cavaillon failed the poet hoped to realize it in a different way and together with Socrate he meant to settle in Montrieux Carthusian Monastery, by his brother Gerardo's.

The document was shown to Clemens VI on 8th September 1347 and it contains the request of Francis in order to live by Gerardo's.

Petrarch leaves to Italy on 20th September 1347 and his unfulfilled desire didn't correspond to his anxious life. The ideal of a sweet loneliness could be only temporary for him because he was not able to separate himself from the world.

In these years Petrarch longed for a new settlement of his life, not incompatible with the intentions ripened during his spiritual crisis.

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A double soul was fighting in himself: the lone, the lover of the ascetic life and the man who wanted honours, approbation and wealth.

In 1337 the poet tried to reconcile with the different feelings within himself, retiring in Vaucluse, a few miles from Avignon. It was a nice countryside place and not far from the town where he could, from time to time, look after his own affairs.

Two different spiritual worlds : Vaucluse and Avignon.

In 1346 preparing the return to Provence he wrote for Philip the letter in verses «Exul ab Italia furiis civilibus» in which we can find the explicit hint to a life by him:

Rure tuo statui quae restant tempora vitae  
Degere, nec bellis nec tristi turbida lite...

These verses are of extreme importance because they show Petrarch had this dream since long time. The chronology of this letter is fixed among 1351 and 1353.

The poet thought he composed the core of *De vita solitaria* in Cavaillon and this hypothesis is confirmed in a passage of the *Senili* (XIII,11) letters sent from Arquà on 26th june 1372 to Philip.

Remembering his stay in Cavaillon at the time of writing *De vita solitaria* the poet writes:

«Inflammato di ardore giovanile ogni giorno io cercava di presentarti qualche cosa di nuovo e con caldissimo affetto dettai per te i due libri della *Vita solitaria*».

When after twenty years Petrarch sent the work to Philip he dedicated it to him and he didn't use the new title of Patriarch of Jerusalem, but utilised the title of Bishop of Cavaillon referring to the time his work was written «Ubi multa sunt propria illius tantum status ac temporis».

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