

# St. Francis of Assisi's Letter to Brother Leo

(1224 – 1226)



*Brother Leo, health and peace from Brother Francis! I am speaking, my son, in this way – as a mother would – because I am putting everything we said on the road in this brief message and advice. If afterwards, you need to come to me for counsel, I advise you thus: In whatever way it seems better to you to please the Lord God and to follow His footprint and poverty, do it with the blessing of the Lord God and my obedience. And if you need and want to come to me for the sake of your soul or for some consolation, Leo, come.*

Edition of Kajetan Esser

This short letter was written on a small piece of parchment. Worn spots suggest that Brother Leo must have kept it with him as a precious relic.

The history of this original manuscript, written by Francis himself, is filled with mystery. It is missing from any list of Francis's writings until 1604 when the Poor Clares gave it to the Conventual Friars in Spoleto. It then disappeared until 1895 when Clito Cardinale, a parish priest of Spoleto, brought it to Michele Faloci-Pulignani, a church official, to determine its authenticity. Faloci-Pulignani brought it to Pope Leo XIII who entrusted it to the care of the canons of the Duomo of Spoleto who still maintain its care.

The concept of relationships qualified by motherhood is undoubtedly intertwined in Francis's concept of bringing others to life through the word of God, an image found in Paul, e.g., 1 Corinthians 4:6 and 1 Thessalonians 2:7. It is found elsewhere in Francis's writings, e.g., ER IX 11, LR VI 8, *Letter for Hermitages 1-2, 10*.

Source: *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, Volume 1*, edited by Regis Armstrong, O.F.M.Cap., J.A. Wayne Hellmann, O.F.M.Conv., William Short O.F.M. New City Press, 202 Cardinal Rd., Hyde Park, New York 12538. 1999. Page 122.

- Photograph: F. Edward Coughlin, O.F.M.