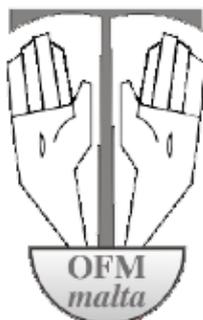




No. 137: JULY - SEPTEMBER 2021



*Journal of Franciscan Culture*  
Issued by the Franciscan Friars (OFM) Malta



## *Editorial*

# REAPING THE BENEFITS OF THE FRANCISCAN TRADEMARK

Quarterly journal of  
Franciscan culture published  
since April 1986.

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John Abela ofm  
Raymond Camilleri ofm

Available at:  
<http://www.franciscanstudies.com>  
<http://www.franciscanstudy.org>

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# 137

The seal of the Tau cross with the two arms and hands showing the stigmata of Christ and Saint Francis is a well-known Catholic symbol. It speaks volumes regarding the little poor man of Assisi and his enduring legacy.

If one asks the man in the street who was Francis of Assisi, the answer would normally be: a man who dedicated his life to peace, fraternity and love towards the poor and creation. Thus, Francis can become a slogan for all those who advocate peace, justice and ecological awareness, as well as liberation and human dignity in favour of the poor.

Wearing the Franciscan habit, whether it be brown, or black or grey, or any other shade of colour for that matter, is normally a sign that draws respect and friendship. In certain cultures it can also mean security in the face of danger. I personally have experienced such security by wearing the Franciscan habit in the Holy Land and in the Middle East, where respect for religious persons is still high on the list of priorities.

Not so any longer in western culture. Sometimes one is tempted to hide the Franciscan sign in clothing and appearance in order to avoid awkward situations. At the same time, however, the search for the benefits of the Franciscan trademark continue to characterise the choices of many of us Franciscans. In new ways, of course.

We still want Francis to be popular, but instead of wearing his habit, we prefer to raise glorious statues and monuments to

him in prominent places. It is amusing to note how the living figure of the Franciscan friar in public spaces has become rare, but has been replaced by prominent monuments extolling Francis and his movement, at least wherever these are permitted.

Another way of promoting the Franciscan trademark is working in favour of social justice and the poor. There are genuine Franciscan friars who are truly working humbly and in silence in favour of the poor in today's world. I can name just one example, for the simple reason that I have personally witnessed his commitment in favour of immigrants coming from war-torn countries and escaping from Turkey to the Greek islands, particularly Rhodes and Kos. Fr. John Luke Gregory, an English friar of the Holy Land Custody, is quietly but effectively giving a genuine witness to Franciscan love for the poor. There are certainly many other examples like him.

However, there are also other examples of social commitment towards the poor which pretend to use the Franciscan trademark for their own purposes. It is easy and convenient to place Francis at the forefront when one wants to create any institution that works professionally to take care of poor people without dirtying his own hands in mixing soup and distributing bread. Just by using the name "Franciscan" one is sure to have a unique trademark that will draw handsome dividends for whatever reasons he is working, even if they are well-intentioned.

Maybe one might think that a Franciscan trademark has to do with being simple in the sense of being ignorant. If ignorance is bliss, why seek knowledge? Why spend useless hours pouring over books and documents that can never solve the world's economic problems? Why not burn all the books and pull up your sleeves to work in favour of peace, justice, equality? Alas, more than once Franciscans have fallen into the trap of being equated with values that have nothing to do with Christian ideals, even though they are still called peace,

justice and equality. Franciscans have fallen into the trap of defending the environment and the ecological issue without any genuine reference to the Christian foundations of creation. Precisely the opposite of what Francis was doing when he chose to be poor, peaceful, just and friendly with all creatures.

I would like to refer once again to what I saw in my Franciscan brother in Rhodes. Without ever appearing on TV on his own initiative, without instituting any NGO for the purpose of realising his dream, without spending thousands of Euros to create a decent environment in which to welcome poor people, he personally goes to them in their immigration camps, where no one dares to tread. He provides them with food packs, with medicine, with medical care, certainly with the help of many volunteers, who have never organised themselves into a structure that can receive funds from official channels. Fr. John Luke does not unveil statues or monuments of Saint Francis to feed the poor. He takes his own person, clad with the Franciscan habit, and invites any brother who visits to accompany him if he so wishes.

Reaping the fruits of the Franciscan trademark pays handsome dividends. As long as it is genuinely done for God's sake and not for human success. In a world that has lost all sense of direction regarding what is genuine and what is fake (to use popular jargon coined by a multi-millionaire), the Franciscan trademark is still highly relevant, if it appears clothed in humility and solid knowledge that comes with prayer and study of who the real Francis was and what his real trademark should be.

One last note. Let us remember that monuments and statues last, but are mostly relegated to oblivion and dust. It is only the living witness of the Gospel that Francis cherished that will remain alive. All other uses or misuses of the Franciscan trademark are doomed to fail.

Noel Muscat ofm

# THE TRANSITUS OF DOMINIC AND FRANCIS: COMPARATIVE NOTES

Noel Muscat OFM

On 6 August 1221, 800 years ago, Dominic Guzmán died in Bologna. Founder of the Friars Preachers, Dominic was born in Caleruega, in Old Castile, Spain, on 8 August 1170. He studied Holy Scripture and theology in Palencia. After being ordained priest he became canon of the cathedral chapter of the diocese of Osma. In 1203/04 Diego de Acebo, bishop of Osma, took him as a close collaborator on a diplomatic mission to Denmark. During his journey Dominic understood the need to evangelise the regions of northern Europe, but also came into contact with the Albigensian heresy in southern France. Pope Innocent III asked Dominic to embark upon the ministry of preaching to the Albigensians, who were dualists, also known as Cathars. Soon other men joined him in his endeavour and in Toulouse, in 1215, he founded a new mendicant Order, known as *Ordo Prædicatorum*, the Order of Preachers, approved by Honorius III who gave them the Rule of Saint Augustine. Bishop Folques of Toulouse gave him and the friars permission to preach in his diocese, and Dominic accompanied him to the Fourth Lateran Council. The friars Preachers were to live a life of poverty, and to dedicate themselves to study and

preaching. Their motto was to be: *contemplata aliis tradere* (transmit to others what you contemplate). After an intense, but short life of apostolate, Dominic died in Bologna on 6 August 1221 and was canonised by Gregory IX in 1234 with the Bulla *Fons sapientiæ*.<sup>1</sup>

The oldest source for the life of Saint Dominic is the *Libellus de principiis Ordinis Prædicatorum* by Jordan of Saxony.<sup>2</sup> Jordan was born around 1190 near Paderborn. He met Dominic in the University of Paris, where he was studying and in 1220 joined the Friars Preachers. During the general chapter of the Order held in Bologna in 1221, Jordan was elected prior provincial of Lombardy. Some months after Dominic's death, Jordan was elected as Master General of the Order of Preachers. Under his direction the Order progressed with such eminent scholars and saints as Albertus Magnus, and studies flourished in Paris and Toulouse. He is the author of the *Libellus de principiis*, the most ancient source for the early years of the Dominicans. He went to the Holy Land, but died during a shipwreck on the coast of Syria on 13 February 1237, and was buried in the Dominican church of Saint John in Acre.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Saint Dominic of Guzmán*. Audience at the Vatican (3 February 2010), in BENEDETTO XVI, *I Maestri Francescani e Domenicani*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2010, 23-29. Richard FINN, *Dominic and the Order of Preachers*, Catholic Truth Society, London 2016.

<sup>2</sup> *Libellus de principiis Ordinis Prædicatorum auctore Iordano de Saxonia*, ed. H.C. SCHEEBEN (*Monumenta Historica Sancti Patris Nostri Dominici*, Romæ 1935)

<sup>3</sup> William A. HINNEBUSCH, *The History of the Dominican Order: Origins and growth to 1500*, Volume 1, Alba House, New York 1966.

Our aim is that of reviewing the section of the *Libellus de principiis* that deals with the moment of the *transitus* of Saint Dominic in Bologna on 6 August 1221, and eventually to compare it to other Franciscan texts that speak about the *transitus* of Saint Francis. The close relationship between the two mendicant Orders, particularly from the time of the minister general Haymo of Faversham (1240-1244), gave birth to an ancient tradition of friendship between the two founders that is echoed also in the narration of the way they welcomed “sister death.”<sup>4</sup>

### **The death of Saint Dominic in the *Libellus de principiis***

Jordan of Saxony composed the *Libellus de principiis* around 1233, that is, some months before the canonisation of Saint Dominic by Gregory IX in Rieti on 13 July 1234. The account of the death of Saint Dominic runs as follows:

“In 1221 the general chapter at Bologna appointed me first prior of the Lombardy Province, even though I had been in the Order only one year and my roots were not so firmly planted as they should have been, for I ought to have learned to rule my own imperfections before being set over others. [...]

Meanwhile, at Bologna, Master Dominic’s pilgrimage on this earth was drawing to a close and he became seriously ill. On his deathbed he summoned twelve of the more prudent brethren and, after exhorting them to be zealous in promoting the Order and persevering in holiness, he warned them against any questionable association with women, especially the young, whose attractions can be a snare for souls not solidly rooted in purity. ‘Behold,’ he said, ‘up to this hour the grace of God has kept my flesh unsullied; yet I confess to

not escaping the fault that talks with young women affected my heart more than conversations with those who were older.’

What he had left them as a legacy. ‘My very dear brothers,’ he said, ‘this is what I leave to you as a possession to be held by right of inheritance by you, my children. Have charity, preserve humility, and possess voluntary poverty.’ What a testament of peace, a testament never to be erased from the memory or modified by any later codicil.

Before his death he also assured his brethren that he would be of more benefit to them after death than in life, for he knew the one to whom he had entrusted the treasure of his labours and fruitful life. As for the rest, he was certain that there was laid up for him a crown of justice which would increase his power to obtain requests the more firmly it rooted him in the Lord’s power.

As a result of fever and dysentery, he grew weaker and weaker, until, at last, that pious soul departed from its body and returned to the Lord Who had given it. In return for a mournful dwelling, he received the eternal consolation of a home in heaven. He died in the Lord on the sixth day of August in the year of Our Lord 1221.

On the very day and hour that Master Dominic died, Brother Guala, prior of Brescia and later its bishop, was resting in the bell-tower of his convent. As he was about to doze off he saw what appeared to be an opening in the heavens through which two shining ladders had been let down. Christ was standing above one and His Mother above the other. Angels could be seen ascending and descending. Between the two ladders at the very bottom, was a seat upon which someone was sitting who seemed to be one of the brethren, for his face was covered with a capuce, just as we do for burial. Our Lord and His Mother were slowly raising the ladder until the

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<sup>4</sup> Regarding the relationship between Dominic and Francis, cfr. Noel MUSCAT, *The Meeting of St. Francis and St. Dominic in the Franciscan Sources*, in [www.franciscanstudies.com](http://www.franciscanstudies.com). IDEM, *The Joint*

*Letter of John of Parma and Humbert of Romans to the Franciscans and Dominicans*, in *Spirit+Life* 95 (January-March 2011), 12-18.

person on the seat reached them. Thereupon he was received into heaven in great splendour amidst a choir of angels. Then the bright opening in the heavens suddenly closed and no more could be seen. Then the friar who had seen this regained his strength, for he had previously been ill and weak, and hurried to Bologna, where he discovered that his vision, which he related to us, had occurred at the very time when the servant of Christ, Dominic, had died.

But let us dwell a while on the burial of this blessed man. A short time before his death, it happened that the venerable bishop of Ostia - at that time legate of the Holy See in Lombardy, but now the Supreme Pontiff of the Roman See, Pope Gregory - had come to Bologna. In his wake came many nobles and prelates of the Church. When he learned of the death of Master Dominic, whom he had intimately known and greatly loved as a just and holy man, he decided to officiate at his burial service. Present, too, were many who knew this blessed man's happy death, of his holy life, and of the state of eternal immortality he had earned. When the preacher of the occasion talked on contempt of the world, he remarked how safe it is to earn one's heavenly home and a place of eternal rest by despising the present life, and by leading a lowly life to assure oneself a happy death."<sup>5</sup>

The account of the *transitus* of Saint Dominic underlines the actions that he accomplished at the moment of his death. He called his brothers, twelve in all, a number which indicates the close association between the college of the apostles and the *apostolica vivendi forma* of the Friars Preachers. His exhortations focus mainly upon the vow of chastity, but then Dominic also speaks of the other virtues that the brothers were to embrace. Jordan of Saxony tells us that Dominic left his brothers a "testament of peace." It was his last will that was to shape the community of

Preachers according to the ideals that the founder had cherished all his life.

The *Libellus de principiis* does not dwell in detail regarding the moment of Dominic's death, except for some short indications regarding his terminal illness and the date of his demise. It does, however, offer greater details in narrating what happened after the death of the holy founder.

The first episode regards a vision or dream by Brother Guala, prior of Brescia, who sees the two ladders upon which stood Christ and the Virgin Mary, who took up Dominic to heaven in the glory of the angels who were coming up and down those mystical ladders.

The second episode is a historical account of the funeral of Saint Dominic, which was presided by Cardinal Ugo di Segni, who was at the time Papal Legate in Lombardy, and who was present in Bologna. The figure of Cardinal Ugo is central in the life of Saint Dominic, as it is in that of Saint Francis. Ugo was to become Gregory IX, and he would be the one to canonise the two holy founders, namely Francis in 1228 and Dominic in 1234.

All in all, the account of Dominic's *transitus* as presented in the *Libellus de principiis* is very sober and does not go into great detail. However, it does show many similarities with the more detailed account of the death of Saint Francis, as given to us by Thomas of Celano in the *Vita beati Francisci*, to which we now refer.

### **The death of Saint Francis in Celano's *Vita beati Francisci***

The earliest biography of Saint Francis was composed by Thomas of Celano in 1228-1229, on the occasion of the canonisation of the Saint. The account of the *transitus* is presented with vivid detail, even though Celano himself was not

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<sup>5</sup> JORDAN OF SAXONY, *Libellus de principiis*, 68-71, in [www.domcentral.org/trad/domdocs/0001.htm](http://www.domcentral.org/trad/domdocs/0001.htm) (accessed 29/08/2021).

physically present. We shall now analyse the account and then note the similarities with the one we have just presented. Indeed, the order in which we are presenting the two accounts should be inverted, since Celano wrote before Jordan of Saxony. We have preferred to follow this pattern in order to understand how Jordan of Saxony borrowed from Celano's account and created a kind of summary episode in the case of Saint Dominic.

"Twenty years had now passed since his conversion, and his time was ending just as it had been shown to him by God's will. For, once the blessed father and brother Elias was staying at Foligno, and one night while they were sleeping, a priest of venerable appearance and great age dressed in white clothing appeared to brother Elias. 'Get up, brother,' he said, 'and tell brother Francis that eighteen years have passed since he renounced the world and clung to Christ. He will remain in this life only two more years; then he will go the way of all flesh when the Lord calls him to Himself.' So it came to pass that, at the established time, the word of the Lord spoken long before now was fulfilled.

After he had rested a few days in that place he so longed for, knowing the time of his death was close at hand, he called to him two brothers, his special sons, and told them to sing *The Praises of the Lord* with a loud voice and joyful spirit, rejoicing at his approaching death, or rather at the life that was so near. He himself, as best he could, broke into that psalm of David: *With a loud voice I cried to the Lord; with a loud voice I beseeched the Lord* (Ps 42:2-8).

There was a brother there whom the holy man loved with great affection. Seeing what was happening and realising the saint was nearing the end, he grew very concerned about all the brothers and said: 'Oh, kind father, your sons will now be without a father, and will be deprived of the true light of their eyes! Remember the

orphans you are leaving behind; forgive all their faults, and gladden them all, whether present or absent, with your holy blessing.' The holy man answered, 'See, my son, I am being called by God. I forgive all my brothers, present and absent, all their faults and offenses, and I absolve them insofar as I am able. When you give them this message, bless them all for me.'

Then he ordered the book of the Gospels to be brought in. He asked that the Gospel according to John be read to him, starting with the passage that begins: *Six days before the Passover* (Jn 12:1) *Jesus, knowing that the hour had come for him to pass from this world to the Father* (Jn 13:1). This was the very gospel his minister had planned to read, even before he was told to do so; that was the passage that met his eye as he first opened the book, although he had the complete Bible from which to read the gospel. Then he told them to cover him with sackcloth and to sprinkle him with ashes, as he was soon to become dust and ashes.

Many brothers gathered there, for whom he was both father and leader. They stood there reverently, all awaiting his blessed departure and happy end. And then that most holy soul was released from the flesh, and as it was absorbed into the abyss of light, his body fell asleep in the Lord.

One of the brothers and followers, a man of some fame, whose name I will conceal for now since he does not wish to glory in such fame while still living in the flesh, saw the soul of the most holy father rise straight to heaven over many waters. It was like a star but as big as the moon, with the brilliance of the sun, and carried up upon a small white cloud."<sup>6</sup>

Celano's account is rather detailed. As we have seen, its intrinsic value lies in the fact that it is the first one among the sources that speaks about Francis' *transitus* at the Portiuncula on 3 October 1226. We know that Celano made abundant use of hagiographic sources,<sup>7</sup> but we shall not

<sup>6</sup> THOMAS OF CELANO, *Life of St. Francis*, 109-110, in *Francis of Assisi. Early Documents*, Vol. I: The Saint, 277-278 (FAED I, 277-278).

<sup>7</sup> Jacques DALARUN, *The Death of the Holy Founders: from Martin to Francis*, in *Greyfriars Review* 14,1 (2000) 1-19.

delve into this issue here. Our aim is to compare the way in which the death of Dominic and Francis is presented by their respective biographers.

Celano's account is original in that it portrays a prophecy regarding Francis' death in the vision or dream of Brother Elias. The place in which Francis chooses to die is the Portiuncula. His death or *transitus* is described as a paschal journey. Francis sings the praises of the Lord and also Psalm 42 with the help of some brothers. Celano does not dwell on the number of brothers who were close to Francis, although this theme is given great importance in later sources, to the point of becoming a point of contention between the "institutional" role of Brother Elias and the "spiritual" role of Brother Bernardo and the first brothers. The paschal element is enhanced with the reading of the Gospel of John and the reassuring words Francis who states that he forgave his brothers all their faults. Francis is then sprinkled with ashes and his death is described as a mystical experience: "the most holy soul was released from the flesh, and as it was absorbed into the abyss of light, his body fell asleep in the Lord."

The account is concluded by a vision that an unnamed brother had during the moment of Francis' death, namely the passage of Francis' soul into glory. This brother "saw the soul of the most holy father rise straight to heaven over many waters. It was like a star but as big as the moon, with the brilliance of the sun, and carried upon a small white cloud."

The narration continues in detail regarding the funeral procession of the dead Francis and the joy experienced by the brothers when they beheld the stigmata on his body. The Poor Ladies of San Damiano expressed their grief at beholding the dead body of their founder when he was brought into the church of San Damiano on his way up to Assisi. Again, there are many aspects

that can be illustrated in this narration, but they are not relevant to our discussion.

Maybe it would also be interesting to document two other sources that were written roughly around the same time in which Jordan of Saxony composed his *Libellus de principiis*. I am referring to another short biography by Celano, discovered fairly recently by Jacques Dalarun, and entitled *Vita beatis patris nostri Francisci*, or *Vita brevior*.<sup>8</sup> This biography, dedicated to Brother Elias, who at the time was minister general of the Friars Minor, was composed around 1232, that is, just before the *Libellus de principiis* of Jordan of Saxony. The account of Francis' death is similar to that in the *Vita beati Francisci*, but has some interesting novelties. First of all, it attaches great importance to Francis who blesses Brother Elias by placing his right hand on Elias' head. A significant detail, given that the biography was commissioned by Elias himself, who was minister general at that time. Another detail is the naming of the two brothers who sang the praises of the Lord for Francis, namely Angelo and Leo, "who among all were dearest to him."

The other source comes a bit later than the *Libellus de principiis*. I refer to the *Vita Sancti Francisci* by Julian of Speyer. This life could have been written around 1235, in the University of Paris. This detail makes it an interesting source, since Julian could very well have had contacts with the Dominicans in the University and might have known of the existence of the *Libellus de principiis*. The account of the *transitus* of Francis in Julian of Speyer is brief and presents only the essential information, and in this way resembles the narration of Dominic's death by Jordan of Saxony. It depends upon Celano's account in many details, but adds an interesting note when it quotes some words that Francis uttered in front of the brothers just before he died:

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<sup>8</sup> Jacques DALARUN, *The Rediscovered Life of St. Francis of Assisi by Thomas of Celano*. Translated by Timothy J. Johnson, Franciscan Institute

Publications, St. Bonaventure University, NY 2016. The account of Francis' death is found in numbers 84-89, pp. 30-31.

“Be strong, my sons, all of you, in the fear of the Lord, and always abide in him, because tribulation approaches you and a mighty temptation will be upon you. Happy, however, are those who will have persevered in the good works they have begun.”<sup>9</sup>

These words can be seen as a kind of spiritual testament of Francis to the brothers on the style of that of the holy founders.

### **Similarities between the two accounts**

Dominic and Francis both died surrounded by their brothers, although in totally different surroundings: Dominic in the friary of Saint Nicholas in Bologna, Francis in the infirmary of the friars close to the chapel of the Portiuncula outside Assisi. Dominic called to his deathbed twelve of his brothers who were his closest associates, on the style of Jesus and the apostolic college. Francis was surrounded by a good number of brothers, only a few of who are mentioned, particularly Elias, Angelo and Leo.

Francis died in a penitential attitude (sprinkled with ash). Although the *Libellus de principiis* does not contain this detail regarding Dominic, there is an interesting similarity since Dominic also died recommending poverty to his brothers and giving them an example by his own poverty during his terminal illness.<sup>10</sup>

Both Dominic and Francis speak to the brothers present by expressing their last will to them. They both spoke of the virtues that are foundational in the life of the mendicant Orders they established, namely poverty, humility and charity.

The sources we have referred to are just some of the many that speak about the death of these two holy founders,<sup>11</sup> but they are sufficient to understand the close spiritual bond between them, irrespective of whether or not Dominic and Francis actually met when they were alive.

As we celebrate the 800 years since the death of Saint Dominic, and prepare ourselves to celebrate the 800 years of the death of Saint Francis in 2026, it is praiseworthy to go deeper into the study of these two founders that goes beyond mere historical speculation regarding their supposed meetings at the IV Lateran Council or at Cardinal Ugo’s residence in Rome, or even the legendary account of Dominic’s visit to Francis during the chapter of mats at the Portiuncula.

Dante speaks about Dominic and Francis in his *Divina Commedia*: “One prince was all seraphic in his ardour; / the other, for his wisdom, had possessed / the splendour of cherubic light on earth.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> JULIAN OF SPEYER, *Life of Saint Francis*, 68 (FAED I, 415).

<sup>10</sup> Jean GUIRAUD, *Saint Dominic*, Translated by Katherine de Mattos, New York - Cincinnati - Chicago 1913, 172.174-175: Then violent pains in his head obliged him to fling himself on the sack of wool which served him for a bed. He was fated not to rise from it. [...] He was placed in Brother Monéta’s cell. Friar Rudolfo the procurator never left him again, supporting his head, and constantly wiping away the drops of sweat that gathered on his brow. Around him stood the monks watching his holy agony with tearful eyes. St. Dominic saw, and wished to comfort them. “Do not weep, my beloved sons, do not grieve because my body must disappear from you. I am going where I can serve you better than I could here.” One of the friars asked him where

he wished to be buried, and he once more replied, “Beneath the feet of my Brothers.”

<sup>11</sup> Other sources for the life of Saint Dominic include: BARTHOLOMEW OF TRENT, *Legenda sancti Dominici*, in Bethold Altaner, *Der heiligen Dominikus, Untersuchungen und Texte*, Breslau 1922, 230-239; CONSTANTINE OF ORVIETO, *Legenda Sancti Dominici*, edited by H.C. Scheeben, *Monumenta Ord. Fr. Præd. Historica*, Rome 1935; HUMBERT DE ROMAINS, *Legenda sancti Dominici*, edited by A. Waltz, *Monumenta OP*, Rome 1935; *Processus canonizationis sancti Dominici (apud Bononiam)*, ed. A. Waltz, *Monumenta OP*, Rome 1935; JACOBUS DE VORAGINE, *Legenda Aurea* (1275)

<sup>12</sup> DANTE ALIGHIERI, *Canto XI del Paradiso* (FAED III, 883).

# THE CATHEDRAL OF THE HEART. THE LIVED CHRISTOLOGY OF SAINT BONAVENTURE

Anthony M. Carrozzo OFM

In *What the Imagination Seizes*, Anthony Domestico writes that We are called to make our lives beautiful and exemplary - and just as crucially, we are called to interpret the mysteries we've lived.

St. Bonaventure would wholeheartedly agree. In his *De Reductione Artium ad Theologiam*, the Seraphic Doctor leads us to the artist within. This enterprise of a full life requires the experience of illumination which is key to all of Bonaventure's writings. Illumination is both a theoretical and an experiential concept, as we shall see.

Domestico further observes that we come to art to enable an encounter that might, in some way, change us, which is precisely Bonaventure's point. Our minds and hearts seek to be enlightened.

This is what St. Francis of Assisi experienced as he, nearly blind yet illuminated, sang his Canticle of Creation. Christ is experienced in all of creation. Fraternity is not a cloistered notion but an *opening* for us to discover Jesus everywhere: an opening to brothers and sisters in all of creation.

Bonaventure crystallized his thinking in *Christ the One Teacher of Us All*, a sermon he preached to faculty and students at the University of Paris. The sermon is as complex as the Cathedral of Notre-Dame which Bonaventure passed each day as he traveled from friary to university. Perhaps he lingered many a time to admire its extensive construction during the thirteenth century.

*Christ the One Teacher of Us All* is Bonaventur's Christological building: a place to pray and reflect, centered in the

nave. Perhaps it was here that Bonaventure's Christology began to take shape. Eventually, he sauntered through the elaborate structure, stopping to pray at what had become his favorite spots. We can do that as well as we listen in our hearts.

Bonaventure's sermon begins: *Christ is the teacher*, a line from Matthew 23:10. It is not a creed, for creeds are human creations, often created in response to heresies. Rather, Christ teaches us because He is *the foundation of all wisdom*. Wisdom demands more than consent. It requires that we enter into relationship with the Truth who is Christ.

As in any relationship, as we live with and experience one another, we understand one another more and in better ways. It must have dawned on Bonaventure's listeners as it now dawns on us, that he is articulating a living, vibrant Christology. He makes clear that his theory of illumination is based on a relationship: *I am the light* (John 8:12).

Bonaventure preaches *He came into the mind as a light*. This understanding of Christ is both outside oneself and within oneself. It is both theoretical and experiential. For knowledge to become wisdom, there must be love which is experienced.

Bonaventure the teacher does not want to mislead his listeners, so he warns that *a light can become obscured*. This wisdom is a gift which needs nurturing and testing in an ever-expanding experience of fraternity. Bonaventure concludes *the light of created intelligence does not suffice for a certain comprehension of anything without the*

*light of the eternal Word ... Christ is the teacher of contemplative knowledge.*

The Seraphic Doctor preaches that Jesus is the door (John 10:9). Doors are used to go in and to go out. With this image, he points out that the going in is an experience of divinity, and the going out is an experience of humanity. Contemplation unites our humanity with Jesus' divinity.

Once again, this highlights not only an active contemplation but also a Christology of experience. One cannot take a course in Christology and think that one has grasped it. One must engage in it, become part of it, be changed by it.

Returning to the inspiration of the Cathedral, we will explore the three chapels spiritually constructed by Bonaventure. These chapels correspond with the encounter between Jesus and Thomas: Thomas said to Jesus, Lord we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way to get there? Jesus answered him, I am the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6)

We move to the first chapel reflecting with Bonaventure on *Jesus the Way*. For Bonaventure we receive knowledge of the Way through our minds and our hearts, both equally important as we travel the Way.

We must authentically desire to travel this Way. We often speak of transparency today, but authenticity is far more important and demanding. The philosopher Charles Taylor offers some insight in his book *The Ethics of Authenticity*. While he argues that *our moral salvation comes from receiving authentic moral contact with ourselves*, he hastens to add *it must have a fundamentally dialogical character*, which means it must be in conversation with others. It must be relational, and therefore, it must be experiential. Augustine enlightened Bonaventure and us by pointing out that when we encounter the beauty of creation and the invisible souls controlling them, *they all answer you, Here we are, look: we're beautiful. Their beauty is their confession. Who made these*

*beautiful and changeable things, if not one who is beautiful and unchangeable?*

Bonaventure's *The Triple Way*, often a seemingly an exasperating work because it is so often misunderstood, is a unique contribution to a way of purgation, illumination and union. They are not separate but intertwined experiences. Consider them as a three-lane highway on which we travel, changing lanes fairly regularly whether in the slow lane of contemplation or the fast lane of activity or the center lane combining both. The rub is we are not the driver. Jesus is. He knows the way to the Father so he shifts lanes accordingly, moving gracefully. Often, though, we become backseat drivers, telling Him when we think He should shift and change lanes which causes consternation and even accidents.

Bonaventure reminds us that Jesus knows where we are going! We go together and experience a far smoother ride than when we try to take charge.

Francis and Clare had some very extraordinary, graced realizations of God's presence in their life journeys. Ordinarily, we may not. Our experiences are so ordinary that we often miss the seeds of this presence. We discover Christ in one another, in those we love, in those we struggle to love, in the poor, the neglected, the lonely, the rejected immigrant. Not always fashionable, to be sure, but always relational. We experience the Lord in all of our relationships. It takes time for this way to dawn on us.

Moving with Bonaventure to the next chapel, we encounter *Jesus the Truth*. Truth is often misunderstood. Jesus does not hand us prepackaged truths. He offers us Himself as Truth: I am the Truth. If we want to know the truths of our faith, we must come to know the Truth, entering into a relationship with Him. It's as simple and as difficult as that.

All relationships are simple and difficult. Consider a long-term relationship that you have had. An unattended relationship disappears. Attended, it either

grows or dies. Growth depends upon illuminating experiences, a light goes on for us, we think *I never knew about her before. I never realized that before.* Our relationship with Jesus is the same.

Certainly, as Bonaventure points out, there is *immutable truth*, but we come to grasp it gradually as we come to know Christ better.

As we grow older, sometimes we wonder if we are losing our faith. We don't accept all the things we used to accept. So readily. In fact, we may be embracing our experience of our most deeply felt relationship with the Lord because revelation is relational and experiential. Bonaventure tells us: *we gaze, as far as we can, upon the illuminations of the most sacred utterances handed down by the Father and also, as far as we can, we consider the symbols for our uplifting gazing with unwavering eyes of the mind upon the clarity of the Father.*

*As far as we can* at the various stages of our lives.

In a world of fake news - about politics, about church life, about gossip - we long for facts when we should be longing for Truth: a truth that sets us free. A good criterion for truth-seekers is to answer the question: how does this set us free? And we must be careful not to burden others while we are enjoying our freedom. The beauty of the Truth creates fraternity; the ugliness of fake news creates mobs.

The provocative Irish writer John McGahern has been described as *both wholly individual and deeply traditional*, which would also be a description of St. Bonaventure. McGahern was quite conflicted. In one of his best short stories, *The Wine Breath*, he captures this conflict brilliantly contrasting light and darkness as the priest in his story reflects *If I were to die, I would miss most the mornings and the evenings, he thought as he walked the narrow dirt track of the lake in the late evenings.*

The priest enjoys the light, but at the same time he feels doomed to die, to enter

the darkness. Later, it will be revealed us that it was *out of fear of death he became a priest, which in time became the fear of life.*

Time and again, he struggles with light and darkness, beauty and mournful funerals. He comes very close to experiencing what Bonaventure calls the *coincidence of opposites*. Things seemingly opposed to one another coincide, as Bonaventure's conclusion to *The Soul's Journey into God* makes evident: *the darkness is the light.*

We love one and fear the other, but Bonaventure challenges us to experience the Truth by remaining in the darkness until our eyes of faith adjust to the light within. It is a circular approach to the truth, and McGahern's priest does discover this: *All that was there was the white light of the lamp on the open book, on the white marble; the brief sun of God and beechwood, and the sudden light of that glistening snow on the timeless mourners moving toward the yews ... It was as good a day as any if there was ever a good day to go.*

Wine breath is, of course, more than the title of a short story. It is an Irish expression for the priest who consumes wine that has become blood in the Eucharist.

So we move to the *chapel of Life*, for as Jesus said *I have come to give you life and life in its fullness* (John 10:10). This comes to fulfillment most tellingly in the Eucharist.

The present-day Bonaventurian scholar Junius Johnson helps us understand the Eucharist as *properly viaticum* and so it is *both well-suited for and only suited for the journey*. So Johnson concludes: *The Eucharist can not only look backward to what was previously done. It is no mere remembrance of the Incarnation and/or Passion; it must also look forward to what is to come.* As genuinely Eucharistic people, we *look forward to what is to come*, because the Eucharist is cosmically central. It is what is happening and will continue to happen until the end times. It gives us cause to be a hopeful people.

We need to be reminded of Jesus' words: *The world will not see me anymore but you will see me* (John 14:19). Christ's sacramental presence lies open to the eyes of faith. The Eucharist then is not a static experience but a dynamic one.

As a people of faith we know that the Eucharist has a profound impact upon our lives and the life of all creation. Here is a vision of reality, founded on Bonaventure's Christology, which provides us with the hope that is often missing when we are confronted with daily facts rather than by a Christocentric vision.

Let us traverse *The Triple Way* once again to investigate the dynamic of participating in the celebration of the Eucharist. The three experiences of purification, illumination and union are all present in the Liturgy. As usual, they are intertwined but they maintain their specific tasks.

As Mass begins we seek the mercy of the Lord by acknowledging our sinfulness. It's

brief and to the point here, though we return to it again and again, in the Eucharistic Prayer and the Agnus Dei.

Moving along, we are illuminated by the proclaimed Word of God, as we listen in faith, and the Word is applied to our life through a well-crafted homily. Illumination comes again with the transformation of bread and wine into the sacramental living presence of Jesus.

The comes union, communion with the cosmic Christ transforming our cosmos along with us. It is a stunning transformation where Bonaventure's Christology comes alive. Only a deep solitude can open us to grasp such a transformative union with Christ, a union that will bless us as we go forth, viaticum.

So we conclude our visit to Bonaventure's Cathedral of the heart. We walk into the brightness of God's gift of creation, exhausted but elated with gratitude. We have found hope again.

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Note from [www.hnp.org](http://www.hnp.org)

*Fr. Anthony Carrozzo OFM, a native of Winsted, Conn., enrolled in St. Joseph Seraphic Seminary in Callicoon, N.Y., where he completed high school and his early college education. He was received into Holy Name Province's novitiate at St. Raphael Friary in Lafayette, N.J., in 1959, and professed temporary vows in 1960. In 1963, Fr. Anthony made his profession of solemn vows and was ordained a priest in 1966, in Washington, D.C. During his years of formation, Fr. Anthony studied at the Province's house of philosophy in Rye Beach, N.H., and Holy Name College in Washington. Fr. Anthony's first assignment from 1966 to 1967 was as chaplain at St. Clare's Hospital in New York City, but most of his ministry has been devoted to the work of formation, preaching, and spiritual direction. He served on the Provincial retreat team at St. Bonaventure Friary in Paterson, N.J., from 1967 to 1969, and the faculty of St. Joseph Seraphic Seminary in Callicoon until 1973. Subsequently, he served as both initial and ongoing formation director for the Province, director of St. Francis Retreat Center in Rye Beach, N.H., and director of the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University. He was awarded a Doctor Ministry degree from the Jesuit School of Theology, Berkeley, California, in 1979. After serving several terms on the Provincial Council, Fr. Anthony was elected Provincial Minister in 1987, a role he held until 1996. During his administration, the Province embarked upon an extensive "Refounding Process" to clarify its mission. After leaving office, Fr. Anthony chaired the editorial board of the Build with Living Stones project, which prepared the revised American version of that international Franciscan adult education program. From November 2004 to August 2013, he served on the staff of St. Francis of Assisi Church in New York City as a spiritual director in the Center for Franciscan Spirituality and Spiritual Direction. He retired from full-time ministry in September 2013 to St. Anthony Friary, St. Petersburg, Florida. He continues to assist with programs of the Franciscan Center in Tampa, Florida, and as chaplain in the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany's retirement house there. A special word of thanks for Fr. Anthony Carrozzo OFM for his expert contributions to our Review of Franciscan Culture Spirit+Life.*

# THE CHRONICLE OF NICHOLAS GLASSBERGER

Noel Muscat OFM

*Chronica Fratris Nicolai Glassberger Ordinis Minorum Observantium, in Analecta Franciscana sive Chronica aliaque varia documenta ad Historiam Fratrum Minorum spectantia, edita a Patribus Collegii S. Bonaventuræ, Tomus II, Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi) prope Florentiam, ex typographia Collegii S. Bonaventuræ 1887.*

The author of this Chronicle is Nicholas Glassberger from Moravia. He was a member of the Observant family of the Order of Friars Minor, a reform that was spread by Saint John Capistran in Germany and Poland during the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The author states that he received the Franciscan habit in the friary of Amberg on 3 May 1472 from the hands of the Guardian Fr. Johannes Spiegel: “During that same year, on the feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross, together with Brother Frederick Geberstorffer, Brother Achatius of Tirshenreut and Brother Johannes of Salzburg, I humbly received the habit of our Holy Father Francis in the friary of Amberg from the hands of the venerable father Johannes Spiegel, who was the Guardian in that same friary. From that time until this present moment, namely the year of the Lord 1508, I still wear the habit for the benefit of our God, although unworthily.” (Glassberger, *Chronica*, AF II, 452).

Nicholas wrote his *Chronicle* in 1508. He was at the time in Nurnberg, as a confessor to the Nuns of Saint Clare. He dedicated himself diligently to the study of history, and personally transcribed the contents of the *Chronicle of the XXIV Ministers General* as well as the *Legend of*

*the Three Companions*. In this way he acquired a thorough knowledge of Saint Francis and of the first three centuries of the life of the Order. In a manuscript of the Province of Saint Leopold in Tyrol, one finds the following note at the end of the transcriptions: “Concluded in the day before the vigil of the Nativity of the Lord, in 1491 by me Brother Nicholas Glasberger suffering from great cold and discomfort because of the bad quality of the weather.” He also travelled in his own country, and faced some difficult disputations with the Hussites. We do not know the date when Nicholas died.

In 1498 Nicholas took care of the edition of the book entitled *Trilogium animæ* by Fr. Ludovicus of Prussia. This *Trilogium* is a work of erudition and piety, full of references to sentences by the Fathers of the Church, and by the principal exponents of Scholasticism, namely the Victorines, Thomas Aquinas, Nicholas of Lyra, Gerson, Bonaventure and Alexander of Hales. In section III, part 6 of this volume, Glassberger inserted a small work which he himself composed, regarding the life of Saint Francis, in order to oppose the false pretenses of a certain James Philip of Bergamo, a friar of the Order of the Hermits of Saint Augustine, who had stated that Francis had been a disciple of Giovanni Boni of Mantua, who had given him the habit of the Augustinians and also received Francis’ profession of the Augustinian rule. In his defence of the true vocation of Francis, Nicholas Glassberger quotes texts from the *Legenda Maior* and *Legenda minor* of Saint Bonaventure, from the *Chronicle of the XXIV Generals*, from the

*Vita beati Francisci* by Thomas of Celano, from the *Liber Conformitatum* by Bartholomew of Pisa, from writings by Brother Peregrinus of Bologna, and from the Lives of Brother Giles and Brother Bernardo of Assisi.

When the Quaracchi editors were publishing the *Chronica* of Glassberger, they had discovered just one codex of the chronicle, which was conserved in the friary of the Reformed Friars Minor in Munich. The manuscript was transcribed by Fr. Quintianus Müller, who was one of the team of scholars in Quaracchi and a member of the Province of the Holy Cross in Saxony. The codex was a 16<sup>th</sup> century work, and contained 297 folios, which were, in fact 298, since folio 192 was marked twice. According to this Franciscan scholar, Glassberger composed the *Chronica* intending it to cover historical events until the year 1472 and maybe even up till 1485.

The *Chronica* of Glassberger contains precious information regarding the early history of the Order, but also regarding Church history, especially in the region of Germany. Glassberger dwells on the evils brought about by the schism of the western Church (1378-1417). He also describes the controversies within the Franciscan Order during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, with reference to the reform of Saint Colette of Corbie and to the divisions between the Conventuals and Observants, with reference to the reforms brought about by Saints Bernardine of Siena and John of Capistrano.

Glassberger also refers to Boniface of Ceva, author of the *Defensorium elucidatum Observantiæ Regularis Fratrum Minorum* (1516), who also speaks about the Conventuals who did not accept the reform of the Order. Let us remember that the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the period of greatest tension between the Conventual and Observant families, leading to the definite division of the Order by order of Leo X in the Bulla *Ite vos* of 29 May 1517.

The sources used by Nicholas Glassberger, as we have already, include the *Chronicle of Saxony* and the *Chronicle of the XXIV Generals*, which is a detailed description of the Order's history up to the year 1374. Glassberger also makes use of the *Chronica* by Peregrinus of Bologna, the works of Thomas of Celano (called sometimes by the author *a Ceprano* or *Ceprano*), Bernard of Besse, *Liber de laudibus B. Francisci*, as well as the already quoted Legends by Bonaventure, the *Legend of Three Companions* and the *Book of Conformities* by Bartholomew of Pisa. Glassberger makes abundant use of the *Chronica* by Jordan of Giano, which is dedicated to the mission of the friars Minor in Germany. He also refers to the *Speculum Minorum* by Giacomo Oddi of Perugia, popularly known as *Franceschina*, as well as to the *Chronica anonyma Provinciae Argentinae* (referring to the Province of Saxony).

The *Chronicle* of Glassberger dwells upon the beginnings of the Order, but stops to consider in a more detailed manner the arrival of the brothers in Germany, first in 1219 and then, in a more organised manner, in 1221 under the direction of Brother Caesar of Speyer. The question of the date of the first German mission hinges upon the interpretation of when Francis founded the Order. The sources speak of different dates. Nowadays we accept that it was 1209 the date when Francis presented the *Forma Vitæ* of the friars for approval in front of Pope Innocent III. That date is considered as the origin of the Franciscan charism. But the brothers already existed before that date. Many sources speak about the number of years following upon Francis' conversion in 1206/07. That is why it is sometimes difficult to understand precisely to what date the early Chronicles refer.

A study on Nicholas Glassberger is found in *Nicholas Glassberger and His Works. With the Text of His Cronica Boemorum Moderna A.D. 1200-1310*, edited by Walter SETON, Manchester

University Press 1923, (1st. Ed. Reprinted, Gregg Press 1966).

We shall here present a translation of the first section of the *Chronica* of Glassberger, dealing with the foundation of the Order of friars Minor up till the chapter of 1221. From that moment Glassberger begins to speak about the German mission of the friars. This translation will be an initial attempt to come to know better this Chronicle that also has its role to play within the list of Franciscan documents dealing with the Order's history, and which makes abundant use of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century sources that now form the well-known translated and published *Sources for the Life of Saint Francis of Assisi*.

### **Nicholas Glassberger, *Chronica***

#### **Prologue**

Nicholas of Lyra, a most famous doctor of sacred theology in our Order of Minors, in the Postilla that he composed on the Book of Esther, in chapter VI, writes, "the memory of the past is said to be the guide of the actions of the future." The occasion to which I refer is the grace of spiritual edification that was once of the first brothers, who were sent by our most holy Father Francis in Germany. I have read in various chronicles, and I have listened to my venerable confreres, who asked me under your command, reverend father, under whose care I am presently living, so that I should compose a short history of the Province of Argentina<sup>13</sup> according to the succession of both the Generals [of the Order] and the Ministers Provincials of this Province. I will write down simply and briefly the history of the origins of the same Order and its progress and government, as I have been asked by those who ordered me, no matter how unworthy I may be. And indeed I am bound to do so deservedly, like

those who obey always, especially in such a pious work, which will be fruitful to many. Therefore I applied my hands to accomplish this work for the good of all, and whatever of this matter I could find scattered in the various chronicles and in other writings, according to my capabilities and in a simple style I have briefly documented, save for the fact that a more sane intellect can always be ready to correct my faults which I might not have transmitted correctly, and I submit myself to my correctors, which might be better for all, and I earnestly entreat that no one might pretend to be a corrector of this writing, except where it is clear and legitimate to prove that I seem to have thought less well of him. To the glory of the undivided Trinity, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

#### **The beginning of the treatise**

Our most blessed Father Francis came from the town of Assisi, located in the Spoleto valley. When he was an adolescent he was a merchant, a trade held in high esteem by the Italians. The Holy Spirit withdrew him first by inner inspirations, and then by revelations as if he led him by the hand, so that he separated himself from secular life and company, in order to make of him a great foundation and primary stone of the building that would be strong in its entire structure. He was struck by the hammer of many future infirmities, tribulations and temptations, and was tried upon the anvil of patience, and thus he was transformed into a perfect man in the order of progress that we have just presented. Indeed, for two years after he had separated himself from the world, he wore the honest habit of a hermit, having a staff, a belt and sandals on his feet. He went into the town of Assisi begging alms, and lived in hermitages, while serving lepers. He

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<sup>13</sup> This was the name by which the Province of Saxony in Germany was called.

understood the most devout command that he received from the cross to go and repair three churches, and this was in a certain way a prophecy of what was to happen. This life according to Vincent (of Beauvais OP, †1264) began

*In the year of the Lord 1206*, the fourteenth year of the pontificate of the lord Innocent III, when he was 25 years old. The verse reads:

The Order of Minors began in the year one thousand, two hundred and six.

The number of years he was to live to be a leader were twenty.

### **Pope Innocent III, under whom Saint Francis founded the Order of Friars Minor**

*In the year of the Lord 1209*, when the most holy man was attending Mass with great devotion in the church, and the priest read that Gospel in which the Apostles received Christ's command to live the evangelical norm prescribed, namely that they should not carry *gold or silver, or money in their purses, no staff, neither two tunics or sandals*, since he was not a deaf listener of the Gospel, he lay off his sandals, he took off his purse and outer tunic, he threw away his staff and belt, and was content with just one tunic, and girded himself with a cord instead of a belt. He gave over himself diligently to carry out to the letter what he heard about the apostolic life and to dedicate himself to it wholeheartedly. According to the more probable opinion, it was at that time that he placed the foundation stone of the Order of Friars Minor and gave a joyful beginning to it. Thus this holy Man separated himself from the world in such a way that many - since they interpreted badly his actions in their souls infected by the doubt of mortals - regarded him not as a religious, but as insane. Others expressed differing opinions regarding him, and for two years he was derided by worldly men. Yet he did not change his resolve to live the religious life,

and especially in the highest austerity of penance, poverty and patience in order to serve God alone and to love him. There was a certain man of Assisi, who was honoured and noble, rich and prudent among the other citizens, in such a way that the entire town used to go to him for counsel. His name was Bernardo, and he was prudently noticing in the man of God both his contempt for the world and his patience in adversity. Moved by divine instinct he invited him in his own house to eat with him, and also invited him to sleep there, in order to explore whether he was truly wise or false. When they had finished eating, Bernardo ordered that a bed be placed in the same room where he slept. Bernardo then pretended to sleep profoundly, when the blessed Father arose from his bed, lifted his mind and face to God and with great devotion joined his hands in prayer, while he was shedding abundant tears, and repeating continually and with inflamed desire and loving affection the following words: *My God and my all, my God and my all*. The lord Bernardo experienced all this in the light of the lamp that shone in that room, according to the custom of the nobles. He felt inwardly moved to repentance, and when he woke up he told the Blessed man: "Brother Francis, I have a desire to abandon the world, and I want to follow you, and whatever you will command me, that I will do." The Saint was filled with joy at those words of his first son, and answered: "O lord Bernardo, what you are desiring to do is a great thing, and for this reason it is necessary for us to go and ask counsel from God. Let us therefore go to church, and there we will be told what we have to do." After having attended Mass in that church, and after having prayed the Lord's prayer, the blessed Father Francis asked the priest to open the Missal in the name of the Lord. After having signed himself with the cross, the devout priest did so and he first saw these words: *If you want to be perfect, go and sell your possessions, and give them to the poor* (Mt 19:21). He opened the book a second time, and he met these words:

*Whoever wishes to follow me must deny himself, take up his cross etc. (Mt 16:24). The third time he opened the book he saw: Take nothing on your journey (Mk 6:8). When he saw this, blessed Francis said to lord Bernardo: "Now you know the counsel of the Lord! Go therefore and carry out diligently what you have heard." Immediately upon hearing these words, the lord Bernardo went to bring the many riches of his patrimony and distributed their price to the poor, together with blessed Francis, in the piazza of Saint George, and on that same year, namely 1209, on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of the kalends of May,<sup>14</sup> he received the habit of the apostolic way of life. In that same time the lord Peter Cattani, who was a lawyer and a canon of the church of Saint Rufino, gave all his possessions to the poor, and entered the Order. After eight days had elapsed another man from Assisi, called Giles, provoked by their example, followed Francis and with him distributed his belongings to the poor in the same piazza, and joined himself to the life of the holy Father and took the habit. Successively another eight men were accepted in the Order, namely brother Sabbatino, brother Morico, brother John of Cappella who was the first one to introduce the use of the hat in the Order, brother Filippo Longo, first visitator of the Poor Ladies, brother John of San Costanzo, brother Barbaro, brother Bernardo Vigilante de Fida and brother Angelo Tancredi of Rieti, who was the first of the Order of knights to enter the Order.*

These are the first twelve brothers, the foundations of our Order, conformed to the way of life of the Apostles, who renewed the holy Gospel. They were all very holy men, except for John of Cappella, who for his lack of merits became a leper and, flaring with anger, went out of the Order and was abandoned by God in the hands of demons, so that in this perverse disciple Francis was conformed to Christ himself. When the holy Father Francis was staying

in a certain abandoned hut close to Assisi, in a place called Rivo Torto, he would give himself over to fasting and prayer, and would water the tender and new plants of heaven with the showers of his doctrine. In that place, inspired by the divine Spirit, he wrote for himself and for his brothers a rule, in which he inserted nearly all the counsels of the Gospel, so that all the prelates and subjects would be known by evangelical names, the prelates also as *Ministers*, according to the words: *The greatest among you will be your servant* (Mt 23:11); he also willed that all the brothers would generally be called *friars minor*, according to the words: *Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, etc* (Mt 25:40).

#### **John of Saint Paul, Bishop of Sabina, Cardinal, first protector of the Order**

When therefore these eleven brothers, with him being the twelfth, went in the presence of the lord Pope, the blessed Father Innocent III, Francis requested that the aforementioned rule be approved by the Holy See, and he pleaded so that he and the brothers would be separated from the world. The same Supreme Pontiff, after having received a divine revelation, namely that the Lateran basilica which was on the verge of collapse, was held up by Francis' shoulder, and after being convinced by the lord John of Saint Paul, Cardinal Bishop of Sabina, who the blessed Father asked in the curia to become protector for him and the brothers, [the Pope] accepted his [Francis'] request, and favourably approved the rule. He also conferred the tonsure to all the brothers, whether clerics or lay, and he gave them the mandate to preach penance and constituted Father Francis as Minister General. Kneeling down [Francis] promised obedience, and all the others received the command from the same Pope to firmly obey Brother Francis.

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<sup>14</sup> The date 1209 is not correct. It should read 1207. The episode of the consultation of the Missal at the

church of *San Niccolò* in the piazza of Assisi occurred on 16 April 1207.

### **Saint Francis, first Minister General of the Order and its leader**

The blessed Father returned with his brothers to the Spoleto valley, and began together with them to exercise diligently the office of preaching, by going through castles, villages and towns. The other brothers did the same thing wherever they went: “Go forth,” the sweet Father told them, “announce peace to all men, preach penance for the remission of sins. Be patient in tribulation, be vigilant in prayer, be strenuous in your labours, be modest in your words, be serious in your behaviour, be grateful for the benefits you receive, because for doing all this the reign of heaven is prepared for you for ever.” Therefore they prostrated themselves on the ground before the holy Man, and with a joyful spirit welcomed the obedience of his holy command. They said to one another individually: *Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you* (Ps 55:25).

Upon hearing their virtuous preaching and moved by their example, a good number of men entered the Order. In their number was Brother Sylvester, the first priest to enter the Order; Brother Pacificus, who was famous when he was in the world as a composer of poetic verses, and was crowned by the emperor with laurels, and called *king of verses*. He saw the blessed Father Francis in a certain monastery when he was preaching. He beheld him signed with two swords in the form of a cross. He lived a most holy life in the Order, and later on was the first Minister in France. He also merited to see on Francis’ forehead the sign of the T[au], which was conspicuous for its many colours. Brother Leo, who was a man of dove-like simplicity, was the confessor of the holy Father Francis, who used to call him with the special name of brother *lamb*. Brother Rufinus came from a noble family and was a relative of Saint Clare. Brother Masseo was a very eloquent man and was dear to the Saint. Brother Juniper was highly admirable and imitable as a man of humility and patience. Brother Morico

came from the Order of Crosiers. He was a very austere man. Then there was Brother John, who Francis nicknamed *the simple*, and many other brothers.

### **The Order of Poor Ladies was founded in the year of the Lord 1212**

*In the year of the Lord 1212 the same Minister General, Saint Francis, founded the Order of Poor Ladies, which he had prophesied in God’s Church six years before, when he was repairing the church of San Damiano. The first little plant was the most holy virgin Clare, who abandoned the world and was welcomed and tonsured by the brothers at night in the church of Saint Mary of the Portiuncula, and given the religious habit, and then transferred to the monastery of Saint Paul of the Black Nuns [Benedictines] and to the church of Saint Michael di Panzo close to the town of Assisi, and finally to the church of San Damiano outside the walls of the same town where, together with her sister Agnes, after having won over many tribulations, she was placed as a cloistered nun by the blessed Father, and became a servant of Christ for the rest of her life. It was the same most holy virgin of Christ, Clare, who abandoned the world when she was 18 years of age, and ended her strict life in the Order after forty-two years. She wanted that her Order would be signed by the name of holy poverty, and requested the privilege of poverty from Pope Innocent III. That man was astonished and said: “Never before has such a privilege been requested from the Apostolic See.” That is why, although at first the same Pontiff smiled at such an unusual petition of the holy virgin, shedding devout tears [the Pope] signed the privilege with his own hands.*

The same Pontiff, on the counsel given to him by Saint Francis, built the hospital of Santo Spirito in the city of Rome.<sup>15</sup>

In that same year, namely 1212, the sixth year of his conversion, Saint Francis, ardent with the desire for martyrdom, and wanting to preach the Christian faith and penance to the Saracens and other nations, tried to cross over to the Holy Land and to the region of Syria. But, by a divine plan, which saw what was better for him, contrary winds blew his ship to the parts of Slavonia, and he was compelled to return to Italy. Since the flame of desire in the heart of the saint did not die down, after some time had elapsed, he once more tried to make the journey to the regions of the infidels, namely towards Morocco, in order to announce the salvation of the Gospel of Christ to king Miramolin and his people. But even this time the divine plan entered to thwart his plans. When he arrived in Spain he was struck by a grave illness. After having visited the church of Saint James the Apostle and was there instructed by divine revelation (while returning he accepted a convenient house of the brothers and strengthened the tender family in Christ), he was compelled to go back. When he was going through Montpellier, while he was preaching to the people in a certain hospital, he foretold and prophesied devoutly in the Spirit that in that place there would be a friary for his brothers; indeed this is what happened.

*In the year of the Lord 1215* Pope Innocent III celebrated a general council at the Lateran in Rome, where Saint Francis was staying, Saint Dominic, who had arrived there with Folques, the Bishop of Toulouse in order to request the approval of his Order, had a familiar vision in which God revealed to him what would happen. Dominic was told by the Pope to go back to his brothers and commanded him to choose some rule with them, which the Pope

promised to confirm upon [Dominic's]. After the council was concluded, the same Pontiff Innocent

**Pope Honorius III, who confirmed the Orders of Preachers and Minors, was Pope for ten years**

*In the year of the Lord 1216* with the curia moved to Perugia and in that place on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of the kalends of August [the Pope] died, on the 19<sup>th</sup> year of his pontificate. He was succeeded in the pontificate by Honorius, who before was called Cencio [Savelli], and who was the chamberlain of the Cardinals. Thus, when Innocent III died, blessed Dominic returned to Rome and obtained from him [Honorius III] the confirmation of his Order. From this it is evident that the Order of Minors began to exist before that of Preachers, since it began in the year 1206,<sup>16</sup> which was the tenth year of the pontificate of Innocent. The Preachers were founded under Honorius III, who succeeded Innocent, during the first year of his pontificate, namely in the year of the Lord 1216. However, since the same Preachers had already chosen an approved rule, they were immediately confirmed, and that is why in papal letters the Minors are preceded by the Preachers. The same Pope Honorius was on the Holy See for 10 years, 7 months and 13 days.

*In the year of the Lord 1217*, the 11<sup>th</sup> year from the beginning of the Order, counting from the first conversion of Saint Francis, and the 9<sup>th</sup> year from the approval of the rule, at the time when the lord Honorius III was governing the Church, after the number and merits of the brothers had multiplied, during the general chapter celebrated in Assisi at Saint Mary of the Portiuncula, the Provinces were assigned, and the Ministers were elected, and many brothers were chosen to go to all the

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<sup>15</sup> The Ospedale Santo Spirito in Rome was founded as an Anglo-Saxon *Schola* by the King of Wessex (689-726). It was destroyed by a fire during the

pontificate of Leo IV. Innocent III renewed it and in 1198 established the Order of the Hospitallers.

<sup>16</sup> It was rather 1209, the year in which Francis went to Pope Innocent III with the *Forma vitae*.

provinces of the world, in which the Catholic faith was present. Saint Francis, as a true shepherd, having been made a model for his flock, visited [the tomb of] Saint Peter in Rome, and chose for himself to go to the Province of France. He departed with a companion, but met the lord Hugo[lino], Cardinal Bishop of Ostia, who was legate of the Apostolic See to those peoples. He commanded [Francis] to return to Italy and told him: "Brother, I do not want you to stay far from the curia, since in your absence you will give occasion to dogs to bark against your Order, but if you are present the lord Pope, with the rest of the Cardinals, will defend you against your rivals and will be in a better position to protect you." After having understood the reason, Saint Francis returned to Italy. In his place Brother Pacificus, a most holy man, went to France, and he was the first Minister of that place and governed that Province diligently.

On that occasion Saint Francis sent many brothers to Spain, as had been revealed divinely to him above in the church of Saint James while he was praying, and they received suitable dwellings for the brothers. They confounded with Catholic teachings the heretics who were sowing confusion by gathering together in Spain, and they kept the people in the true faith. When the men saw the brothers who arrived in the reign of Portugal wearing the tunics of hermits and speaking a foreign language, they thought that they were heretics, and treated them badly and did not let them dwell among them in any way. Since they were harrassed the brothers went to the queen of Portugal Urraca, who was a pious woman, and humbly and devoutly they explained to her how they met with great opposition, and they pleaded with her to find an opportune remedy. After having ascertained their state, the reason for their coming and their holy aims, she judged them to be true servants of God. So she obtained from her husband, the lord king Alphonso, permission for the aforementioned brothers to build two houses in Lisbon, and she

herself served them in the Lord and cared for them as if they were her own children. The sister of the king, who was called Sancia, was a virgin devout to God and for the sake of Christ lived a life of perpetual love for chastity. When she heard of the fame of the friars, she called them to her house in order to listen to the words of life from their mouths. She became so familiar to them, that it was allowed for her to keep the habit of some friar in her castle, and sometimes the brothers would come until Compline during the time they would be graciously welcome to stay there. With her command, in that same castle of Alanquer the brothers built a friary, in which among some of the brothers sent over there by blessed Francis, there was one who was special in his love for devotion, solitude and prayer, and he also detested the company of women. There was a certain damsel, known by the name Maria Garcia, who would often come and disturb him in his contemplation. He did not want to see talk to her or even see her, and her look and presence were for him an occasion to flee as if he were avoiding a serpent. One day that woman arrived in an inopportune moment, and since she was asking why she was repulsed so frequently, the same brother answered: "Go and prepare hay and fire-wood." When she brought them the brother ordered her to burn the hay in the fire, and then he said: "Just as this hay burns with the fire, so the servant of God gains nothing by talking with a woman." When he said this, she went away blushing with shame. This brother was so full of virtue that when the end of his life approached, it seemed that his body was shining with a heavenly splendour, a witness to his clean purity. At that same hour Saint Anthony, who at that time was still a canon in Coimbra, and was celebrating Mass, saw his soul under the guise of a most beautiful bird going up directly and swiftly from purgatory to heaven.

Among these brothers there was also Brother Zacharias, a Roman, who was held very dearly by lady Sancia in that same

friary of Alanquer. Among his many virtues he often prayed in front of the image of the Crucifix, which nowadays stands in the chapter hall of the same friary. Because of his most devout prayers he merited, as it was known, that the same image spoke to him with a human voice that could be heard, and informed him regarding the salvation of his soul. After his death he shone with many miracles.

In the friary of Guimaraens, among the brothers sent by blessed Francis, one of the first was Brother Walter, a devout and perfect friar, who shone with such clear and famous holiness that he drew all people towards the Order with devotion and he reformed it to become better with his exemplary life. From his tomb, before he was transferred, it is said that oil came out, and it conferred the remedy of cure to many sick persons.

To Germany were sent Brother John of Penna, with around sixty brothers. But since they did not know how to speak the language of that province, when they were asked whether they wanted to eat, or to receive hospitality, etc.; they learned how to answer with the language of the people by using the word *ja*, which means yes, and thus their needs were satisfied. Since those simple brothers realised that that word could draw kindness and did not know all its implications, they therefore decided that every time they were asked something they would answer *ja*. Someone asked them in German whether they were heretics and whether they came there with the intention of infecting Germany with that pestiferous heresy like what happened in Lombardy. At this they answered with the usual word *ja*, thinking that they would be given food or drink. When they answered thus some of them were beaten, others were tied with chains, then they were carried naked to public scorn, and all of them were treated so badly, that they escaped as quickly as they could from the boundaries of that land. When, therefore, the brothers saw that they could do nothing in Germany, they returned to Italy. After what happened the brothers

regarded the people of Germany such ferocious barbarians that no brother would ever dare to go there, except if he was drawn by the desire for martyrdom. The brothers did not carry with them any letters - the rule had not yet received the [papal] bulla, but was simply approved by word of mouth by the lord Pope Innocent - and therefore the brothers were sent to different parts of the world and were welcomed like poor men, but nobody permitted them to build houses. From the Germans they were repulsed from those regions as unsworn and false men. Thus after some time they came back to blessed Francis, without bearing any fruit, but full of bruises, injuries, covered with curses and insults, and thus they returned sorrowfully.

#### **The lord Hugolino Bishop of Ostia and Cardinal, second protector of the Order of Friars Minor**

During that same time, this same lord Hugo[lino], Cardinal Bishop of Ostia, after the death and burial of the lord John of Saint Paul, Cardinal Bishop of Sabina, was given to the brothers as protector and procurator out of his devotion towards them. Since he wanted to save them from the above-mentioned vexations, he summoned blessed Francis and presented him to the lord Pope Honorius, who showed himself to be pious, favourable and benevolent in the affairs of the Order. The holy Father preached in front of the same Supreme Pontiff and the college of cardinals, and commended his Order in the Spirit of God who was speaking through him. The hearts of those men were inflamed so much with sublime devotion towards the Order, that each one of them wanted one of the brothers to come to live in his household. After being admonished in a vision, Saint Francis also asked the aforementioned lord Pope to give him the lord of Ostia as protector. He was the first one to occupy this office according to the form laid down in the rule.

In that same year 1217 a certain monk, called Dithmarus, went to the Holy Land, crossed to the parts of Zabulon and Naphtali, came to the town of Sephoris, the hometown of Saint Anne, the mother of the blessed Virgin. He also passed through the town of Nazareth and wrote a book on the Holy Land in which he reported to the lord Pope the state of that same Land. Therefore Pope Honorius preached in Rome the crusade to Jerusalem, which had started in the pontificate of Innocent.

*In the year of the Lord 1218 the emperor Otto* died in the castle of Harzburg, and was buried in Braunschweig. Since the general council had concluded that on that same year, in the kalends of July, the crusaders were to leave, many from the parts of Germany hurried but did not succeed, and were blocked in the towns of Apulia. With the Apostolic authority their vows were differred and were sent back after having uselessly sought their compensation.

*In the year of the Lord 1219*, the 13<sup>th</sup> year from the first conversion of Saint Francis, but the 11<sup>th</sup> year since the approval of the rule, the general chapter was celebrated at Saint Mary of the Portiuncula. In the chapter the Ministers were elected, and with God's will, the brothers were sent in all the world with letters from the lord Pope, in which he wrote: "Honorius Bishop etc. et infra. Our beloved sons, Brother Francis and his companions of the life and Order of Minors have rejected the vanities of this world and have chosen a way of life deservedly approved by the Roman Church; after the example of the Apostles they go throughout different regions sowing the seed of the word of God. We therefore beseech and exhort all of you in the Lord, and by these apostolic letters command you, when members of the aforesaid brotherhood present themselves to you bearing these letters, to receive them as faithful Catholics, showing yourselves favourable and kind to them out of

reverence of God and us" etc.<sup>17</sup> In a similar manner wrote the lord Hugo[lino], Bishop of Ostia, protector of the Order, and many other most reverend lord Cardinals, commending effectively the brothers and their way of life. When [prelates] saw these letters, they welcomed the brothers charitably, and the Order spread widely, and in all parts of the world the brothers built houses. As we have said, they were sent to France, Spain, Hungary, England,<sup>18</sup> etc., all kingdoms where the cult of Christ reigns supreme.

Furthermore, when it was the turn to go to Hungary, where they were sent by a certain Bishop and transferred by boat, when they were crossing the fields some shepherds - being the most savage among the human race - persecuted them with dogs, and they hit them unceasingly with their sticks, without telling them or asking them anything. The brothers were very astonished and suffered, and since those barbarians could not speak Latin, they did not dare to ask them what evil had they done to be flogged in that manner? One of the brothers answered that maybe those [shepherds] wanted to take their tunics. So the brothers gave them their tunics, but they did not desist, and the brothers gave them also their inner garments. Since they did not want to stop persecuting them, one brother said that maybe they also wanted to have their short trousers. Except for these, the brothers relinquished their tunics, and these poor man of the Gospel did not have anything else that they could give. When [the shepherds] saw that they could get nothing more from those men, they let the brothers go away naked. Brother Jordan narrates in his writings<sup>19</sup> that one of the brother said that he lost his trousers fifteen times in Hungary. This chaste brother was so embarrassed and suffered more than all the others, that he invented a stratagem, namely by soiling his trousers with the dung of oxen and other filth, in such a way

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<sup>17</sup> HONORIUS III, Bulla *Cum dilecti* [11 June 1219] (FAED I, 558).

<sup>18</sup> In England the friars Minor arrived later, in September 1224.

<sup>19</sup> JORDAN OF GIANO, *Chronicle*, 6.

that when [the shepherds] saw them so dirty, they did not ask him to hand them over. Now if someone thinks that all this is ridiculous to be commemorated in writing, let him remember what Ambrose says: “the author of our salvation Jesus was stripped of his garments, and was naked when he came out of his mother’s womb and when he was hanging on the cross.” It was for his love that we believe that the brothers bore up patiently with all these tribulations, since we consider it a undignified not to write it down. The brothers thus experienced mockery and scourging, and when they saw that they could not reap any fruit, they returned to Italy.

It happened during the same time that there were some brothers who were afflicted with thirst in a certain place in the mountains. Upon command of their Prelate they blessed the water they found, and with the merits of God and their obedience that water gained such power and good taste, that it seemed to become more precious and sweeter than wine. The brothers were refreshed more with the miracle than with the taste of that water.

Some brothers who were in Spain were sent to Morocco, in order to preach the faith of Christ to the infidels. There were five of them, namely Berardus, Otto, Peter, Accursius and Adutus, and they constantly sustained martyrdom for Christ. When Saint Francis heard their legend and the account of their martyrdom, and realised that the brothers were glorifying their passion, since he had great contempt for praise and glory of men, he scolded them and said: “Each one should glory in his own martyrdom and not in that of others.”

Moved by the example of these five martyrs, Saint Anthony, who at the time was called Fernando Martini and was a canon [of the monastery] of the Holy Cross in Coimbra, ardent with the desire for martyrdom, entered the Order when he was twenty-four years old. He remained in the

Order for ten years, and was full of holiness and became famous for miracles.

To the province of Provence, which we nowadays name for Saint Louis, during the same chapter brother John Bonelli of Florence was sent. He was a perfect man of great zeal, and Francis called him the *bursar or bailiff of Florence*. After having been made Minister in that place, he called a chapter at Arles, in which Saint Anthony preached about the title of the cross of Jesus, when the holy Father Francis appeared raised up in the air, blessing the brothers.

In Aquitaine was sent a man of dove-like simplicity, namely Brother Christopher from Romagna, who when he was a parish priest, abandoned the comforts of this world and followed blessed Francis. Receiving his blessing, he left for the region we mentioned, where he strove hard to imitate Christ perfectly. While still alive and after death he shone with many miracles, and enlightened that whole region, and was buried in the friary of Cahors.

Saint Francis sent Brother Agnellus of Pisa to England. He had founded the friary of Pisa and was instituted as Custos. He was accompanied by Brother Albert of Pisa, who later on became Minister of Germany and then General Minister, and with three other brothers, with the aim of implanting the Order in the kingdom [of England]. The same Brother Agnellus was made Minister. The brothers arrived on the third day of May<sup>20</sup> and went to Canterbury, where the friars Preachers had a friary in which they kindly welcomed them. The brothers then went to Oxford, and at night arrived in a grange of a certain monastery of black Monks [Benedictines] in a place called Abingdon, in a large forest situated between that city and London. At that time the monks were resting. Since they treated badly these servants of God, that night Christ appeared seated ready to make

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<sup>20</sup> THOMAS OF ECCLESTON, *De adventu fratrum Minorum in Angliam*, states that the friars arrived in Dover on 10 September 1224.

judgment, and he condemned [the monks] to death, except for one of them through the intercession and protection of Saint Francis, as is clearly explained in the *major chronicle* and *Book of Conformities of Brother Bartholomew of Pisa*, where it is stated how the Abbot of that monastery and that monk, as well as the lord Rudolph Bishop of Hereford, and many others entered the Order and lived in so much humility, that the Bishop and Abbot brought stones and water [to the brothers] upon their shoulders for building the walls [of their house].

In that same year in which these brothers were sent forth, the most blessed Father Francis, spurred by the fervour of spirit to attain martyrdom and shed his blood for the faith of the Trinity, decided to cross the sea to go to the lands of the infidels. He took with him some companions, namely Illuminato and Brother Peter Cattani, together with other ten brothers, and left. When he arrived courageously to the castle of the Sultan, he was captured along the way and was scorned and beaten. Between the beatings he was crying out: “Soldan, Soldan.” When they brought him in front of him, that cruel man was changed to meekness, when he saw the appearance of the man of God. He welcomed him reverently, treated him kindly and willingly listened to his preaching. Since [Francis] saw that he was not going to reap any fruit in that place, he decided to go back. The Sultan ordered that he be accompanied by his own soldiers to the Christian army, which at the time was besieging Damietta. Regarding this journey of the holy Man, the lord Cardinal Jacques de Vitry writes in the history of Jerusalem<sup>21</sup>: “We have seen the founder and master of this Order, Brother Francis, a simple, uneducated man beloved by God and man, whom all the others obey as their highest superior. He was so moved by spiritual fervour and exhilaration that, after he reached the army of Christians

before Damietta in Egypt, he boldly set out for the camp of the Sultan of Egypt, fortified only with the shield of faith. When the Saracens captured him on the road, he said: ‘I am a Christian. Take me to your master.’ They dragged him before the Sultan. When the cruel beast saw Francis, he recognised him as a man of God and changed his attitude into one of gentleness, and for some days he listened very attentively to Francis as he preached the faith of Christ to him and his followers. But ultimately, fearing that some of his soldiers would be converted to the Lord by the efficacy of his words and pass over to the Christian army, he ordered that Francis be returned to our camp with all reverence and security. At the end he said to Francis: ‘Pray for me, that God may deign to reveal to me the law and the faith which is more pleasing to Him.’”

#### **Brother Elias Minister of Syria and Vicar of Blessed Francis**

Brother Elias was appointed Minister Provincial of Syria by blessed Francis. When he heard him preaching, a certain cleric called Caesar converted and was received in the Order. This Caesar, who was German, was born in Speyer, and his master was a certain Conrad of Speyer, who was a preacher of the crusade and afterwards Bishop of Hildesheim. Caesar was a disciple of theology. When he was still a secular Caesar was a great preacher and enthusiast of the life of the Gospel. Upon hearing his preaching certain noble ladies of Speyer took off all their ornaments, and humbly begged to follow him, but their husbands were very angry at this and they were nearly going to hand over Caesar to be burned as a heretic. But his master intervened and sent him to Paris; later on, after having accomplished the solemn passage by crossing the sea, when he heard Elias preaching, as we have said,

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<sup>21</sup> JACQUES DE VITRY, *Historia Occidentalis*, 14 (FAED I, 584).

he despised the things of this world, entered the Order and lived in it becoming famous for his life and doctrine.

While blessed Francis went beyond the sea with the brothers we mentioned, he appointed two vicars in Italy, namely Brother Matthew of Narni and Brother Gregory of Naples. He left Matthew at Saint Mary of the Portiuncula, so that he could receive the newcomers in the Order, and he commanded Gregory to travel around Italy to comfort and console the brothers. Since, according to the first rule, the brothers fasted and abstained from meat on Wednesday and Friday, and with the permission of blessed Francis, on Monday and Saturday, and on the other days they could eat meat, these two vicars celebrated a chapter with the senior brothers of Italy, and they commanded that the brothers were not to procure meat on days on which it was allowed, but could only receive it if it were freely offered. They also prescribed that the brothers were to fast on Mondays as on the other two days, and that on that day and on Saturday they could not eat dairy products, but they were to abstain from them, except when the faithful would devoutly give them such products.

A certain lay brother, angry at these constitutions presuming to add precepts to the rule of the holy Father, took with him a copy of the same constitutions, and without permission of the vicars journeyed and came to blessed Francis. After having first confessed his guilt, namely that of having come over without the permission of the vicars, and then asked for forgiveness, he showed him those statutes, and told him that he felt compelled out of necessity to come to him since the Order in Italy was in turmoil because of the vicars and because of the novelties which they and other brothers were introducing. After reading the constitutions, the blessed Father Francis, since he had meat placed in front of him - in fact it was the time for eating - told brother Peter: "Sir Peter, what shall we do now?" Peter answered: "Sir Francis, we will do what pleases you, since you are the

one who has power to decide." Since Brother Peter was an educated and noble man, therefore the blessed Father, in his good-mannered courtesy, used to call him Sir, and with reason [Peter] considered [Francis] to be his spiritual Father, and humbled himself in front of him, and both showed mutual reverence, since they would show this reverence when they were on either side of the sea, and tried to surpass one another in giving honour one to the other. So the holy Father said: "Let us eat what has been prepared before us, as the holy Gospel states."

At that same time there was a certain woman with magic powers who would foretell many true things before they occurred, and the people used to call her *truthful*. She told the brothers, who were with Saint Francis: "Go back, go back, since the absence of Brother Francis is causing confusion, divisions and squandering." Indeed all this was found to be true. Because Brother Filippo Longo, who was visitator to the Poor Ladies, without the permission of Saint Francis, who wanted to win over adversities more by humility rather than by the power of judges, had requested letters from the Apostolic See in order to excommunicate those who were harassing the same Poor Ladies. Similarly Brother John of Cappella separated himself from the Order and founded a new Order, in which he gathered a great multitude of lepers of both sexes, wrote a rule for them, and presented it together with the members [of the Order] for approval by the Holy See. These and other things, while Saint Francis was absent, were sowing confusion as time went by, and as the aforementioned *truthful* woman had stated.

Blessed Francis realised that nothing was progressing in the conversion of the Saracens, and neither could he acquire the crown of martyrdom, since as Jacques de Vitry states in the aforementioned history, "the Saracens willingly listen to all these Friars Minor when they preach about faith in Christ and the Gospel teaching, but only

as long as in their preaching they do not speak against Mohammed as a liar and an evil man. When they did speak in such a manner, the Saracens irreverently put them to the lash and savagely expelled them from their territories.”<sup>22</sup> Having considered all this, the blessed Father, advised during a divine vision, took with him some brothers, namely Elias, Minister of Syria as we have said, Brother Illuminato, Brother Peter and other companions together with Brother Caesar, who Brother Elias, Minister of Syria, had received in the Order, as we have seen, and left the East to return to the regions of the [Christian] faithful. Thus, with the ordering of the clemency of God and of the virtue of Saint Francis, it was ordained in God’s mercy and miraculous design, that the friend of Christ went to look for death with all his heart, and yet did not find it in any way, so that his merits did not lack the desired martyrdom and in future would serve to mark him with a singular privilege. That was precisely what happened, so that the divine fire that was burning in his heart in such a perfect manner, would later on be made evident in his own flesh.<sup>23</sup>

When he arrived in Italy and understood the full nature of the causes of that confusion, he did not face the trouble-makers, but went straight to the lord Pope Honorius. The humble Father stayed humbly outside the door of the lord Pope, since he did not dare to knock upon the door of the bedroom of such a great prince. Therefore, he stood for a long time spontaneously outside, and waited. When he was told to go in, blessed Francis bowed before [the Pope] and said: “Most holy father Pope, may the Lord give you peace.” And [the Pope] to him: “May God bless you, my son.” Blessed Francis then said: “Lord, since you are a great lord and you are always busy in important matters, the poor cannot arrive in your presence and neither can they speak to you, whenever they need to do so. You have given me many popes. Now give me just one, with whom I can talk whenever I need, in such a way that he can deal personally in all matters pertaining to me and my Order, hearing and discussing them, except for those matters which pertain to you alone.” The Pope then asked him: “Who do you want me to give you, my son?” He answered: “The Lord of Ostia, who you have already

given me a first time.” The Pope conceded his request. Therefore, when blessed Francis narrated to the lord of Ostia, his pope or protector, the cause of the confusion, he immediately revoked the letters given to Brother Filippo, and Brother John was expelled from the Order with shame. And thus, the causes of that confusion were brought under control, and the Order was reformed according to its own statutes. When blessed Francis saw that Brother Caesar was well versed in Holy Scripture, he commissioned him to adorn the rule, which he had conceived in simple words, with the words of the Gospel; and this is what was done. And since the brothers from various parts had listened to rumours stating that blessed Francis and the other companions had died, or been killed, or drowned in the sea, they were initially confused. But when they understood that he was alive and had returned, for them a new light dawned to give them joy.

*In the year of the Lord 1220, when Frederick the second became emperor, he was crowned emperor in Rome in the basilica of Saint Peter by the ministry of the lord Hugo[lino], then Bishop of Ostia and protector of our Order, with the mandate of the lord Pope Honorius. In that same place the emperor endowed the church of Saint Peter with many gifts and riches which he contributed from lands of his empire in Italy, and after accumulating these favours, again accepted to take the cross from the hands of the same Bishop of Ostia in order to make the journey to Jerusalem.*

In that year, on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of the kalends of February, during the fourth year of the pontificate of the lord Honorius III, and seven year before the death of Saint Francis, the five aforementioned friars were sent to Morocco and completed their martyrdom. When Saint Francis returned from beyond the sea, he convoked the general chapter.

*In the year of the Lord 1221, on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the kalends of June,<sup>24</sup> the 13<sup>th</sup> indiction, on the holy day of Pentecost, at Saint Mary of the Portiuncula, Saint Francis celebrated the general chapter. According to the customs of the Order, the professed brothers and also the novices came [to the chapter]. It is estimated that the brothers who gathered there were five*

<sup>22</sup> JACQUES DE VITRY, *Historia Occidentalis*, 15 (FAED I, 584-585).

<sup>23</sup> A reference to the spiritual martyrdom of Francis in the event of the stigmatisation.

<sup>24</sup> 23 May 1221.

thousand. In this chapter intervened the most reverend lord Raynerius [Capocci] Cardinal deacon, with many other Bishops and Religious. At his command one of the Bishops celebrated Mass, while Saint Francis sang the Gospel. The brothers were so numerous that no building could house them, and therefore they built reed huts in the open space, where they ate and slept. They were divided into twenty-three groups and stayed in an orderly fashion in those open spaces. For the needs of that chapter the people of the nearby regions came willingly and hurriedly to serve the brothers, bringing abundant bread and wine. Blessed Francis rejoiced at the sight of such a great gathering of brothers and at seeing them returning .

The blessed Father chose the theme, namely: *Blessed be the Lord my God, who leads my arm in battle* etc. (Psalm 143:1), and preached sweetly to the brothers, teaching them the virtues, by demonstrating his patience and holy example. He similarly preached to the people, and edified both the people and all the clergy. What is more fruitful than to say that, among the brothers, there prevails charity, patience, humility, obedience and spiritual joy? I have not read that there was another chapter like that in the Order, both in the multitude of brothers present and in the solemnity of the ministers. And although there was such a multitude of brothers, the people joyfully served them in every need just the same, and after seven days the brothers were compelled to close the doors of the friary and not accept any more offerings, and they had to remain there for another two days, in order to thank God and consume so many gifts that they had received.

## *Latin Abbreviations*

### *Writings of St. Francis*

Adm	Admonitiones
CantAudPov	Canticum Audite Poverelle
CantSol	Canticum fratris Solis
LaudDei	Laudes Dei Altissimi
BenLeo	Benedictio fratri Leoni data
EpAnt	Epistola ad S. Antonium
EpClerI	Epistola ad Clericos
EpCust	Epistola ad Custodes
EpFid	Epistola ad Fideles
EpLeo	Epistola ad fratrem Leonem
EpMin	Epistola ad Ministrum
EpOrd	Epistola toti Ordini missa
EpRect	Epistola ad rectores
ExhLD	Exhortatio ad Laudem Dei
ExpPat	Expositio in Pater noster
FormViv	Forma vivendi S. Claræ
Fragm	Fragmenta alterius Regulæ
LaudHor	Laudes ad omnes horas
OffPass	Officium Passionis Domini
OrCruc	Oratio ante Crucifixum
RegB	Regula bullata
RegNB	Regula non bullata
RegEr	Regula pro eremotoriis
SalBVM	Salutatio Beatæ Mariæ Virg
SalVirt	Salutatio Virtutum
Test	Testamentum
UltVol	Ultima voluntas S. Claræ

### *Sources for the Life of St. Francis*

FAED I	<i>Francis of Assisi. Early Documents. Saint</i>
FAED II	<i>Francis of Assisi. Early Documents. Founder</i>
FAED III	<i>Francis of Assisi. Early Documents. Prophet</i>
1C	Celano, <i>Vita beati Francisci</i>
LCh	Celano, <i>Legenda ad usum chori</i>
VB	Celano, <i>Vita brevior S. Francisci</i>
2C	Celano, <i>Memoriale in desiderio animæ</i>
3C	Celano, <i>Tractatus miraculorum</i>
LJS	Julian of Speyer, <i>Vita S. Francisci</i>
OR	<i>Officium Rhythmicum</i>
AP	<i>Anonymus Perusinus (De Inceptione)</i>
L3C	<i>Legenda trium sociorum</i>
CA	<i>Compilatio Assisiensis</i>
LMj	S. Bonaventura, <i>Legenda Maior</i>
LMn	S. Bonaventura, <i>Legenda Minor</i>
SPMaj	<i>Speculum Perfectionis (Sabatier)</i>
SPMin	<i>Speculum Perfectionis (Lemmens)</i>
ABF	<i>Actus beati Francisci et sociorum eius</i>
Fior	<i>Fioretti di San Francesco</i>



Cover page: Francis sends the brothers on mission. Basrelief: pulpit of St. Francis Church, Hamrun, Malta