

*A DIALOGUE  
ON THE DEEDS OF  
SOME HOLY FRIARS MINOR*

by

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## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

The work entitled *A Dialogue on the Deeds of some holy Friars Minor* [*Dialogus de gestis sanctorum fratrum minorum*] was published by Fr Ferdinand Delorme OFM in the College of St Bonaventure, Quaracchi, Italy in 1923. It was published as the fifth volume in the series entitled *Bibliotheca franciscana ascetica medii aevi*.

The identity of the author, the date of the work, its character and value are discussed by Fr Delorme in the Preface which follows immediately after this Preface.

The Bible used in this translation is the New Revised Standard Bible (NRSV). At times, however, this translation is markedly different from the Latin Bible used by the author. When this occurs the Douay Rheims Bible (DRB) has been used as it follows the Latin text closely; whenever the Douay Rheims Bible is quoted this is noted in the text. In the translation the abbreviations for the names of the books of the Bible are the abbreviations used in the New Revised Standard Bible.

Not all the references in the footnotes of the Introduction could be verified as not all the books quoted are available to me. The references which could not be checked are reproduced as they are quoted in the printed edition. The editor divided the text with many headings, and while he put these headings in his Index he did not include them in the text. In this translation they have been added to the text.

I record my gratitude to Sr Joanne Fitzsimons OSC for her careful work in proofreading these pages and for her many suggestions which have improved the translation. I record my thanks also to Fr Angelo O'Hagan OFM and to Fr Maurice Carmody OFM for assistance with some of the difficulties in the text. The mistakes which remain are my own responsibility.

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Feast of St Francis, 2000



## PREFACE

Already in 1902 in Rome, Fr Leonard Lemmens O.F.M. had prepared a first but incomplete edition of this work.<sup>1</sup> He says of the author,<sup>2</sup> ‘in his work ... he included some arguments of dogma and asceticism, which even after several attempts we have not in any way been able to decide on their meaning nor understand them; hence we have edited fully and faithfully only and all of the sections dealing with history; we have used the theological sections only in so far as they are a help to understand and group together the other material’. I did not want to leave anything out of this new edition,. But one must treat firstly of the title, final form, history, characteristics and author, all topics which prepare the way for this edition.

### 1. THE TITLE OF THE WORK

The title, *Dialogue*, first used by the author in his Prologue, reflects the character of the whole work, is sanctioned by historical tradition and it would be wrong to omit it; to omit it would not make it an independent work but a certain imitation and beautiful copying of the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great, to which it could be joined as a fifth book. For in both there are two persons ‘speaking to one another, one the speaker, the other the listener’.<sup>3</sup>

I have added *on the deeds*, not on the lives, as has up till today been wrongly used as the title.<sup>4</sup> The speaker did not intend to tell the stories of lives for his purpose was quite different. The parts which are strictly biographical are only introductions, and little need be said of them. The author states<sup>5</sup>:

It is my intention moreover in the beginning of each section of the proposed work, to set out in summary form as a type of preface some short facts about their life and character.

Little is said of the life of St Anthony, less of the other two Friars, and almost nothing of the rest. So in no way should the title refer to a description of lives.

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<sup>1</sup> Fr. L. Lemmens, O.F.M., *Dialogus de vitis sanctorum fratrum minorum: scriptum circa 1245 nunc primum edidit*. Romae, 1902, (*Fragmenta franciscana*, I).

<sup>2</sup> Loc. cit., x.

<sup>3</sup> See page 2.

<sup>4</sup> L. Lemmens, loc. cit., x.

<sup>5</sup> Page 1.

The work of the author clearly indicates that he is speaking of *deeds*. After he had honoured the deeds of the venerable fathers described in the *Annals*,<sup>1</sup> the author begins to describe his own list of deeds, beginning with those of his brothers ‘of whose deeds a celebrated fame has spread’.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, he explains firstly the *deeds* of the famous man, St Anthony, then he continues with the last *deeds* of his life, those deeds, namely, which he can remember. He then praises blessed Beneventus, all of whose *deeds* are not known; he speaks of what he remembers of the *deeds* of others, especially of blessed Ambrose, leaving out nothing of the *deeds* of so great a man. He had heard of many *deeds* of Friar Matthew. In this way he continues his list of *deeds* and developed more on the *deeds* of our Friars. He concludes with the statement that in no way does he envy those who know more and greater things of the *deeds* of the Friars of whom he will speak. In fact he has deliberately kept silent on many things which he had heard and read of the *deeds* of the Friars.

From what has been said, the author did not intend to speak in a general way; he worked always to speak of what he refers to so often as the *deeds*, especially by committing to writing the wonderful things or *deeds* of our heroes. He collected and related these facts under the general but glorious name of deeds, some of which concern Friars still living, but by far the major part concerns Friars who have died. When this is kept in mind, the book should be given a title which reflects the style of writing, and is fully consonant with its content.

## 2. THE INTEGRITY OF THE WORK

The present edition of the *Dialogue* without doubt should not be an ‘incomplete’ work or ‘only a fragment’ of the original work, but an edition of the whole work. There is no force in quoting the contrary assertion found in the *Catalogus XV Generalium Ministrorum* in its reference to Friar Crescentius<sup>3</sup>:

He searched out and collected many miracles of blessed Francis and also edited a work on the lives of Friars in the form of a dialogue: of which we still have parts but other parts have been lost by carelessness.

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<sup>1</sup> The life of Gregory IX, by an anonymous author, in Muratori, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, III, p. I, Milan 1723, 575, begins with a similar formula. A similar prologue is in Celano, *Second life*, Foreword, n. 26, *English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St Francis*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1987, 385.

<sup>2</sup> Page 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Analecta franciscana*, vol. 3, 697-707; *Mon. German. Hist.*, SS. XXXII, 661.

These last words are true provided they are read as referring only to the first part of the sentence, that is, to the miracles, and this would seem to be the meaning indicated by the grammar. The collection by Friar Crescentius on the miracles of Francis has been lost, although traces of it are to be seen in the work of Thomas of Celano, in the *Major Life* by St Bonaventure, and in the *Chronica XXIV Generalium Ministrorum*. But given that the statement can also apply to the second part of the sentence, that is, to the *Dialogue*, this would prove no more than that the author of the *Catalogus* knew only one or other fragment of the *Dialogue*, not the whole work printed here. Had the author had before him the whole work, he would not have referred so inaccurately to ‘the lives of the Friars’. This author then has no authority in this matter.

The *Chronica XXIV Generalium Ministrorum* carries no weight in this question for it repeats<sup>1</sup> the passage quoted from the *Catalogus* but adds in the final section ‘of which we still have parts but other parts have been lost by carelessness’; they have changed the text. The same response, only stronger, is to be given to the *Chronica* as was given to the *Catalogus*.

Indeed, one would expect the *Dialogue* ‘to say something of the many Friars who were famous for holiness and signs and who are now dead’.<sup>2</sup> However, it has to be proven, not supposed, that the author wished to speak of these others. In fact, the contrary is clear. After he said<sup>3</sup> that he would relate ‘the wonderful works of virtue’, which the Almighty had shown ‘in certain holy Friars of our Order in diverse parts of the world’, he immediately added the prudent comment: ‘I have not set down in the present text each single virtue of all those spread throughout almost the whole world’. He concerned himself with deeds of Friars of whom there was available an apostolic process or of whom he possessed a genuine record. When he had spoken of the three, he added<sup>4</sup>: ‘I am happy to add the deeds of some other Friars’ to what has gone before; and he explains what he means: it is my intention to speak ‘especially of those known to have lived in parts of Italy’. Later,<sup>5</sup> he decides ‘to come to Friars of our day’. Repeating why he writes nothing of St Francis, he says finally<sup>6</sup>: ‘I have consciously and prudently omitted deeds of other Friars’. It is clear

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<sup>1</sup> *Analecta franciscana*, vol. 3, 263.

<sup>2</sup> L. Lemmens, loc. cit., xiii.

<sup>3</sup> Page 1.

<sup>4</sup> Page 79.

<sup>5</sup> Page 101.

<sup>6</sup> Page 127.

that he states several times he did not wish to treat of all the holy Friars nor of each of their single deeds.

What has been said concerns the subject matter of the book. As regards the form of the book, I realize the author made a certain promise in the Prologue<sup>1</sup>:

It is my intention moreover in the beginning of each section of the proposed work to set out in summary form as a type of preface some few facts about their life and character.

But this was not something on which he insisted. While it is true of the first sections, it is not at all true of the fourth and fifth sections. This is evident for the fifth which deals with visions of the Friars; it can also be said of the fourth if its structure is closely examined.

The writer treats each of the first three Friars separately, and undoubtedly he refers to them when he says<sup>2</sup>: 'We begin by speaking of the Friars of whose deeds a celebrated fame has spread'. These three are St Anthony, blessed Beneventus, and blessed Ambrose, whose life and wonders were set out in apostolic processes. It is not surprising that the compiler when dealing with these would make use of a succinct synthesis already written before their deaths and based on the absolute truth of their deeds;<sup>3</sup> this synthesis was most acceptable to the author because of the forest of miracles reported therein. So he used copious sources by which he could join the three into a homogeneous whole.

There remained in his list the acts of sixteen 'more famous' Friars who are described separately but completely authenticated by juridical documents. In a reply to his listener he says<sup>4</sup>: 'As you ask, I am happy to add the deeds of some other Friars ... especially those known to have lived in parts of Italy'. But since these had been 'hidden from the knowledge of the faithful by a certain negligence', he made a personal study based on the memories of Friars still living, and published under a common heading everything he considered to be more sure.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Page 1.

<sup>2</sup> Page 3.

<sup>3</sup> This was easy because it was the custom in processes of canonization to draw up a summary of the life of the saint which was then submitted to the scrutiny of the Cardinals; later this summary was called *Vita per Curiam approbata*. See *Analecta Bolland.*, XXIII, 392.

<sup>4</sup> Page 79.

<sup>5</sup> Describing the deeds of Friar Roger, pages 85-88, he quotes more than once witnesses speaking under oath; it is also highly probable that he made use of some authentic documentation.

Given this evidence and knowing the intention of the author to relate wonders, it is clear why in the fourth part there is no biographical material; this cannot cast doubt on the integrity of the book. The integrity becomes even clearer the more closely one looks at the *Dialogue* where everything seems to be close knit and well tied together so that there do not seem to be any gaps. The acts of blessed Ambrose are introduced with these words<sup>1</sup>: ‘I acknowledge you have told me much about these two admirable Friars’. After these and after a long discussion provoked by some questions which arose over the alleged resurrection of Trajan,<sup>2</sup> the listener continues<sup>3</sup>: ‘Your clear reasoning has wonderfully satisfied my interest. Now I ask you to continue as you began and tell of other Friars of our Order’. In response the speaker immediately begins a new list, which will contain the deeds of other Friars so long neglected. At the end there is a natural transition to the last part dealing with the visions of the Friars; a general epilogue closes the work.

It can be added that whenever the author quotes himself by referring from one text to another, the reference is always evident and nowhere has anyone been able to identify a gap.

Therefore, nothing can be proved against the integrity of the text, rather the whole work clearly indicates its integrity.

### 3. THE TIME OF COMPOSITION

The author clearly indicates the time when he wrote<sup>4</sup>: ‘In obedience to the command of the reverend Father Minister General, namely, Friar Crescentius ... I am happy to establish the truth of these deeds’. The work was undertaken then at the command of Fr. Crescentius, the Minister General (1244-1247).

In his work the author praises the *First Life* of Celano. When the author speaks of St Francis and gives his excuse for not speaking of his deeds, he notes<sup>5</sup> that these deeds ‘can now be read as they are described by another Friar with sufficient accuracy and care’. This provides a rather fictitious reason for not speaking of St Francis when on the contrary he related the deeds of St Anthony at length even though they were first compiled in the Legend *Assidua*<sup>6</sup>; the author

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<sup>1</sup> Page 56.

<sup>2</sup> On this see de Rubeis, *Dissertationes criticae*, XXXII, c. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Page 79.

<sup>4</sup> Page 1.

<sup>5</sup> Page 3.

<sup>6</sup> Further on in the work another reason is given for the omission. It is enough to say here that perhaps our author remained silent on St Francis because he

could not have made a clearer reference to the first work of Friar Thomas of Celano. The use of the adverb ‘now’ clearly could not refer to the *Second Life* of Celano, especially when it is said that many miracles are omitted there because they were unknown to the writer, because they did not fit his style, because knowledge of them could not have come to him; all these comments would sound false if the *Second Life* of Celano already existed.

The *Dialogue* is then to be dated between the two lives by Celano. Since Crescentius was elected in 1244<sup>1</sup> and the writings of the Companions, on whom the *Second Life* of Celano certainly depends, were finished ‘in Greccio on the thirtieth of August in the year of the Lord 1246’, the present work can rightly be thought to have been written between these two dates.

#### 4. READERS OF THE *DIALOGUE*

Very few have read this work. How better to prove this than the fact that the only copy of the work, deposited in 1384 in the library of the Sacred Convent in Assisi, was in our day discovered by chance in the Vatican library. From the beginning of the fourteenth century to today it was hidden, so that, except perhaps for Marianus Florentinus and Rodolphus Tossinianensis,<sup>2</sup> how many Franciscan historians, for example Wadding, have there been whose information on holy early members of the Order has been changed by intervening compilers.

Nevertheless, it was not entirely unknown to early writers. It seems to have been read by Friar Thomas of Celano when writing his *Second Life*. He refers to the *Dialogue* clearly enough when he warns<sup>3</sup> he also had received a command to write of the ‘deeds’ and admits he includes ‘certain ... wonderful things, which were not included previously in the Life, since information about these had not come to

knew that Fr Crescentius had asked Celano to write more on the Seraphic Father: Celano writes in the Prologue of his *Second Life*: ‘It has pleased the entire holy assembly of the past general chapter and you, Most Reverend Father, not without the dispensation of divine wisdom, to enjoin upon our littleness that we set down in writing for the consolation of those living and for a remembrance for those to come the deeds and also the words of our glorious father Francis...’ n.1, *English Omnibus of Sources*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1987, 359.

<sup>1</sup> See *Analecta franciscana*, vol. 3, 261, note 9; P. Sabatier, *Fr Crescentius de Iesi et son généralat* (1244-1247), in *Opusc. de crit. hist.*, fasc. III, 109ff.

<sup>2</sup> F. Ehrle, *Notizie sui ms. della Bibl. di S. Francesco in Assisi*, in *Miscell. Francesc.*, II, 19; L. Lemmens, loc. cit., ix.

<sup>3</sup> L. Lemmens, loc. cit., xxiiif.

the author'.<sup>1</sup> Celano excuses himself using the same formula repeated in the *Dialogue*. However, I do not believe that Celano had the *Dialogue* when he wrote *De Miraculis*, n. 117 and 60, describing two wonders concerning Zanchato and Pesquitium since Celano describes them with different circumstances from those found in the *Dialogue*.<sup>2</sup>

One of the first readers was the person who took a list of St Anthony's miracles from the Bollandists who had published it on the basis of a codex from Ancona.<sup>3</sup> Besides the prologue and two additional miracles, which come directly from the Legend *Assidua*, the whole work is taken verbatim from the *Dialogue*, with some small changes in the order of the material.

Another reader was the anonymous author of the Legend of St Anthony, commonly called *Benignitas*,<sup>4</sup> which was published after 9 April 1317. Eight passages are taken literally from the *Dialogue*....

Then there is the *Catalogus sanctorum Fratrum Minorum* written about 1335. Speaking of Friars outstanding in their fame for holiness, he often uses expressions which are proper to our *Dialogue*, and moreover some are not found in any other source<sup>5</sup>: it can be taken for certain that the *Dialogue* is the source from which these were taken.

The fifth reader to mention is Fr Dominic Bonaventure Fessis, the nephew of blessed Francis Fabrianensis, the son of his sister Joanna; when this nephew wrote a life of his uncle he copied the Prologue of the *Dialogue*.<sup>6</sup> Together with the Bollandists, I suspect that here is 'a general prologue used not only for the miracles of this blessed, but also for many blessed of the seraphic Order, put together in one book with a brief synopsis of their lives'. Fr Dominic, following the form of the *Dialogue*, intended to prepare a new compilation of the miracles of holy Friars. But only one portion of the writing has survived.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the formula of the author of the *Dialogue*, which he uses at the end of his Prologue: 'Either because news of them could not reach him' (page 3), and he repeats the formula on the last page of his work: 'If it be thought opportune to write something about any of the deeds of which scant notice came to my attention' (page 127).

<sup>2</sup> See below pages 115 and 105.

<sup>3</sup> *Acta SS.*, t. III for 13 June, Antwerp, 1698, 718ff.

<sup>4</sup> Fragments of this were published by L. de Kerval, *S. Antonii de Padua vitae duae*, Paris 1904.

<sup>5</sup> L. Lemmens, loc. cit., p. xix; *Catalogus sanctorum Fratrum Minorum*, Romae 1903, 12. 13. 15. 20. 23.

<sup>6</sup> *Acta SS.*, t. III, for 22 April, 984ff. Fr Bartholomew of Tolomeis, the author of the life of blessed Luchesius, did the same thing in about 1320 when he copied literally the prologue of the *Major Life* of St Bonaventure. See *Acta SS.*, t. III, for 28 April, 597.

Except for the doctrinal explanations, of which not even one is found and the chapter on blessed Roger of Todi, Fr Bartholomew of Pisa rewrote the *Dialogue* in detail often quoting literally, sometimes abbreviating.<sup>1</sup> In relating the life of St Anthony, in which too often falsehood is mixed with truth, some things were taken from the *Dialogue*, as can be seen in the passages marked in the footnote.

I cannot list the writer of the *Chronica XXIV Generalium Ministrorum*, who wrote many years before Bartholomew, among those who read the *Dialogue*. He does refer to two ‘deeds’ recorded in the *Dialogue*.<sup>2</sup> But these were certainly not taken directly from the *Dialogue*; otherwise one could not explain why he did not use other ‘deeds’ and how he was able to make such a gross mistake on the name of the author.

## 5. THE CHARACTER AND NATURE OF THE *DIALOGUE*

Were one to ask why the *Dialogue* did not have a better fate, I think an answer can be easily given. In the work there are outstanding literary qualities such as are rarely met, but they are clouded by defects: the type of work determines its fate.

Right from the start, the author set himself a threefold purpose. He wanted the first to be historical. As others had done in ‘commending in annals the achievements of the ancients’, so he intended to hand on to future generations something of the early days of the Minors. He did this not to relate the common course of life nor a general history, but to deal with persons who had been honoured after their death; the great value of this is that for the historian of Franciscan matters they constitute a source which is often the only and primary source. Would that many other Friars had written about the deeds of the Friars!

He also tries to develop a culture or teaching and the attention of the readers, so that ‘by an experience of virtues’ they might ‘abandon the drink of an earlier age’. Therefore, he cures the weak, inspires the healthy and moves all to better things by giving examples of men of virtue and the presentation of signs. He consistently does this in two ways: first, by proposing miracles but he sins in this by excess, believing he can do more by this than if he had attempted to explain the virtuous deeds of his heroes; second, in expounding solid doctrine the attentive ‘listener’ often proposes ‘what is surprising or dubious’.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Analecta francescana*, vol. 4, 240, 242ff., 249-254, 261ff., 278ff., 282ff., 289ff., 293-295, 303, 321, 433, 453ff., 516; for St Anthony especially, 264ff., 268, 271, 272, 273.

<sup>2</sup> *Analecta francescana*, vol. 3, 263ff. and 267.

At times he writes in an apologetic manner before the heretics of his time who were growing in their attacks on Catholic truth. He shows them the great wonders which God does not cease to work through the saints in the church which is the pillar of truth. He relates so many 'deeds', enters into so many discussions about the points under attack, eliminates by firm and solidly developed arguments the many objections proposed to him by the 'listener', that finally they 'come to their senses', wondering at the holiness of the Christian religion and contemplating its clear doctrine, or they remain silent 'biting on what does not please them'.

All this is presented in a polished and ornate style, with artfully elaborated sentences, using the literary form at one time in use by the writers in the Curia and called by the name of 'the special style of the Curia'; it proves that the author was well qualified in this style of writing. He is shown to be a person outstanding in his ability to solve difficulties, his insight in expounding doctrine and biblical texts, and his prudence when giving advice.

These qualities did not prevent the book from having only a mediocre success due, in my judgment, to three reasons. First, there is the excessive number of miracles. Why fill the work with so many 'deeds'? Why burden the work with such long lists of miracles, 44 to St Anthony, 45 to blessed Beneventus, 55 to blessed Ambrose, and then generously adding those of the other Friars? Nothing could be more immoderate nor, shall I say it, tedious. This certainly did not escape the writer who to avoid monotony which, to use his own expression, might be 'taking away the appetite of a fastidious reader', he worked in the form of a *Dialogue* thus hoping to create some variety.

There was also the little space he devoted to the historical details of the lives of his heroes. Certainly, our author did not have the ingenuity of Thomas of Celano. Of the people of whom he wrote many lived lives full of work, more than one holding public office, engaged in journeys and in some history making chapters. This applies to St Anthony, to Friar Adam Rufus and Friar William from Cordella. But the writer omits all this. Everyone can see how much more keenly and truly, even more usefully and pleasantly, Celano wrote.

Moreover, the writer is to be credited with excessive obscurity. The more he develops a phrase it becomes sometimes more difficult to understand, especially when he gives explanations which touch on theological doctrine. Some of this obscurity can be attributed to the inexperience of the scribe of the codex, as will be explained later, but the main fault lies with the writer who, to preserve the curial style, used too many inversions and twists in his sentences.

I will willingly add another reason why the *Dialogue* remained unread. It was left among the anonymous writings so that even the most scholarly collector of early Franciscan history, Friar Bartholomew of Pisa, who more than others made use of the work, left us nothing about the author nor even about the title of the work. When some did refer to the work they spoke wrongly on these matters, showing that they had not seen the work. Hence, since the true or supposed name of an author quite frequently determined the fate of a book, it is not surprising, given the foregoing evidence, that it fell into almost total oblivion.

## 6. THE SOURCES AND VALUE OF THE *DIALOGUE*

When we, first of all, ponder the doctrinal portions of the *Dialogue*, the author shows himself to be sufficiently learned. He certainly had an easy grasp of sacred Scripture and sometimes gave a keen interpretation of a text. He had read some of the writings of the Fathers, for example, St Ambrose and St Augustine whom he quoted sometimes from original texts, sometimes from liturgical texts and also from contemporaries such as P. Lombard, Praepositinus and William Altissiodorensis; he was more closely familiar with the *Dialogues* of St Gregory whose style he tried to imitate both in the choice of material and in the literary form. He quotes from these authors using vague formulas such as ‘according to the opinion of a saint’ (pp. 16, 50), ‘as a saint testifies’ (p. 4), ‘in the opinions of the Fathers’ (p. 25), ‘in accord with the opinion of orthodox Fathers’ (pp. 40, 52) etc. He follows the common opinions of theologians as can be seen, for example, in the questions on prayer<sup>1</sup> (p. 63), on the knowledge of demons, on those recalled miraculously to life, and on whether the sentence passed on the saved and the damned is definitive<sup>2</sup> (pp. 25-26). He could conclude with truth that he taught what he knew to be in accord with the opinions of his many seniors, with the opinions of the saints and the statements of the doctors (p. 126).

He knew and referred the reader to some lives of the saints, such as St Nicholas, St John and St Catherine.<sup>3</sup> But in the historical sections

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<sup>1</sup> See Gulielmus Atissiodorensis, *Summa*, III, tract. 8, c. 5, q. 3 (ed. Franc. Regnault, Paris, s. 1 and a.).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, I, c. 11, q. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Pages 28, 93.

he has used excellent sources which he indicates clearly from the beginning of his work<sup>1</sup>:

I have not set down in the present text each single virtue of all those spread throughout almost the whole world, but those especially which are approved either by scrutineers acting on the command of the Pope, delegated by the Apostolic See, and which are kept in a faithful record based on a diligent examination of witnesses and noted by public authority, or by Friars of our Order who are still living and who have confirmed them for me by their testimony.

He had then a double source: one authentic and solemn, namely, the apostolic processes which were available to him, and the other private and particular, namely, the reports whether written<sup>2</sup> or verbal of Friars still living.

The process of blessed Ambrose was kept in Civitavecchia, from where L. Fumi published a summary of it;<sup>3</sup> this proves how faithfully our author worked from official documents. It is to be presumed that he was nevertheless circumspect, not recording everything he had heard but selecting what was truer and writing what was more certain. He admits<sup>4</sup>: 'I have consciously and prudently omitted deeds of other Friars which I have heard of and read'. Speaking earlier about visions he said wisely<sup>5</sup>:

Because it is common for the deception of the demons to be active in these, I have omitted many and various visions while the few which I relate here, as you request, were given to me by most sure reports of Friars.

Given such declarations I would not dare to say that the facts he has related are dreams or something worse. From among them Celano did not hesitate to list two and St Bonaventure listed one as miracles of St Francis.<sup>6</sup> In fact there is no reason for them to be doubted; otherwise, as St Bonaventure<sup>7</sup> advises in a similar case, 'with equal reason whatever is read in the Legends of the other saints is cast into doubt'.

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<sup>1</sup> Page 1.

<sup>2</sup> Certainly, some of these were reports of notaries.

<sup>3</sup> In *Miscell. Francisc.*, I, p. 77ff.: *Processo della canonizzazione del B. Ambrogio da Massa*,

<sup>4</sup> Pages 127.

<sup>5</sup> Page 105.

<sup>6</sup> Celano, *Tractatus de miraculis*, n. 60 and 117, *Fontes franciscani*, Assisi: Edizioni Porziuncola, 1995, 690 and 719; Bonaventure, *Major Life, Part 2*, VII, n. 7, *English Omnibus of Sources*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1987, 774.

<sup>7</sup> *De perfectione evangelica*, q. 2, art. 2, n. 4, *Opera omnia* (5, 152).

## 7. THE RELATION OF THE *DIALOGUE* TO THE FIRST LEGEND OF ST ANTHONY

I have already said that the section of the *Dialogue* dealing with St Anthony is based on the process of canonization. I do not intend by this that the author used it personally, but that his information is based ultimately on it. Its immediate source is the first Legend of St Anthony which begins with the word *Assidua*; this in fact was written following the documents of the process of the scrutineers.<sup>1</sup>

This would be most certain if it could be established that the *Dialogue* follows the Legend step by step, simply by abbreviating it<sup>2</sup> and reducing its style to fit more strictly the rules of the curial style.

With the exception of the miracles in n. 36 and n. 44 which are not in the Legend, all the other miracles in the *Dialogue* are found in the Legend; on the other hand the *Dialogue* does not list many miracles which are found in the Legend. Thus he omits the deeds of Forlivius and the events in the field of St Peter, details of burial and canonization, and many miracles while using the words<sup>3</sup> which introduce the section on miracles in chapter 27 of the Legend from which they are clearly taken.

However, other miracles which are treated at length in the Legend, he reduces to a few pages, making clear more than once his intention of touching only briefly on some matters<sup>4</sup>: 'I will turn, writing in summary form, to the last deeds of his life'; and: 'I have kept silent for the sake of brevity about many and indeed great signs of holiness'. These quotations are sufficient to prove the point about him who promised to give 'as a type of preface some few facts about their life and character'.

Another intention of the author was to polish the style of the Legend, because it was deficient in its curial style, and he did this by rearranging the phrases. Many clear examples of this are evident to anyone who compares the two texts.<sup>5</sup>

On closer inspection it quickly becomes apparent that both are by the same author. We read in the *Dialogue*<sup>6</sup>: 'I know many things from

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<sup>1</sup> This has been edited by L de Kerval, loc. cit., 23-114; I refer always to this edition in the quotations in the present section.

<sup>2</sup> Others have already commented on this: L. de Kerval, loc. cit., 4, and P. Van Ortrooy, *Analecta Bolland.*, XXIII, 386.

<sup>3</sup> Page 12.

<sup>4</sup> Pages 7 and 12.

<sup>5</sup> The editor here on page xxxi cites eight examples but the comparisons are based on the use of Latin and are omitted in this translation.

<sup>6</sup> Page 4.

personal observation, but I recall many others from having heard of them from witnesses worthy of trust'; In the Legend it was said earlier: 'I write of some things which I have not seen with my eyes; I know of them from the reports of the lord Sugerius the second and from other Catholics'. Unless there is a case of blatant plagiarism, one can see the one hand at work. This is stated first in the prologue of the *Dialogue* in equivalent words,<sup>1</sup> when the author asserts he is not intending to treat of St Francis because his life had already been written by another Friar. This in no way allows us to conclude that he did not have the Legend of St Anthony, but the only solid and logical conclusion is that this had not already been written by another Friar.<sup>2</sup> If it is not from another hand, therefore, it is from the same hand.

And in fact one and same person can be seen in both texts in many ways:

- a. in the most frequent use of special words;
- b. in formulas used with equal frequency;
- c. in some texts in particular;
- d. in the prologues and epilogues.<sup>3</sup>

It is therefore as clear as day that the same person wrote the *Diaolgue* who had first written the Legend of St Anthony; in this he proves that the books of the *Dialogues* of St Gregory were then commonly available; he mentions them in his prologue<sup>4</sup> and more than once copies literally from them in both writings. The same culture and literary style is evident in both, the same psychology of the saints and the same clearly deficient method in explaining their actions.

## **8. THE RELATION OF THE *DIALOGUE* TO THE *CHRONICLE* OF FRIAR THOMAS DE PAVIA**

So far we have found nothing about the author. Several names have been proposed and finally excluded; the question was considered to be insoluble, since neither historical tradition nor the two works themselves offered any grounds for adequately resolving the question.<sup>5</sup> It was necessary to search in a different direction. This direction was fortunately opened for me from the prologue of

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<sup>1</sup> Page 3.

<sup>2</sup> From this it seems that the author was not a plagiarist who copied the work of Celano; but since he used the other without scruple, he regarded it as his own.

<sup>3</sup> From pages xxxii-xxxv the author lists examples of these points of comparison but since they are based on the Latin words the pages are omitted here.

<sup>4</sup> He says: 'In this way St Gregory in his *Dialogues* answered the questions of Peter'.

<sup>5</sup> See L. Lemmens, loc. cit., xi-xv.

*Chronica imperatorum et pontificum*,<sup>1</sup> written in 1278 by Friar Thomas de Pavia:

It has been our wish in writing the deeds of the emperors and Roman pontiffs to avoid brevity and excess; too much brevity brings on a covering of clouds and does not lessen the hunger and desire for knowledge but increases it: just as if someone who is very hungry takes a little food, the hunger is not satisfied but rather stirred up and increased; an excess of words, unrestrained by proper moderation, often gives rise to dislike in the readers. It is proven that an abundance of food eaten by one who is excessively hungry causes sickness. Therefore, taking the middle way between too little and too much, we will speak of things useful as far as we see it to be expedient, and will leave aside what is superfluous. Many have been too brief in writing chronicles; but the vice of excess is common in those who have written histories. We begin our story, after calling on God, with Octavius Caesar, who was the universal lord of the Romans, in whose reign the Saviour, Christ our high priest, was born into this world from the most holy virgin.

Several things are noteworthy in this prologue:

1. the exact use of the curial style which is commonly applied in the whole *Chronicle* as in the *Dialogue*;
2. the word *deeds* which appears right at the beginning and is so often used in the *Dialogue*;
3. the same concern of the writer not to burden the reader and sometimes the same words used: he is concerned with 'brevity' (*Dialogue*, pp. 1, 4, 31, 55, 127), comparing a person desirous of learning as being 'hungry' (*Dialogue*, pp. 38, 67), wanting to avoid 'annoyance' (*Dialogue*, pp. 2, 55, 93, 127), accepting something 'as food' (*Dialogue*, p. 93), taking 'superfluous food' (*Dialogue*, p. 93); one can add to these that the *Dialogue* on page 4 has 'the beginning of your word [sermo]' while the *Chronicle* has 'the beginning of the story [narratio]'.<sup>2</sup> A certain affinity is evident here and there.

It is necessary to search out whether or not this is found also in the body of the *Chronicle*. Happily this is proven to be so as can be proven clearly from many texts from which I select some.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I consulted Cod. Bibl. Nat. Parisien. 6815, fol. 111r-178v; this was used also by E. Ehrenfeuchter who edited parts of it in *Mon. German. Hist.*, SS. XXII, pag. 490-528. Two other codices are in Florence, Bibl. Laurentiana, S. Croce, Plut. 21. sin. n. 5 et 7. In Cod. Parisien. the section on the Popes is missing, and it is incomplete in the codices in Florence.

<sup>2</sup> The *Dialogue* uses story [narratio] on pages 9, 43, 46, 60, 67, 70, 87, 89, 91, 126.

<sup>3</sup> On pages xxxix-xli the editor lists significant Latin words and formulas which occur in both works.

I do not deny that these words or formulas can be found in other writers, but their use or frequency in both works, especially of particular words, is, I believe, new evidence not to be neglected and gives a favorable indication to the identity of the author.

To be added to this is the fact that Friar Thomas, faced with texts contrary to him, quotes them and then tries to reconcile them with special formulas.<sup>1</sup>

In the last chapters of his *Chronicle*, he is totally occupied with contemporary events which he reports in his own style; in the *Dialogue*, this is also present, precisely in the section *On visions of Friars*, when the author relates his study of wonders, and one finds at times the same terms.<sup>2</sup>

Frequently then one sees identical concepts, words, phrases and natural ability. These do not indicate the kind of similarity which would result from one work being a simple imitation of the other or that one is only quoting from the other. One relates to the other from common characteristics because, unless I am mistaken, they have a common author using his own style of writing which after 35 years he could not change.

## 9. THE RELATION OF THE *DIALOGUE* TO THE *OX* OF FRIAR THOMAS OF PAVIA

While what has been said is of itself sufficiently convincing, I concede that, apart from the two works themselves, the conclusion is not based on any extrinsic evidence. However, I hope that the conclusion is confirmed and supported by a new comparison between the *Dialogue* and another work of the same Friar Thomas. This comparison could take away completely any difficulties. So I turn to the argument based on the great theological collection which was written for the use of preachers and is called the *Ox*.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On pages xlii-xliii the editor lists the Latin formulas.

<sup>2</sup> On page xliii the editor lists examples of these Latin terms.

<sup>3</sup> Under the form of *Distinctions* the collection proceeds in alphabetical order, as do other works, for example, of Friar Maurice, Friar Arnaldus Royardi, Friar Nicholas Biard, etc. Questions are not treated in a scholastic style, but it is rather a moral treatise suitable for anyone who had to announce 'vices and virtues, punishment and glory'; in it one can see perfectly the style and method used by the Friar preachers in Italy in the early days of the Order. Two copies of this work are preserved in codices of the Bibl. Conv. S. Francisci Senarum under nn. 391-395. See N. Papini, *L'Etruria francescana*, Siena 1797, 1331. Another two or three copies, more or less complete, were found recently by Fr Ephrem Longpré, O.F.M. in Florence, Bibl. Laurentiana, S. Croce, Plut. 28 sin. codd. 2, 3, 5, 6, 4 and 9, and Plut. 29 sin. cod. 1. Fr. Longpré soon proved,

If one studies the *Ox* and *Dialogue* in detail, the same similarities and affinities are found as were seen from a comparison of the *Dialogue* and the *Chronicle*. In the *Ox* the author does not often use an ornate style, since his aim is not to produce a literary work; for the most part the text is taken up with biblical quotations, but there is no lack of words or phrases on which one can establish the affinity of the works and the identity of the author. I will propose a few examples,<sup>1</sup> while it is sure that were anyone to look through this voluminous work many more would be found.<sup>2</sup>

The style of speaking is again so similar in both works that one is led to presume there is one author. So many and such words and phrases can be drawn from the two works, and in fact have been, as would seem to be impossible were the works written by different authors or if one depended upon the other.

My argument becomes more detailed and stronger if I can show that the doctrinal content of the *Dialogue* corresponds closely to parallel passages in the *Ox*. And in fact this happens as will be immediately apparent. The moral expositions, omitted in the first edition,<sup>3</sup> provide a most valid argument for solving the question of the name of the author. How important it is at times to have the complete text of old works! Certain examples follow.<sup>4</sup>

I have no doubt there are other passages I could quote,<sup>5</sup> in which it would be equally apparent that in both works one finds the same author, the same themes treated in the same way, similar sources quoted, similar concerns thought out, and a like culture of mind. But these suffice.

in *Archivum franciscanum historicum*, vol. 16, 3-33, that these codices contained genuine works of Friar Thomas. I owe it to his friendship that I have been able to consult these codices and so support my thesis with new arguments and, I hope, prove the thesis.

<sup>1</sup> The examples quoted are taken for the most part from the distinctions under the words *Antichrist*, *ignorance*, *signs*, on which the author has stamped his own personal style.

<sup>2</sup> On pages xlvi-xlix the editor gives examples of similar phrases and Latin expressions in both works.

<sup>3</sup> This is the edition by Fr. L. Lemmens, 1902.

<sup>4</sup> On pages l-lv the editor gives examples of similar doctrine from the two works but the force of the arguments is in similar Latin words which are omitted here.

<sup>5</sup> Under the word *Oliva* the Legend of St Nicholas is quoted at length as it is in many places in the *Dialogue*.

## 10. THE AUTHOR OF THE *DIALOGUE*

It is time to conclude. We do not have any external argument such as the testimony of an ancient writer. But the works themselves, the *Chronicle* and the *Ox* which are indisputably authentic, speak without any doubt of Friar Nicholas de Pavia.

- a. The chapters of the *Ox*, in which the author writes in his own personal style, contain special and characteristic formulas familiar and as it were natural to him and these are found in the *Chronicle* and are often found in the *Dialogue*.
- b. The chapters of the *Ox* in which his personal style is less evident, introduce divisions of some subjects, quotations from the Bible or other sources, and they frequently contain themes and biblical texts used in the *Dialogue*, themes which are treated in the same way and texts which are applied in the same way.
- c. The same moral personality is evident in the three works, especially in the *Ox* and in the *Dialogue*. The writer is at times severe, good natured, solid in doctrine, most discreet in counsel and judgment, and seems to be more prudent than any other when concerned with miracles, prophecies and visions.

On the basis of what has been presented, even though it be internal arguments based only on the comparison of texts, I dare to say that with strong probability the *Dialogue* is from the person who wrote the *Ox* and the *Chronicle*. In many places, certainly in my judgment, the author reveals himself, and I am unaware whether there are many authors whose writings with no external testimony have such a collection of presumptions in their favour as is the case here.<sup>1</sup>

Salimbene de Adam, a friend of Friar Thomas, has left a testimony about him of much importance and it is quoted here. After speaking of the death of Philip, archbishop of Ravenna, (died in September-October 1270), whose last confession was heard by Friar Thomas in Pistoia, he adds<sup>2</sup>:

This Brother Thomas of Pavia was a holy, good, and very learned man, who was lector in theology at Parma, Bologna, and Ferrara for many years. He was in the Order of Friars Minor for many, many years, a wise man of sound counsel. He was a cheerful, friendly man, humble, blessed, and devoted to God, and he was a pleasing and fruitful preacher. He was Provincial Minister in Tuscany for many

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<sup>1</sup> From this, as a mere corollary, you have a full response to the question asked by Fr Van Ortro, *Analecta Bolland.*, XXIV, 1905, 308, about the First Life of St Anthony: *Quand donc la lumière se fera-t-elle sur l'auteur de ce précieux document primitif?* See above, section 7.

<sup>2</sup> *The Chronicle of Salimbene de Adam*, New York: Binghamton, 1986, 434-435.

years. He wrote a lengthy chronicle, for he knew many things and he was very facile in writing. He also compiled a collection of sermons. Moreover, he wrote a wide-ranging theological work, which he entitled the *Ox* because of its magnitude. As Minister, he did a good job of reforming the province of Tuscany. He was a very good friend of mine, for I lived with him for many years in the convent at Ferrara.

From this text it is clear that, apart from the birthplace of Friar Thomas being Pavia, that is, the old town of Ticinum in Lombardy, he was:

- a. a theologian, not of any kind but sufficiently eminent, who taught theology for many years and wrote a large work on the subject;
- b. an equally competent historian, the author of the ample *Chronicle*;
- c. a wise, discreet person of sound judgment, who was rich and broad in ideas. All of this is true of the author of the *Dialogue*, who proves himself to be a theologian and historian, loquacious and diffuse, but most prudent and showing right judgment.

A closer examination of his *Chronicle* reveals many other details about his life. He spent his childhood in Pavia<sup>1</sup>: ‘What has been said up till now comes from the seniors of the area as I heard in Pavia while I was still a boy.’ If full faith can be put on his information about the earthquake in 1222,<sup>2</sup> he was perhaps no more than fifteen years of age when Pope Gregory IX was elected (19 March 1227). He was received into the Order of Minors in 1229, he witnessed in Padua the events at the time of the funeral of St Anthony, which he could record as an eye witness.<sup>3</sup> In 1245, about the time when he wrote the *Dialogue*, he was present at the council of Lyons as a companion to Friar Bonaventure de Iseo, Vicar to Crescentius, the Minister General.<sup>4</sup> Later he travelled widely. He was in Romania in 1255 ‘when it rained ash ... as I saw with my own eyes’;<sup>5</sup> in Dalmatia where it seems he envied Salonae and Spatalus;<sup>6</sup> in Illyria where he saw the beginning of the walls built by the Romans to keep out the barbarians;<sup>7</sup> Prague, where he read a history of the Bohemians;<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cod. lat. 6815 Bibl. Nat. Parisien., fol. 161 v 2.

<sup>2</sup> Cod. Florent. Plut. 21 sin. n. 5, fol. 111 v 2.

<sup>3</sup> This claim is based on what has been said in section 7, namely, that one person was the author of the Legend *Assidua* of St Anthony and the *Dialogue*. See above page xxiii, note 1.

<sup>4</sup> Cod. cit. 6815, fol. 130 r 2. He was a member of the General Curia in which he held the office of scribe. On this basis it is clearer why the Minister General would command him to write the *Dialogue*.

<sup>5</sup> Fol. 146 r 1.

<sup>6</sup> Fol. 127 r 1.

<sup>7</sup> Fol. 142 v 2.

<sup>8</sup> Fol. 170 r 1.

Cologne, where he saw the tomb of the three great kings;<sup>1</sup> in the Monastery of St Maurice, or Agaunense, where he heard much of the actions of the Burgundians.<sup>2</sup>

As Minister Provincial of Tuscany, which he ruled 'for many years' according to Salimbene, that is, 'from 1258 to 1270' according to N. Papini,<sup>3</sup> he was present at the General Chapter held in Paris in 1266; there he learnt much of Charles I, King of Sicily,<sup>4</sup> and perhaps also what he reports of Christianus, a canon of Belvacensis,<sup>5</sup> a significant Bachelor of Theology, who was one of the adversaries of the Mendicants and who taught the error of Cerinthus while reading the Sentences. As Minister of Tuscany he had much to do with the Charles mentioned above,<sup>6</sup> and he stayed sometimes in his camp; because this familiarity developed between them he willingly reported his outstanding deeds.

The probable list of his treatises is:

- a. the Legend of St Anthony which begins *Assidua*;
- b. the *Dialogue* here edited;
- c. the theological work entitled the *Ox*;
- d. a treatise of sermons;<sup>7</sup>
- e. the *Chronica imperatorum et pontificum*.

Friar Thomas was then noteworthy among the Friars of his time for his culture, doctrine and the offices which he held, and worthy to be numbered among those who have added lustre to the Order of Minors. He died between 1280 and 25 June 1284 after which day Friar Salimbene preached his eulogy.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Fol. 162 v 1.

<sup>2</sup> Fol. 156 v 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Index onomasticus scriptorum franciscanae familiae*, n° 3881. Cod. II. II. 181, in Bibl. Nation. Florentiae.

<sup>4</sup> Fol. 168 v 1.

<sup>5</sup> Fol. 123 r 1. See H. Denifle, *Chartularium universitatis Parisiensis*, I, n. 280, note 8, and n. 317.

<sup>6</sup> Fol. 168 v.

<sup>7</sup> This treatise of which mention was made above by Salimbene, is the work *De arte concinandi*, which is found in the introduction to the sermons of St Bonaventure, *Opera omnia*, (9, 8-21), and is thought by Fr Ephrem Longpré O.F.M to be a work by Thomas of Pavia. In this Fr Ephrem Longpré is completely correct. I can confirm his conjecture by new evidence coming from a comparison of this work with the *Dialogue*. [The editor then in this footnote details further points of contact between the Latin in the treatise and in the *Dialogue*.]

<sup>8</sup> See *Mon. Germ. hist.*, loc. cit., 430, note 3; R. Davidsohn, *Forschungen zur Geschichte von Florenz*, IV, Berlin 1908, 359-362.

## 11. ON THE MANUSCRIPT TRADITION OF THE *DIALOGUE*

The text of the new edition of the *Dialogue* is based on the only known codex. In fact, almost as soon as it was discovered in the Vatican Library, there came a report that Dr Paul Sabatier had found another. Fr Lemmens said<sup>1</sup>: ‘The eminent Sabatier has informed us that he has found another copy of the *Dialogue*’, and L. de Kerval<sup>2</sup> repeated this; but Fr Van Ortroty cast doubts on it.<sup>3</sup> However, P. Sabatier, when consulted by letter after the text had been published, responded courteously saying that in 1902 he had indeed seen another copy but he had not paid much attention to it as it concerned a text newly edited, and now he does not know where the codex is.

Codex 547 of the Museum of Borgo now in the Vatican Library, is the text, as I have said, which previously was in the Library of the Sacred Convent of Assisi, as is clear from the inventory for the year 1381.<sup>4</sup> The codex is described by Fr Lemmens as follows<sup>5</sup>: ‘It is a codex of parchment (175 by 130 cm, fol. 152), written in Italy about 1500 in the style used in books meant for public use, by a scribe with but little skill in the Latin language so there are many and irreparable mistakes in the text’. There are hardly any corrections in the text. The text and rubrics have been written by the same person. Other hands have added in the higher margins the headings of divisions, as: *On blessed Anthony of Padua*, *On blessed Benevenuto who is buried in Corneto*, etc., as well as some biblical references; much later hands have added on the first folio the title which was lacking: *A dialogue on holy Friars Minor*, and the marginal rubrics: *On blessed Herman from Foligno*, and *buried in Barulum*.

From the lack of skill of the scribe there are many and indeed most serious mistakes, as will be clear to any reader, and these occur especially in the sections concerned with doctrine so that at times corrections are most difficult. There is sometimes such obscurity coming from the omission of words or the complex construction of phrases, that to determine the meaning demands excessive effort. This difficulty cannot be overcome without the help of at least one other copy of the work; since this is not to be had, the kind reader will have to excuse the imperfection of the work here offered.

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<sup>1</sup> *Dialogus*, x.

<sup>2</sup> *S. Ant. de Padua vitae duae*, viii.

<sup>3</sup> *Analecta Bolland.*, XXIII, 384.

<sup>4</sup> L. Alessandri, *Inventario dell'antica biblioteca del convento di S. Francesco in Assisi*, Assisi 1906, 92, num. cc.

<sup>5</sup> *Dialogus*, x.

## 12. THE PLAN OF THE PRESENT EDITION

1. I wanted to edit a complete text, that is, with its historical and doctrinal passages as they are found in the Roman codex.
2. I have changed the punctuation and orthography according to modern conventions; I have done this with the proper names, when known, otherwise they remain as they are in the codex.
3. More than once the author himself or the scribe has used an Italian form which I have been careful to note where it occurs.
4. Errors not due to a question only of orthography are corrected but with a note added.
5. For corrections I have relied first of all on the context of the words; sometimes, by studying the writing it was possible to discover how the scribe had erred by not understanding or copying imperfectly the paleographic signs or abbreviations: in such cases I have used what is called a critical conjecture; otherwise, and especially at the end of sections, it was helpful to apply the rules of the curial style, which the author set himself to follow strictly.
6. I have set myself to keep these rules before me, as a whole and singly, especially whenever it was necessary to supply a missing word: that this has been done successfully on many occasions is abundantly proven in the notes placed at the bottom of the pages.
7. Two kinds of notes often occur at the bottom of the pages. Those using numbers refer to quotations of the Bible, the Fathers, or matters relating to history; those indicated by the letters *a, b, c, d, e, f, g*, refer to variations and corrections in the codex (= C) or in the first edition of Fr Lemmens (= L); when *om.* is added it indicates that a word had been omitted.

The text which up till now few have read is available for anyone to go through. It is certainly not of the weight and value first hoped for. However, it was composed with a pious zeal and written with a certain art, and merits to be regarded as one of the primary sources of Franciscan history, to be placed immediately after the early lives of St Francis and those of St Anthony; compared to the *Lives of the Friars*, written by Friar Gerard of Fracheto O.P. which preceded it, it seems to be superior in method, sobriety and authority.

I must not omit to thank the dear Friars of the College of St Bonaventure who have assisted me in various ways in preparing this edition.

Fr. Ferdinand M. Delorme, O.F.M.

Dialogue

xxx

Quaracchi, 16 November 1922

xxx

**A DIALOGUE  
ON THE DEEDS OF SOME HOLY FRIARS MINOR**

**Prologue**

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

To commend from a pious zeal the deeds of the venerable fathers and the memory of the worthy titles of the ancients normally brings much fruit to the posterity of the faithful: firstly, so that the *Fashioner of all things* [Wis 7:22] and the most high Worker who is *wonderful in his saints* [Ps 67:36 DRB; 68:35 NRSV] is proclaimed; another fruit is that the weak faith of small ones might be provoked by an experience of virtues to abandon the drink of an earlier age and, using the image of a more perfect life, be strengthened to eat more solid food [see I Cor 33:1-2]; lastly, so that the praiseworthy life of deceased fathers, attested by the wonders of signs, might disperse heretical errors which try to darken the rays of recognized truth with a cloud of darkness, and might promote the unity of the Catholic faith, or certainly might melt away what is locked in the confines of perfidious blindness caught in the harmful bite of gaping envy.

Thereby, although I be an *unworthy servant* of Christ [Lk 17:10], to the glory and praise of the divine majesty, in obedience to the command of the reverend Father Minister General, namely, Friar Crescentius, and so that the pious devotion of the Friars might have, in summary style, a list of the deeds and wonderful works of virtue which in certain holy Friars of our Order in diverse parts of the world the almighty power of the Creator deigned to show, I am happy to establish the truth of these deeds and to give a short, succinct report which might inspire contemporary Friars to sentiments of divine praise and to come to admire them all the more from a devout and closer study. However, I have not set down in the present text each single virtue of all those spread throughout almost the whole world, but those especially which are approved either by scrutineers acting on the command of the Pope, delegated by the Apostolic See, and which are kept in a faithful record based on a diligent examination of witnesses and noted by public authority, or by Friars of our Order who are still living and who have confirmed them for me by their testimony. It is my intention moreover in the beginning of each section of the proposed work to set out in summary form as a type of preface some few facts about their life and character in order that the declared evidence of perfection, the example of virtue, might invite others to imitate them and that the signs of faith which are known to

be given not *for believers but for unbelievers* [1 Cor 14:22] might support the proven sincerity of life.

To lessen annoyance for a fastidious reader and to bring a richer pleasure in hearing to religious ears, we propose to have two Friars speaking to one another in the form of a dialogue, one the speaker, the other the listener. The purpose of this is that should the truth of the deeds related cause any surprise or doubt in the ears of the weak, in reply to a question of the listener it can be shown to be in accord with the laws of sacred Scripture that nothing is difficult to the all powerful Creator, and that pious faith may become capable of the discipline of divine grace.

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**Speaker.** *Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and varied ways by the prophets of the power of his great majesty and the riches of his glory but in our days* [Heb 1:1-2; Rom 9:22-23], anxious to stir up the sleep of dozing faith and after the wonders of bygone fathers, God *made a remembrance of their wonderful works*, renewed the *signs* and powerfully changed what is to be admired [Ps 110:4 DRB; 111:5 NRSV]. Certain persons of our time clothed like us in mortal flesh, while others already taken to the place of happiness, have been made to shine with unheard of miracles. What does the most powerful hand of the Redeemer cause by this in the hearts of the predestined, other than to strengthen and feed them by a wonderful extension of present signs of the hope of future things promised to the faithful? For to be sure, although *faith is the assurance of things hoped for*, it may become blind and empty of merits when it is based on arguments of plausible words of wisdom [Heb 11:1; I Cor 2:4], or when it is more satisfied with signs provoked by human effort than in the written truth *once and for all entrusted* to us [Jude 3]; however, in this the providence of divine clemency nourishes the weakness of an ageing faith in little ones, according to a firm edict of an evangelical promise by which the same power and grace of virtues preserve faith in the stronger members of the church until the end of time.

**Listener.** Often, I confess, I regard by a high contemplation of mind the glorious fathers of the new and old Testaments, whose deeds antiquity transmits to us through Scripture, and while I am deficient in the admiration of their virtues, I do see in a certain way the traces of divine majesty in their actions and power of words. But I would have you, dearest brother, tell me something, even briefly, of the virtues and miracles of the Friars of our Order. I ask this so as to build up for those here present and to increase for the future the tender faith of the reborn, so that having heard the wonders of their way of life, I may

acknowledge how much perfection I lack, and so that I may aspire to imitate their faith and virtue according to the limits of my ability.

**Speaker.** Brother, I do not want you to delay me with questions about the character and life of our most blessed father Francis since I want to hurry on to other things. His life and the works he did while living with us in the flesh, but also those which he does not cease to do while now reigning with Christ, can now be read as they are described by another Friar with sufficient accuracy and care; although indeed many of the miracles of the said father were hidden from this writer, either because news of them could not reach him due to the distance of the regions, or because he hid them in accord with his style due to the exceedingly long list already in existence, but in the meantime they are known to us as to people who have examined them. We begin by speaking of the Friars of whose deeds, although inferior in the level of authority, a celebrated fame has spread; what I relate is wonderful and greatly to be revered by pious ears.

## I

## OF BLESSED ANTHONY OF PADUA

**Listener.** If you are able, I wish to hear about the deeds and miracles of the famous saint who is our brother Anthony.

**Speaker.** Of what you ask, brother, I know many things from personal observation, but I recall many others from having heard of them from witnesses worthy of trust; I will restrict what I say to some few of them for the sake of brevity, provided you, as you assert, prove to be an attentive listener.

**Listener.** Do not, I ask, keep me waiting for the beginning of your word; my spirit is ready and strongly desires to hear what you have to say.

**Speaker.** This blessed Anthony of whom you ask was a native of Spain, a citizen of the city of Lisbon where he was born into a noble family. Almost from earliest childhood he adorned his life with actions which were a sign of things to come. He began the study of the liberal arts but, while still young, felt himself urged strongly, more than was usual, towards what is unlawful. The feelings of corruption increased in his flesh, but going beyond the urgings of youth and pleasure, he left aside the study of letters and went to an Augustinian monastery near the same city where with humble devotion he took the habit of a canon regular.

There, during a stay of almost two years, the apprentice of Christ tolerated an unwanted frequent contact with friends and family which serves to enervate the strength of souls as a temptation; he decided to leave his birthplace and happily transferred to the community of the Holy Cross in Coimbra. But because, as a Saint testifies,<sup>1</sup> what proves to be praiseworthy is not just staying in Jerusalem but living rightly there, he took care to adjust himself to regular discipline so that it could be seen he was concerned not with the place but with a complete transformation of his life. He occupied his mind always with a more than mediocre study of sacred Scripture; nor did he cease at fitting times of day and night from conversations with God. He stored carefully in a strong memory what he had read, so that in a short space of time he managed to abound in a wonderful knowledge of all Scripture.

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<sup>1</sup> Jerome, *Letter 58*, Letters and Select Works, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 6, New York: Christian Life Company, 1893, 119.

While, as we have said, these things were happening, a man born of a royal family, by name Petrus Infans, when the remains of some Friars of our Order were carried from Morocco, was wonderfully cured by the merits of these Friars; he later preached with great fame through the whole of Spain. When this reached the ears of Anthony, he immediately felt a zeal for martyrdom and desired with all his strength to join the Order of Friars Minor; he commended this desire of his heart to Christ with frequent prayers and fasting. One day, some Friars Minor who were staying in a neighbouring religious house came, as was their custom, to ask for alms; the Friars assured Anthony he would be sent to the land of the Saracens, and they clothed him in the habit of St Francis, hardly delaying to have the permission of the superior.

He, strong in his love of martyrdom, was sent by the Friars to Morocco, but the supreme Master had greater plans for him; he was struck by a severe fever and forced, although unwilling, to return to the land of his birth. When he took ship, intending to return to Spain, his purpose was frustrated by God as strong winds drove the ship to Sicily.

**Listener.** I wonder greatly at what you say, namely, that the Omnipotent, who *knows the heart* [Sir 7:5 DRB] and, as one who is true and most benign, inspires the heart to such perfection, would not only allow him to be frustrated in his joyful seeking of martyrdom, but also send him abroad to unknown peoples and lands.

#### **Why God allowed Anthony to be frustrated in martyrdom**

**Speaker.** If we were to discuss diligently the deeds of the Doctor of the Gentiles we would find that what you say is causing you to wonder is not a matter for wonder. Paul stated that the brothers told him *bands and afflictions wait for him at Jerusalem* [Acts 20:23 DRB], but he, firm in the zeal of faith, set himself to go there to be crucified; the Lord arranged that he was not able to find the glory of martyrdom which he then sought, but instead he came by land and after being shipwrecked reached the limits of the Roman world. In this way God, the moderator of his will and actions, accepted the holocaust of his pious intention as *a fragrant offering* [Eph 5:2] and the offering of an obedient spirit. That Paul's life proved more useful to the public life of his city is shown by the spreading of his purpose and vows: he was busy before the tribunal of Caesar as a most strong athlete for the defence of the faith; he taught by word in a few parts of the world, and how much this benefited the Church was confirmed by his subsequent work; new seedbeds of his preaching were cultivated by his healing warnings and letters, so necessary to those young in the

faith. Accordingly, writing to the Philippians of himself, after knowing the will of God more clearly, he said: *I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and to be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you* [Phil 1:23]. Without a doubt, God discerned with righteousness the decisions of holy Anthony and suspended his intention for the benefit of others so as to sow for the future more abundant fruit; his life in parts of Italy was to prove more useful to the children of holy mother Church than had he shed his blood for the faith in the land of the more obstinate Gentiles.

**Listener.** I see it is too dangerous for the unlearned and ignorant to discuss the abyss of divine judgment; such people can discern only the exterior actions and words observable by the human senses, and do not examine the merits of the causes with necessary weight. But because I see you have responded to my doubt with a clear argument, I ask you to go on with the story of the facts about this great person, not hiding from me how afterwards his life proved useful to the Church of Christ.

**Speaker.** At the very time when, as we have said, the holy man arrived in parts of Sicily, a General Chapter of the Order was to be celebrated in Assisi. As was the custom, Anthony came to the Chapter with other Friars and was appointed by the Minister General to the province of Romagna. There, in the place called Mons-Pauli, he subjected his flesh to the service of the spirit, lived a solitary life for a long time, ate *bread by measure* and also *drank water by measure* [Ezek 4:16]; he curbed the jaw of his flesh *with bit and bridle* [Ps 32:9], so that often when he wanted to return to the other Friars at the sound of the bell, he was unable to do so except when supported by the hands of the Friars.

A careful devotee of humility, he tried so much to curb the haughtiness of arrogance, that while he had assiduously committed to memory the books available to him, and was rich in the grace of mystical eloquence, the Friars thought him to be more competent in washing the kitchen utensils than in expounding the mysteries of sacred Scripture. Nor did the Friars think he had any knowledge of the divine Scriptures, for they held to an opinion with confidence even when it rested on a single observation, and rarely, except when necessity demanded it, had they heard him speak of study. Finally, however, the Lord so arranged matters that the Friars learnt of the knowledge of the man of God, whom God ordered to be placed *on the lampstand* as the *light* of grace [Mt 5:15], destined to evangelize as a devotee of the desert *the glory of God's name* [Ps 79:9].

Having taken on *the work of an evangelist* he so effectively showed himself to be a *faithful and prudent* servant [2 Tim 4:5; Lk

12:42], totally denying rest to his body, that he passed through cities, villages and hamlets, *convincing* unbelievers, *encouraging* the pious, *rebuking* the lazy [2 Tim 4:2], and all of this so effectively and fervently that he gave suitable advice on doctrine to all. He *showed no partiality* to persons [Rom 2:11] sought no human favour or popularity, but according to the word of the prophet, *like a threshing sledge, sharp, new and having teeth*, with the ploughshare of his preaching he *threshed the mountains* and made *the hills*, that is, people of a lower status, *like chaff* [Isa 41:15].

Nor do I think it should be passed over in silence that, when he preached his first course of sermons in the city of Rimini, a heretic by the name of Bonelli converted to the way of faith by following Christ. In fact he brought out with fluent eloquence so much from the hidden depths of Scripture, that the Vicar of Christ gave him a title of special grace, namely, ‘the ark of the testament of the covenant’.

Because it would require much time to tell all his wonderful virtues and the many provinces and parts of the world in which he sowed the word of God, I will turn, writing in summary form, to the last deeds of his life which indicate clearly the more evident signs of his virtues.

At the time of the General Chapter in which the relics of blessed father Francis were transferred into Assisi, accepting from the Minister General of the Order a general freedom to preach, he came, with Christ leading the way, to the city of Padua. Discerning during the season of Lent that the time was right to concentrate on *opening the door for the word* [Col 4:3] and the ministry of the word, for forty continuous days he *proclaimed* to the people *repentance for the remission of sins* [Mk 1:4]. He was burdened with a certain natural corpulence and suffered continual sickness from his tireless zeal for souls by preaching, teaching, hearing confessions from dawn till evening; yet all this time he weakened himself by fasting.

The enemy of the human race, jealous of virtue, is bent on preventing good actions and, at the beginning of the Lent just mentioned, tried to divert the servant of God from the way of salvation. On a certain night while Anthony was sleeping the devil tried to suffocate him by choking his throat. But Anthony, having called for help on the glorious Virgin, the Mother of God, by name, made the sign of the cross on his forehead; when he opened his eyes wanting to catch sight of the one hastening away, behold the whole cell in which he lay was lit up with a heavenly light. We hold for certain that the light in the cell of the man of God came from the divine authority, so that from the presence of the infused light of Christ the servant might recognize the one who would give him a high gift, while the one who cultivates the rays of darkness went away confused and afraid, unable to bear the light.

**Listener.** It is clear that zealous souls to some extent are disturbed by reprobate spirits; these spirits try to divert people of virtue who long for spiritual benefits from their striving for salvation; to this end they use the whole skill of their malice to try and block by skilful schemes the souls of believers redeemed by the blood of Christ, lest believers come to their senses.

### **Spiritual persons are tempted in two ways to cease doing good**

**Speaker.** Know that evil spirits often prepare obstacles in two ways harmful to the good of souls, so as not to let these souls, acting from a good intention, do anything of benefit for their neighbours.

Firstly, by transforming themselves into *an angel of light* [2 Cor 11:14] they lead them away from some good work already started, under the guise of a better good, so that they are cut off by a vain distraction from what they intended, and do not pay attention effectively to the good intended. The leaders of the Jews, when they insulted the Lord on the cross, are examples of this. While the Son of God was hanging on the cross for the salvation of the world, they invited him to get down off the cross in accord with the promise: *He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him* [Mt 27:42]. As if they were of the mind that Christ would do something greater for the conversion of the Jewish people, whom he had come to redeem, were he to come down from the cross alive, than if by dying he were to gather under his arms spread out on the cross, a multitude of people as a *hen gathers her brood under her wings* [Mt 23:37]. While they were persuading him in this way and he would in no way leave the cross, we believe that our priest and host, Jesus Christ, could not yield until the *evening sacrifice* [Ps 141:2] was completed; Christ would not undervalue the price of his blood shed for the redemption of all and accepted, by the mercy of God, as the necessary payment.

Secondly, not under the guise of virtue, but by an open dishonesty of evil, the apostate spirits show the malice of their virus. They do this now by threats, now by terror, and often God allows them to afflict the just by bodily scourges, so that the just might turn aside from the journey to perfection they have undertaken or from the horror of persecution. Nevertheless, holy people despise by an excellent way of thinking the forces of evil spirits moving against them: the more strongly they hold off the arrows of the enemy with the shield of patience, the more powerfully do they make an end of the plan attempted by the enemy and adapted to their glory.

This is the war waged against the children of the captivity who were rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Their enemies surrounded

them with threats and terrors aimed at making them stop the work begun; they could get no rest from the persecutions. But, as it is written: *each laboured on the work with one hand and with the other held a weapon* [Neh 4:17], so that they might overcome powerfully with the sword of the Spirit the imminent war and complete with the desired success the building of the walls of the city.

**Listener.** I agree completely with what you say because the servants of God have much need of prudence in the *discernment of spirits* [1 Cor 12:10], lest they be cut off from a good work by a kind of false virtue or give up their way of life to the spears of temptations before completing the work. But I ask you to return to the story you had started.

**Speaker.** As I recall, I said that after the name of holy Anthony became known to the people of Padua, *because the watercourses are dried up* [Joel 1:20], they came from everywhere in large numbers to hear his word. They came from the cities, castles and villages around Padua, a large multitude of people of every age, sex and station, all of them thirsting devoutly for the word of life and confirming their salvation by a most sure faith in the power of his doctrine. They rose in the middle of the night, trying by various routes to arrive first, and, carrying lighted torches, they hurried most earnestly to the place where he was to preach. He restored peace and unity to all in conflict, gave freedom to captives, refunded by due restitution what had been gained from another by usury and violence, to the extent that *they laid at his feet* [Acts 4:35] the money from fields and homes taken as payment to richer people, and, as has been said, they restored with a prayer or the price whatever had been plundered. Also, by salutary warnings he restrained from shameful actions prostitutes well known for their dishonour of shame; he converted effectively to penance famous robbers, arsonists, thieves or those corrupted by any kind of evil. He sent such a large number of both sexes to confess their sins to priests, that neither our Friars nor other priests, who frequently accompanied him, were able to hear them. Many coming to penance assert they were moved by a divine vision; after his death others came secretly to our Friars testifying that while they slept he appeared to them; the Friars to whom this information was given are known by name.

**Listener.** I would like to know, if you can tell me, whether such a great person knew beforehand the time of his death, or what did the Lord deign to show him of future events.

**Speaker.** I do not think the day of his death was hidden from the confessor; but I think he kept it secret so that the Friars would not be desolated by news of his death, the imminent corruption of his body. On the fifteenth day before he was freed from the burden of his flesh,

when he was on a certain hill from which he could see the lovely plain of the city of Padua, he turned to the Friar who was his companion on the journey and spoke with high praise of the situation of the city and foretold that it would soon be honoured with a great honour. What honour, indeed, to Padua were the merits of his holiness, by which it was to be made famous through its association with him; we see it adorned by his merits with marvellous and singular praise. In the year 1231 from the Incarnation of the Lord, in the fourth indiction, on Friday 13 June, blessed Anthony in the city of Padua in which the Almighty increased the glory of its name through him, in Celle, a residence of the Friars, he went happily the way of all flesh to enter the dwelling of the blessed spirits.

When he went at a certain time to have some quiet in Celle, of which we have just spoken, *the hand of the Lord was heavy upon him* [1 Sam 5:6], and as the weakness of his body increased he showed many times by his gestures a kind of anxiety. When he had rested a little, he made his confession and received absolution, and then, rejoicing in spirit, began to sing loudly a hymn to the glorious Virgin, saying:

O glorious Lady,  
Raised above the stars.<sup>1</sup>

And immediately with his eyes turned towards the heavens, he looked for a longer time upwards. When asked by one of the Friars assisting him what he saw, he replied: 'I see the Lord Jesus Christ'.

When the attending Friars saw the end was close, they decided to give the servant of God the sacred anointing with oil. When, as was customary, the priest approached him for the sacred anointing, holy Anthony looked at him and said: 'There is no great need for you to do this for me: I have this anointing within me; however, I am happy with this and well pleased'.

With hands joined, he sang with the Friars almost to the end of the penitential psalms. And while for almost half an hour he continued to hold on to the spirit, his most holy soul, drawn out of the prison of his flesh, was absorbed in the abyss of brightness. The body of the one who had fallen asleep was completely unusual; when he was still alive the limbs of his body showed a natural pallor, but after his death they showed to those looking at him the white glory of the future resurrection.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the beginning of an old hymn from Lauds in the Office of the blessed Virgin Mary. See U. Chevalier, *Repertorium hymnologicum*, II, 197.

**Listener.** These are wonderful things indeed, but I think they were done by a special grace of the divine pity so that the one who found joy on earth in nothing other than *Jesus Christ and him crucified* [1 Cor 2:2], as death came closer, might see by a bodily presence, as if it were a reward, that the very goal of his desire was already secure. I confess, this causes in me sentiments of deeper admiration. I see why the merciful Lord, the kind protector of the *labourers* who had the strenuous task of caring for the special vines in the *vineyard* [Mt 20:1; 25:22] which the Lord had planted, when they had doubled the talent given to them by an effort of supererogation, the Lord drew them away quickly *from the present evil age* [Gal 1:4] and in no way allowed what was due to them to be taken away.<sup>1</sup>

### **Why some just persons die younger than others**

**Speaker.** Often divine mysteries are hidden nor can anyone, as Wisdom testifies, *learn the counsel of God* [Wis 9:13].<sup>2</sup> We can conclude, however, on the authority of sacred Scripture, that for different reasons holy people are sometimes mercifully freed from the present unhappy condition. It often happens that the souls of some of the elect, caught as they are in the corruption of the flesh, feel an inclination toward what is wrong. This can happen when they produce by a wrong law in the limbs feelings hostile to the law of the Spirit, or when an inclination of this deadly force serves what is wrong from some attraction of crime to what is illicit. Certainly, the prophet wished such things to be cleansed in a just person when he said: *Clear me from my hidden faults. Keep back your servant also from the insolent* [Ps 19:12-13]. Nevertheless the merciful God often hears the desire of the elect, when God takes them out the world giving them rest from their labours in *the glory of the children of God* [Rom 8:21]. The book of Wisdom says of the just person: *They were caught up so that evil might not change their understanding or guile deceive their souls* [Wis 4:11].

Often the kind Redeemer puts the life of certain perfect people as a model before the eyes of sinners, so that by an increase in virtues they might become like interior persons, or they might be inspired to wipe away by tears of penance and exercises of piety the blemishes resulting from evil actions. When it is clear that the wicked and those obdurate in malice cannot be drawn to amend their lives, the Lord

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<sup>1</sup> St Gregory, *Dialogues*, book 3, n. 37, vol. 39, *The Fathers of the Church*, Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1959, 184-185, proposes and solves a similar question.

<sup>2</sup> See St Ambrose, *Enarrationes in Lucam*, l. 2, n. 1 (PL 15, 1633).

sometimes decides justly that the perfect ones be taken from the world to the dwellings of the heavenly citizens. Paul says among other things in praise of the faith of the ancestors: *Destitute, persecuted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy* [Heb 11:37-38]. Because the world rejects the life of the saints as a model in life and actions, it shows itself to be unworthy to join such company.

Sometimes, however, when the enemy has been overcome and the span of this life is complete, *the bounds of which they cannot pass* [Job 14:5], the servants of God shall be admitted *carrying sheaves of justice with shouts of joy* [Ps 126:6; Mt 25:21], so that they might rejoice in never ending glory due to the dignity of their virtues; in the time of their pilgrimage they served God well with the perseverance of faithful subjects. It was said to the angel of Sardis about some perfect persons: *Yet you have still a few persons in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes; they will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy* [Rev 3:4]. Those adorned with cleanness of life as they enter the exile of this death are rightly covered with the white stole of their immortality in the eternal happiness of purity.

**Listener.** I ask you to open for me what you know of the miracles and virtues of this saint, so as to condescend usefully to my devotion as you had begun to do.

**Speaker.** I have kept silent for the sake of brevity about many and indeed great signs of holiness of the man of God whose fame has been carried far and wide. I put forward for the information of all in a surer style those things especially which shone forth after his transfer to the area of Padua, leaving out others. As is customary, the examination of these wonders was committed by the Holy See to the venerable bishop of the city and to the Priors of the Friars Preachers and of St Benedict. The process was completed with such maturity and juridical method that the reports received from those enquiring so subtly into the trustworthiness of signs, persons and the circumstances of the facts were confirmed by oath; each fact was studiously supported by evidence of what had been seen, heard, of times and places, or any other circumstance requiring the testimony of witnesses, and, destined for the reverence of the Apostolic See, they were handed on by public authority as a testimony of truth.

**1.** On the day when the body of blessed Anthony was placed in the church of the holy Mother of God with worthy praises and due honour, a certain woman, by name Cuniza, who was horribly bent, came to the place of burial supported by wooden frames called splints; on her shoulder was a large hump caused by a collection of fluids. She was so miserably bent that she was unable to walk without the support of the wooden splints. When she stayed for a little time before

the tomb of the saint, the hump disappeared before all who were watching and, throwing away the splints, she returned home.

2. In the city of Padua, a certain woman, named Riccarda, was known to almost all the citizens. For twenty years her legs had been so withered and so deformed that a hard callous joined her knees to her chest and her feet to her buttocks. One day when she came, carried on a bench, to beg with other poor people in memory of the holy father, she slept for a short time weighed down by a deep lethargy, her head bent to the ground. As she rested she heard a voice call out: 'Thanks be to God, for she has been freed'. When the woman woke she saw a girl, who had come as a hunchback but had returned restored to health by the merits of the most holy father. The woman rose so that she too might enter the place of burial to seek a cure. When she approached the entrance to the church, a seven year old boy went before her with hands joined and invited her to enter saying: 'Come, come, in the name of the Lord because you will be set free'. Following the footsteps of the boy, she dragged herself to the door of the church, but when she was in the doorway the boy disappeared; she, however, went on to the wall of the grave. While she prayed, behold two egg-like globes broke between her thigh and flank and a liquid ran out of the globes to come down below her feet, and there was a noise heard by many like a clapping of hands. Then her legs which had been dried up for twenty years were extended before the eyes of all, and as the skin softened the flesh grew back to its original condition. Putting aside the bench on which she had been carried, the woman returned home and walked with firm paces through the center of the city to the amazement of the citizens who knew her.

3. A woman named Mary once followed the mares of her father beside the river Brenz where she sat down under a walnut tree. A black man came directly to her from the river and taking her by the arms carried her quickly to another walnut tree nearby. After carrying her, he wanted to force himself upon her. When he threw her to the ground, he left her terribly broken, her chest swollen, her knee broken, and the joint of the hip pushed away from the hip so that she could return home only with the help of her father. After remaining in this broken condition for five years and more, she was taken to the tomb of the most holy father Anthony, and by his merits was restored to her former state of health. It seemed to her, when she was being cured, that a hand had gently come between the flesh and bone, and that the limbs previously racked with such pain were soothed as if by a sweet anointing.

4. Another woman named Gisla, who had been bent over for eight years, her left leg dried up and the sinews maimed, could not place the sole of her foot on the ground. Her husband, by name Marchoaldus,

carried her on horseback and placed her before the tomb of the saint to pray; immediately, lying prone in prayer she began to be deeply distressed, to the extent that she was not able to bear the excessive heat coming over her, her strength deserted her, and she would restore her spirit by breathing in cold air. Afterwards, when she begged for mercy before the tomb of the saint, the woman felt the hand of a man touching her womb and trying to lift her. She, anxious to know whose hand had touched her, opened her eyes but could see no one close to her. The woman understood then that it was a divine help which she had felt, and there and then she got up and, throwing her splints away, she departed rejoicing with her husband.

5. A girl named Agnes, with no strength in her whole body for three years, suffered from the sickness called convulsions; her intestines were restricted by excessive dryness, and as soon as she ate, she immediately vomited the undigested and hard food out of her mouth; the sickness developed to the point that she could hardly swallow a drop of spittle or anything soft. One day when she was brought and placed on the tomb of the saint, she seemed close to death as she was oppressed with extreme pain. When the pain which she felt in her whole body had lessened a little, she said to her mother who was close by that she was so hungry she would be able to swallow a whole piece of bread. The joyful mother brought her daughter home and straightaway gave her food which she kept down.

6. In Codigoro, a girl named Samaritana, in the company of other girls entered the field of her father to collect vegetables, but her knees were suddenly joined together, and she was unable to return; carried by the others she returned to her parental home. The sickness increased for three years so that she was a sorry sight as she crawled on her hands and drew herself along with her buttocks firmly on the ground. One day coming to the tomb of the saint with her mother, she made her confession and went as a suppliant to the coffin; staying there for but a short time, she was restored to her former health by the merits of the most holy father and went home walking on her own feet. When news of this came to the ears of the people of Codigoro, they sounded the bells and went to meet her as she came; with the magnificence of God made visible to the eyes of faith they praised God with due reverence.

7. Frederick, from the county of Concordia, once fell carelessly from the church of Pulcignum and was then only able to go forward or move himself about with splints on his damaged limbs. Coming, however, to the tomb of the said father he received back his former state of health after making a vow; he then cast aside the splints and walking upright returned to his home, to the wonder of all who had seen him before.

**8.** In the city of Venice there was a woman named Caesaria who for two years and even more had a withered hand and her left foot twisted diagonally; when she heard of the miracles of the holy father she hastened immediately to Padua. Unable to reach the tomb because of the large number of people, she tried to touch the place of the burial by stretching out her shin. When the people around saw the anguish of the woman (for already she was too weak to speak), they moved her from the tomb and placed her beside the wall of the church to give her some quiet; when she had been there for some time, she got up as her tiredness lessened, and went away rejoicing and giving thanks to God for the regained health of her hand and foot.

**9.** Prosdoxima, wife of Mainerius from Noventa Padovana, whose hand and both feet were withered, was carried in a shallow frame to the tomb of the blessed father. When she was lifted onto the tomb, her feet were straightened and she regained their full use as all could see. Trembling she began to open her hand a little, she held her hand out so that the guards of the tomb noticed her carefully as she closed and opened it again.

**10.** Margaret, a citizen of Padua, while sleeping soundly one night, felt that she had fallen from a height to the earth. On waking, the woman found her neck twisted, her left hand and one foot also bent, so that as she stretched out her heel she could hardly touch the ground with the tips of her toes. But when one day she was placed on the tomb of the holy father, her head with the neck straightened returned to its proper position and, with health restored to her hand and foot, she got down cured through the merits of the same father.

**Listener.** My admiration is aroused by the tenor of your story for two reasons, namely, how signs of such great virtues were completed by such a quick and sudden manifestation of events, and why some needing healing bore such bitter suffering, as you relate.

#### **On the nature of a miracle and why some sick suffer such pain**

**Speaker.** The events we have related are certainly great, inscrutable and wonderful if judged only from what can be seen by the eyes. But if we look into them with the subtler keenness of the mind, we know they can be controlled exactly as the Creator who is over all may wish; we know also that nothing can be difficult to the creative power when it wishes to do something, nor will the faculty to obey be lacking in nature when it is so desired by the One above nature. By an absolute majesty of power, God always and everywhere can do whatever God may want, even though it may seem to be difficult when outside the normal course of nature; however, the dispensation

of grace given by God<sup>1</sup> knows no restraining difficulty, provided there be no resistance in the subject to whom the gifts of God's goodness are given in mercy. It has to be noted carefully that not everything which is regarded by people as marvelous is judged by scientists to be the work of a miraculous power. There is no small difference in the concept of a miracle which is a dispensation from the ordinary pattern inherent in things from the beginning, that is, the ordinary course of nature, and something which is above or even outside nature. For what, as we have said, is in accord with the ordinary nature of something, the ordinary course of nature, is not properly to be called a miracle, wonderful or a wonder. However, those things done with the permission of God but which are contrary to the ordinary course of nature, for example, to bring the dead to life, to give sight to the blind and such things, these rightly are given the name of miracle; by a superior power they bring back a state or faculty which persons, once deprived of them, could never recover by themselves. Things can be listed as above nature when nature obedient to the Creator is raised beyond its capabilities so that it extends the limits of its capability in a way greatly distant from it by nature: such a wonder, not a miracle, is the work of the Incarnation, because it perfects not by a contrary course but by raising the nature benefited. Those things can be said to be outside nature, which, although hidden from the bodily senses, do have some foundation and order in nature. That the magicians of Pharaoh turned their staffs into snakes [Ex 7:12]<sup>2</sup> was not, according to the opinion of a Saint, a miracle or a wonder, but a certain curiosity, something unknown to the audience; they brought forth, God allowing, powers hiding in the elements of the world and mastered by the ministry of demons. Leaving aside the Incarnation, it is often seen that, by the ministry of magicians and demons, in accord with the order of nature, hidden powers come together, given the right circumstances of time, according to their own ways and purposes and something living is shown to the senses.

You asked in the last part of your question why some persons endured such suffering to be cured. This is necessary for them either because of a lack of faith or for the wrong of a prior guilt for which they have not been fully punished; these may then be expiated more effectively by other bodily punishments, which, as I have said, a

<sup>1</sup> St Ambrose, *Enarrationes in Lucam*, l. 2, n. 19 (PL 15, 1640).

<sup>2</sup> The opinion of St Augustine followed here by the writer, can be seen in his *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum*, l. 2, n. 21 (PL 34, 602). Of the Scholastics who discussed this question worthy of note are Alexander of Hales, *Sententiarum*, p. II, q. 43, (ed. Lugdun. 1516), and especially St Bonaventure, *II Sententiarum*, dist. 7, p. 2, a. 2, q. 2, *Opera omnia*, (2, 200-203); dist. 18, art. 1, q. 2, ad 5, *ibid.*, (2, 437).

sluggish faith or the guilt of a crime committed or both together at the same time show that they are less ready to receive grace. So that what we have said may be seen in the clearer light of discussion, we put forward two people who were cured in the Gospels by the power of our Redeemer. Of the blind person, as Mark says, to whom Jesus gave sight with the use of spittle, the evangelist adds: Jesus asked him: *Can you see anything?*; he replied: *I can see people, but they are like trees walking*; and he added: *Then Jesus laid his hands on him and his sight was restored and he saw everything clearly* [Mk 8:23-25]. Why is it that after the use of spittle and the first imposing of hands the blind person could not see clearly, other than a clear indication that imperfect faith was followed by an incomplete illumination of healing? Jesus cannot be thought to have been less powerful in the first imposition of hands than in the second; from the method of the cure the heavenly master showed that, as the merit of faith increases, there is a more suitable effect of perfect freedom in the sacrament. Mark says of the deaf and dumb person healed by the word of our Redeemer: *Jesus said to the father: If you are able! - All things can be done for the one who believes*; the father answered: *I believe, help my unbelief* [Mk 9:22-29]. As if to say clearly, I understand from your words, Lord, that to obtain the grace of healing for my son faith is needed; I see faith is less evident in the one asking, so, you who are merciful in the abundance of your kindness, by my prayer increase faith greatly with merits, so that as a consequence I may be able more effectively to beg for what I ask. And then is said: *After crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse*. It is clear that to cast someone out of a house requires a strength of more power than to stop someone from entering a house to do harm. Could not, therefore, the one who had the power in his body to evict with force the deaf and dumb demon from the possessed person, have prevented the departing demon from convulsing the one languishing? But the bitterness of the suffering in the body of the one to be cured taught that the health, merited by the piety of faith, was held back somewhat by a guilt of past sin yet to be expiated.

**Listener.** I ask you again, if you remember, to continue as you had begun to do and tell me something about the miracles of the said holy father.

**11.** A youth named Tridentinus, had a bone growing out from the spine on his back, and for a space of five years as the hump increased he went forward by holding his hands on the knees. Supported by a splint he came to the tomb of the saint. When his mother full of faith had him lifted up a little onto the coffin, the hump diminished immediately and he threw away the splint, got down and stood upright; with his mother he returned home joyful and full of praise.

**12.** A man by the name of Veridotus, crushed by an extreme sickness from broken limbs, developed a hump, to the extent that he could move only with his head almost touching the ground and when held up by supporting splints. Brought by his mother to the tomb of the holy father he began immediately to be distressed with such pain that, with his whole body so enervated, he sweated all over. However, the sweating lessened slightly and in front of a large number of people the man stretched out his limbs and, through the merits of the saint, the hump became flat and immediately disappeared.

**13.** In the town of Treviso a woman named Venetiana for more than two years had a hump like bread on her chest; when it was necessary for her to move, her head rested on her knees. She came to the tomb of the holy father where for three days she persevered in prayer to the saint. The health she asked for was restored, the hump was made flat and her head raised up; she went away thanking God and blessed Anthony.

**14.** Solangna of Montagana, enervated for a year and one month, made a vow to the most holy father that she would have herself carried to his tomb to ask for healing. One night when she was asleep in her bed, the bed shook with a clattering noise like the stamping of a foot; frightened she got up and kept watch. After a little while the frame of the bed was shaken for a second time; as she signed herself with the sign of the cross, the woman called out: "Who is touching the bed?" She heard a voice say to her: 'Sign yourself boldly'. She said: 'Who are you, Lord?' he said: 'I am Anthony'. The woman cried out to him: 'Saint Anthony, free me!' He answered: 'Look, you are healed'. In the morning the woman got up healed and, through the merits of the saint straightaway felt no burden; she remained healthy.

**15.** Bartholomew from Piove di Sacco had been dumb from birth and for fourteen years was uncoordinated in his whole body because of paralysis. He came as a suppliant to the tomb of the holy father because of a vow he had made. Full of faith and devotion he persisted there in prayer; when the bond of his tongue was loosened he praised God, and he who came carried on the back of another man, went home on his own feet.

**16.** In the area of Ferrara a woman named Mary for four years had to endure a continuous shaking of her head due to a breakdown in her whole body. She came to the place of burial of the holy father and remained there in devout prayer. Suddenly her nerves began to coordinate and her head rested from its usual shaking; before many people the woman got up, stood still on her own feet and, restored to full health, went home praising God.

**17.** A man named Sconitus from Befiore whose feet were decayed and swollen from a growth of knotted gout, came to the tomb of the

holy father carried on the back of a man. He went to confession and accepted his penance from the Friar who sent him away and he was carried to the tomb of the saint; there, when he had prayed devoutly to the saint, he was immediately healed and went back to the Friar to whom he had confessed; the Friar wondered at the extreme suddenness of the cure and made him walk here and there through the cloister.

**18.** Ermerina from Vicenza for five years had no strength in her feet; when she had to move herself for some necessity she moved her body back and forth with shaking movements. She came to the tomb of the holy father, stretched herself out in prayer, and immediately merited on that day to have the health she wanted.

**19.** Another woman, by name Bilia, weakened in her whole body for three years, came in distress with trembling steps to the coffin of the holy father. When she had persevered in prayer daily before the tomb, she fell sick with fever and a frightening shaking came upon her. Seeing this, the men and women with her wept; but when she was carried outside the door of the church she regained her breath a little, the fever lessened and the shaking also stopped; with her former health restored she went home with joy.

**Listener.** From what I hear, the faithful worthily and, what is not less, usefully ask for the help of the servants of God from whose mediation such wonderful gifts of benefits are often invoked.

#### **How useful it is to pray to the saints**

**Speaker.** Clearly, as you say, it is fruitful for us to *lift the eyes* of our mind *to the hills from where help* comes to us [Ps 121:1], but it is in no way enough for those caring for our requests by their intercession to grant what we ask for, without also giving an abundance of piety more useful to the petitioners than they would ever think to ask for. Often we ask the saints for something temporal, for example, for children, heirs, even moderate atmospheric temperature, fertility of fruits and often also for bodily health. When the saints by their intercession obtain what is suitable for us, or more often when what we had hoped to get through them is denied to us as being harmful, they add the grace of working well, often also offering forgiveness of sins from the Lord. Certainly a sign that one asking, by the merits of the one praying and of the one giving, often receives more than is asked for, is indicated by Peter and John [Acts 3:2-10]. When the lame man begged *at the gate of the temple called the Beautiful Gate so that he might receive as an alms* something in the hand, Peter and John gave him a bodily alms above what he expected and a spiritual health of faith which he had not requested. What does

the lame person represent other than a sinner who, by imperfect faith and work, is cut off from the state of virtue as if by the loss of both feet? Hence Elijah says of some sinners: *How long will you go limping with two different opinions?* [1 Kings 18:21]. These sinners wanted to please the Lord and Baal in both faith and work, but they gave to neither the required worship as if they were lame in both feet. In the opinion of some people, the lame person is well described as a paralytic, that is, a sinner who, thinking himself to be too weak to take hold of what is above, does not fear to delight harmfully in what is below. But such a one, provided he regards the flesh of his imperfection as a loss, immediately shows compunction in tears, sees what is lacking in his vows, and prays as a beggar to perfect or holy people. This is indicated in the text: *And he fixed his attention on them expecting to receive something in the hand from them.* Peter correctly said to him: *I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you.* This is as if Peter had said openly about the request: You ask for the benefits of a temporal gift, which, because such is regarded as nothing by the saints in comparison with a spiritual good, I give you gifts more useful than what you ask for, and I do this in the presence of all who are passing by: *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk.* Here one should note carefully that when prayers are to be answered the name of the Saviour is suitably put first: Jesus Christ is the origin and end of all grace and health. *Stand up*, he said, *and walk*; as if, he would say openly in words: Lift yourself up by a firm decision of the mind from earthly and temporal gains to what is eternal, and going forward walk by doing more that is required in good works. So it is aptly added: *And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong.* Often in the task of going forward they see reluctance in those whom they moved forward by their prayers and multiplied intercessions; they raise the right hand as a hand held out in intercession to the heights of virtues, and make firm by a strengthening gift the ankles of thoughts and the feet of the works of perseverance.

**Listener.** I admit I am pleased with what you have said above of the intercessions of the saints by which you have brought out more openly their concern towards us and how useful are their gifts. Now, therefore, do not delay to go on with what you began so that what remains you may be able, as I desire, to tell quickly.

**Speaker. 20.** A certain Friar of our Order, by name Theodoric, who had lost the sight in his left eye for two years, came from the area of Puglia as a suppliant to the tomb of the holy father Anthony. After he had stayed for some time with the Friars in Padua, he begged earnestly for the grace of healing before the tomb of the saint. Finally,

with his sight restored he returned, rejoicing and full of praise, to the area from which he come.

**21.** A German woman named Caroline, for seven years deprived of the use of both eyes, came devoutly to the tomb of the holy father, where for a short time she remained in prayer before the coffin; with her sight restored by heaven she returned home joyful and full of praise.

**22.** A girl named Auriema, deprived for a year and a half of sight in her eyes, was brought to the tomb of the holy father seeking the grace of healing. When the cloth covering the coffin was applied to her eyes, her eyelids opened through the saint's merits and immediately she received the light she had longed for daily.

**23.** Leonard from Corniglianum for three years was totally deprived of sight in one eye and was becoming so blind in the other that he could only distinguish people he knew or did not know by the sound of their voices. He came to the tomb of the reverend father to ask for the favour of regaining his health; when he had spent a short time in prayer before the coffin he went away with the use of both eyes restored.

**24.** Flos de Gemma from Loreto had for seven years lost completely the use of her left eye; she came to the coffin of the blessed father Anthony, was given the sight she longed for and went back home giving thanks to God with joy.

**25.** A woman named Alexia had been deprived completely of the use of both eyes for five years; she spent time daily at the tomb of the man of God and through his merits she received her sight.

**26.** A certain Rollandus, whose family name was Bolgarus, had been deaf for twenty years from an extremely grave and developing sickness of his head; standing devoutly before the tomb of the holy father his former health was restored and rejoicing he returned home.

**27.** Leonard of Venice for four years was totally deaf due to a drying up of the fluids in his ears; one day when he came in humble devotion to the tomb of the man of God, he regained straightaway the desired hearing.

**28.** Another beggar, named . . . . , who had been deaf for two years, came to the place of the grave of holy Anthony to beg for the favour of a return to health; when he persisted there asking for mercy, he was restored to full health and went away joyful and praising God.

**29.** A woman with the name of Michelota had been dumb for eleven years, unable to say anything at all; destitute, she was languishing in the energies of her whole body. When she heard from others of the wonders shown through the merits of the holy father, she had herself brought to his tomb to ask for health; when she lay before

the coffin asking with the utmost devotion for mercy, she was freed by the merits of the same father and departed.

**30.** A man from Cividale dei Friuli, sad over the loss of the use of his tongue, came to the coffin of the most holy father with the assistance of his mother. When he remained devoutly before the tomb, he regained that day the lost use of speech.

**31.** A citizen of Padua, named Peter, had a daughter named Paduana; at the age of four she could not use her feet, but, crawling like a serpent she moved by using her hands. People said that she often rolled about suffering from epilepsy and fell over. One day, however, when the holy father was still alive and was traveling through the area, the saint met her father who began to ask him to deign to bless the girl whom he was carrying in his arms; because of his faith the saint stopped and blessed her, then went away. When the father of the girl returned home he forced her to walk here and there through the house supported by a small frame; she so improved in a short time, that she needed no support nor from the time when the saint blessed her did she experience any suffering from epilepsy.

**32.** A boy named Simeon, shaken severely with the sufferings of epilepsy, often pressed his face flat on the ground: shaking so miserably he seemed completely like a dead person from the harm done. Anxious for the health of her son, his mother brought him to the tomb of the most holy father, and after praying there returned home with her son not suffering even the least symptom of the sickness.

**33.** In Padua, a woman named Michelota, suffered from epilepsy and from the strength of her sickness lost her sight so that often she seemed close to death. Her mother brought her to the tomb of the saint for the gift of a cure and, when she was lifted up for a short time on to the coffin, immediately she regained the use of her eyes, and from that time never suffered from epilepsy.

**Listener.** It is certainly clear that the following prophecy of Isaiah applies not only to the times of the Apostles and the martyrs: *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy* [Isa 35:5-6].

### **On the power of miracles given to the Church**

**Speaker.** The prophet showed that this prophecy pertains especially to the fulness of time when the mystery of the incarnate Word effected the salvation of the world, for the prophet said immediately before the prophecy you quote: *He will come and save you* [Isa 35:4]. However, Jesus Christ, the mediator of God and people, on the evidence of the Gospel, promised the same power to the

posterity of believers: *Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do* [Jn 14:12]. It is clear that not only to the beginnings of the infant early mother Church, but also to the end of the world for a variety of reasons, and according to the needs of places and times, did he give, as we have said, the power of working miracles. This power is given to those at least who show the dignity of the name of Christian by a clear confirmation of their fulness of faith, character and deeds. Greater also to some extent than signs of visible virtues, the saints act in accord with the guarantee of the promise of Christ. They do this when by a convincing persuasion of the word of God, by the example of a more perfect life, or sometimes by the intercession of prayers, they enlighten those who are blind in their mind to an understanding of the truth; they do this when they open powerfully the ears of those condemned by obstinacy to obedience to the commandments; when they lift up those shut off from higher things by imperfection of thoughts and actions; when they open in confession the mouths of those who were previously silent; when they clean lepers from the disease of such a putrid nature; when they give the peace of meekness to those raving from a diabolical cruelty; and when they change those dead and stinking from the poison of sin to the hope of spiritual life, *for both the present life and the life to come* [1 Tim 4:8]. All of these, when compared with wonderful signs, are in no way thought worthy of admiration by the wicked and those wise in the ways of the flesh. For the merciful judge, however, the work of converting an impious person from sin is regarded with higher esteem than to have created, even though equal power is needed for both.<sup>1</sup>

**Listener.** We read in the Gospel that Christ the Lord raised three people from the dead: I ask you to tell me if you have been able to find anything similar about this saint regarding the dead.

**Speaker. 34.** In the region of Padua, a woman went out near her home to get firewood; when she returned home she found her small daughter, who had been following her, in a ditch full of water and mud, drowning with her face upturned. The groaning mother hurried, pulled her out of the ditch of sediment and placed her on the bank. Not a few people came in sadness to see what had happened and a man among the group lifted up her legs, with her head downwards, trying to get her to spit out the water she had swallowed; but this did not bring back her voice nor consciousness, because her lips and cheeks were pressed together and hope of saving her faded. Finally, the mother made a vow and promised that she would bring a wax image

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<sup>1</sup> St Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John 55-111*, Tractate 72, n. 3, *The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 90, Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1994, 82.

of her daughter to the tomb of holy Anthony. Immediately after this, in the sight of all standing there, the girl moved her lips and when someone put a finger in her mouth she spat out straightaway the water she had swallowed, and through the merits of the holy father came to life warmed by a life giving warmth.

**35.** Something similar happened in the town of Commacchio. A man there named Dominic left his house one day to do some work and his small son followed his footsteps. When he had gone a short distance from the house, he looked back but could see no one. Stunned, he looked everywhere then saw his son underwater in a ditch; he hurried and immediately drew him out and gave him, suffocated as he was, to the mother. Groaning, she immediately made a vow invoking the help of the most holy father with all her heart, and was gladdened to receive her son back alive through the saint's merits.

**36.** In the town of Monopolis in Puglia, near the house of the Friars, a youth was digging the ground when the bank caved in from above, fatally trapping him; when another boy saw that he was buried by earth, he ran, shouting out to his mother what had happened. As soon as the mother heard this she began to beat her face and tear her hair, and hurried with tears to the house of the Friars calling out in a miserable voice: 'Hurry, Friars! Hurry! Help me because the earth has covered my son'. On hearing this, the Friars hurrying with mattocks and other tools began to dig where they saw that the earth had caved in; all this time the mother of the youth continued to call out: 'Holy Anthony, give me back my son!' As they dug they found his feet turning black and blue from the weight of earth, and his buttocks bruised by the earth; others, however, with hoes reached the hat he had worn and made three openings. When they lifted the boy from under the earth he seemed to be alive but severely crushed. To the Friars asking how he had been able to live under the landslide, he replied: 'Blessed Anthony held his hand over my mouth'. Many bystanders heard this and gave due thanks to God and to holy Anthony.

**Listener.** Certainly, *God is wonderful in his saints* [Ps 67:36 DRB; 68:36 NRSV] by whose merits God mercifully calls back to this present life those who have cast off the clothing of flesh which, in accord with the quality of the works of the saints, God kept in hidden places in distress or rest.

#### **On four types of dead and the diversity among those raised from the dead**

**Speaker.** Although we read in the pages of the new and old Testaments that many were raised from death, without wanting to

prejudice a sounder opinion, we believe one must acknowledge that this is not so for every kind of dead person. It is clear in the opinions of the Fathers that the merits of the deceased are of four distinct kinds.

i. They point out that the souls of some of the elect, because of the dignity of their virtues, are already endowed with the blessing of such happiness and the divine gift, that in no way would they wish to be hindered from the close contemplation of truth by a covering of some corruption; nor would they want others to be able to force them because of the need of dear ones or any necessity. Otherwise, were it possible for pressure to be applied violently to the will of one freed and confirmed in glory by grace, such a one would be deficient in the perfection of beatitude. Accordingly, if we read that any of these have appeared to someone, this is often an admonition to the faithful by the merciful God, sometimes a compassion on prayers offered by the devout, however, we remember none who remained subject to the servitude of the present misery or corruption.

ii. The Fathers declare that the souls of some damned, after leaving the body, are delivered with such security of justice to places of punishment, because of the quality of their deeds, that in no way can they any longer seek out remedies for themselves from anywhere; while they were living they despised getting for themselves future alleviation. These could be recalled to this present life by the divine right hand with the majesty of power, but inflexible justice blocks this, and we do not read in the canonical Scriptures of this happening to any such person.

iii. Between these two extremes there are others who are mediocre in good or mediocre in evil.<sup>1</sup> Those who are mediocre in good retain some imperfection of justice and are held back in purgatory from the heavenly mansions, so that only by their own previous merits or by the prayers of others are they able with complete freedom to cross over. Only by the kindness of God granting mercy, and sometimes by prayers offered, do I think that many of this kind of dead persons have been called back to gain a richer abundance of merits or a payment of a sacrifice offered to wipe away with certainty the present punishments.

iv. Of those moderately evil, some of the main Fathers feel that, for the mitigation of their condemnation, the prayers of those dear to them

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<sup>1</sup> The double expression 'mediocre in good' and 'mediocre in evil' was already used by P. Lombard, *IV Sententiarum*, dist. 45, c. 2, n. 2, 525. This does not come from the teaching of Augustine stated in *Enchiridion*, c. 110 (PL 40, 283). Augustine has only a triple division of those sleeping when he refers to the 'very good', the 'not very evil', and the 'very evil'; by 'not very evil' he understood the dead who are in purgatory.

or also the prayers of the saints may be applied to them after death;<sup>1</sup> without violating faith, however, this can probably but piously be doubted. I do not know whether any such can be brought back from hell to a condition in which they can gain merit; but if my reasoning is sound, I hold that it is to be completely denied, saving always the authority of the infinite power.

Also among those brought back to life it can be shown that there is a great diversity, apart from what has been said already. Sometimes, from the abundance of the grace of the merciful God, the souls of some elect before the final judgment are so united to their bodies, that in an inseparable bond of future union which is the foretaste of glory for all after the judgment, they can never be separated by any disturbance of strife. Many of the main Fathers reasonably think in this way on the basis of the witnesses to the risen Christ and as certain of the saints affirm with due piety of the glorious Virgin, the Mother of God. Often not simply but for a set time the souls of some are called back to life, so that through the greater merits of a holy person, as I have said, one may pray for the benefit of others, and afterwards obtain release from the sentence of death for a set time; this can be seen in Lazarus and Tabitha [Acts 9:36] and in many others in both the old and new Testaments, and it is something clearly affirmed in the writings of many holy people. Lastly, the bodies of some are raised for a time not for them to acquire merits for themselves but to illustrate some purpose, such as how the soul assists movement in the limbs of the body: as Moses, after being with the transfigured Lord and having given his witness, put aside the body he had taken up for a time; and, according to some, Samuel the prophet by divine will announcing to Saul his fate, after striking dismay in a contemporary and a seer, left the body he had taken up and went back to the hidden places.

**Listener.** I like indeed, I like in my ignorance, in the judgment of my opinion, what you have brought forward concerning the risen dead, as I see you have compressed prudently the questions and writings in a brief summary. But now I ask you to continue and if you remember anything to be told add it to what you have said.

**Speaker. 37.** A soldier from Pizzighettone, named Aleardinus, from the age of reason was deceived by heretical teachings. He had heard of the wonders of the said father and came one day with his wife and family to Padua. While sitting at table with others the conversation turned to the miracles of Anthony. When the others

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<sup>1</sup> Of this opinion which was the opinion of P. Lombard, loc. cit., Praepositinus and others, see St Bonaventure, *IV Sententiarum*, dist. 46, art. 1, q. 1 and 2, *Opera omnia* (4, 956-960).

affirmed that what was said about the saint of God was true, he emptied the glass drinking cup in his hand and said almost in these words: 'If he whom you call a saint will keep this cup unbroken, I will admit that the other things of which you are trying to persuade me about him are true'. He threw the drinking cup on to the pavement from the seat in which he was seated for the meal and, marvellous to relate, the glass resisted being thrown on to the stone and remained unbroken, as those near him in the room could see. On seeing the miracle, the glass cup led him to penance; the energetic soldier sprang up, took the unbroken glass with him and recorded in order what had been said and done. After confessing his sins, he accepted with humble devotion the penance imposed on him and firmly clinging to Christ, constantly preached the power of the saint.

**Listener.** Since it is written: *Do not put the Lord your God to the test* [Mt 4:7], I wonder greatly why the glass, which the one mocking grace had thrown down, would remain unbroken.

#### **On various effects of miracles**

**Speaker.** Often, contrary to the faith and merits of the wicked, God permits or rather works many wonders which, although the wicked are ignorant by whom they are done, become *vessels of mercy* [Rom 9:23 DRB] and an edification of piety; sometimes *from the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness* of Christ [Rom 5:17] they mercifully invite the tempters themselves to penance as is clear in the example just given, or, by a secret judgment blind those who mock grace and despise God's power; often also they cause a purging of the infidelity which was in them.

**38.** A cleric from Anguillara Sabazia, named Guidotus, was one day in the room of the lord Bishop of Padua when witnesses were giving testimony on the miracles of the most holy father, but he laughed privately. On the following night he began to be distressed by an extreme pain in his whole body, so he thought that without doubt the judgment of death was imminent for him. Regarding himself unworthy of mercy, he went to his mother and humbly begged her in her faith to make a vow to the saint so that he might merit to receive the grace of health. When this was done, the sick cleric recovered before daybreak, and he who had laughed without faith at the witnesses of truth, himself became a public witness of the truth, and preached the glory of Christ.

**39.** On a stormy day about twenty six men and women together came to Saint Hilary sailing in a ship for Venice. At the hour of Compline they reached an opening beside Saint George of Alega, when a most severe storm began, and they tried to take refuge in the

place just mentioned. As the storm raged, they were carried helpless to places unknown to them; from above, darkness, wind and such heavy rain came upon them that they despaired completely of reaching safety. They confessed their sins to a priest among them and were absolved; they lamented with shouts and tears and made vows earnestly to God and to blessed Anthony. As soon as they had made their vows the storm around the ship subsided; however, in the surrounding darkness none of them knew where they were or where they should go. Then a light shone out from the ship and went ahead of the weeping travellers. To their joy it led them to Small Saint Mark near Venice. When they reached there, torn from the hand of death by the merits of the most holy Father, immediately the light which had led them disappeared from sight and no longer led them as they had reached safety.

**Listener.** It seems to me I have heard of something similar happening to blessed Nicholas at a time of shipwreck.<sup>1</sup>

#### **It is neither easy nor safe to compare the merits of the saints**

**Speaker.** I think it is difficult to compare the merits of the saints, nor do I consider it to be safe. For if we base our judgment of differences on the evidence of visible signs, we often find that some saints worked lesser, even fewer or no miracles at all before the eyes of people, and yet they are known, according to common judgment, to have shown signs of greater perfection in life and conduct. Therefore, if you think worthy of admiration what we read to have occurred at the time when blessed Nicholas was saved from shipwreck, I report no less a miracle which, I recall, I found among the approved deeds of the holy father.

**40.** A woman of Mons-Silex journeyed to Padua with her husband, in the company of other women, and showed the joy she expected by her words and laughter; her husband had promised her quite recently what she had requested, namely, to take her and visit with her the shrine of blessed James. Wishing to moderate her joy and laughter as well, he said to his wife: ‘Why do you pour out in joy so many words and laughs, since you are deceived by a vain hope and act in an unfitting manner? Know that I have completely changed my intention and in no way will I set out for where you want to go’. When the husband persisted in annoying her greatly with such words, the woman after long periods of silence, finally with changed expression said to the one rebuking her: ‘Unless you complete in deed the

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<sup>1</sup> See B. Mombritius, *Sanctuarium seu vitae sanctorum*, Paris 1910, II, p. 300; Surius, *Historiae seu vitae sanctorum*, Turin, 1880, XII, 184.

promised task of pilgrimage, know that I am to be submerged in the name of Jesus Christ and of blessed Anthony in these waters which flow by us'. But, not taking her words seriously, he more forcefully called her stupid to her face, denying constantly that he would fulfill the promise. With her trust and hope completely frustrated the unhappy woman on her own initiative threw herself into the water, after calling on the name of blessed Anthony. The women travelling with her saw her turning over in the middle of the river, and although astonished at the very strong current, forgetting feminine modesty, with limbs and all their clothes soaked, they drew her, already submerged, out of the water. She was brought out and placed on the bank, and certainly what I tell is wonderful! The other women wrung their clothes to get rid of the abundance of water, while on the bank of the river she was found without a thread of her clothes wet. While we attribute such an action to stupidity rather than to virtue, we believe the merits of the most holy father before God had been able to ensure that the woman was kept unharmed in the middle of the river; we know Anthony had always been a friend of true simplicity even though the simplicity of the woman was stupid.

**Listener.** It is clear that the merits of the saints sometimes direct the vows of the simple; the saints often grant petitions made for the usefulness or correction of the powerful, with God working through them.

#### **That the intercession of the saints benefits us in various ways**

**Speaker.** As you state, I am not in doubt that the requests of the saints are always carried out for the benefit of those asking, whether by denying or doing what is asked. Often however, when it is not expedient, for reasons of place or time, to grant to the one praying what is asked, God allows, for the correction of those asking indiscreetly, that many things be given. Among examples of this, I remember one example granted to a woman and I include it with other deeds of the saint.

**41.** A servant sister, by name Oliva, of the Order of Poor Ladies, before the body of the most holy father was buried, came to pray and kissed his hand; among other things she asked that all the punishments merited by her sins be inflicted on her now by God and that no further punishments be kept for later. After praying, the woman returned to the monastery; immediately through her whole body she was tormented most severely and was unable to bear the immensity of the pain; she greatly disturbed the other sisters with her cries. About nightfall on the following day, when she had recovered a little, she went to the refectory together with the other sisters; seated at the table

with the others she began to be distressed with repeated pain to the extent that no one could eat their food; like a woman giving birth she writhed this way and that on the table and shouted. The Abbess ordered her to be taken to the infirmary and she who had asked in her vows to be afflicted with pain, now begged with many prayers for a remedy from the pain. Finally, remembering a woman who had hidden away in her home a piece of the habit of the saint, the woman came and placed it on her body, and without delay all the pain went away.

**42.** A woman named Iuvitta, from Trimegon, heard of the wonders done at the tomb of the holy father and was stirred with the strongest desire to go there. She was not able to go, because she had to put to flight sparrows insistent for a little of the white bread which she made for the harvest; she had been appointed the guardian of the bread. Coming one day to the castle in which the small breads were prepared, she made a vow to Saint Anthony that, if he would keep the bread safe from the sparrows, she would visit his tomb nine times. When she had made the vow, straightaway a large flock of the said birds in one column left the castle, nor could she see even one of them upon the willows; in fact none remained searching for bread.

**Listener.** Do you not think that the saints grant the vows and offerings made to them because the saints themselves do not need temporal gifts?

### **On fidelity in observing vows**

**Speaker.** Since it is written: *When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it; for he has no pleasure in fools. Fulfill what you vow. It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not fulfill it* [Eccl 5:4], I believe one must hold that, what the saints know is displeasing to their Lord, could not be pleasing to them. For often by withholding a cure they are investigating what is clearly promised in the vows of the faithful and what should be done.

**43.** A boy named Henry from Padua endured for fifteen days extreme pain from a swollen neck. In her anxiety his mother vowed to the saint to bring a waxen head and neck to his tomb. On a certain day she brought her son to the tomb of the most holy father, and immediately on his return home health was restored to his neck. However, the mother neglected to fulfill the vow she had promised, and the boy's neck began to swell again and he was distressed with the former pain; the mother conscious of her guilt was sorry and brought the waxen head and neck to the tomb of the saint. On doing this, the tumour in the neck suddenly went away as did the pain, and within a few days the boy was restored to full health.

**Listener.** Truly, you relate many and wonderful things; but I ask, do not be reluctant to tell anything else which you remember of such deeds.

**Speaker. 44.** Bartholomew, a soldier from Champrond-en-Perchet, had a daughter who was troubled with sickness from a stone; at certain times of the year she barked like a dog from the severity of the pressure. Her mother, hurting with compassion for the extreme pain of her daughter, made a vow in humble prayer to blessed Anthony, asking him to deign to restore health to her daughter. Once the vow had been made, the daughter immediately passed a small stone and experienced no further pain from the former sickness.

What I have said and many other signs which the Lord of majesty deigned to work through his servant Anthony *are not written in this book* [Jn 20:30]. I have selected these from the many and written but little so as to add to his praise and provoke an interest in reading by the brevity of the style. For if *every one of his signs were written down* [Jn 21:25], I fear it might produce a scruple of doubt in the minds of the weak from the considerable difficulty and the unaccustomed size of the work.

## II.

ON FRIAR BENEVENUTUS WHO WAS FROM GUBBIO AND IS BURIED IN CORNETO<sup>1</sup>

**Listener.** I have heard often of the fame of other Friars of our Order who have done deeds worthy of admiration; not wanting to be uncertain of these I beg you to go on opening up for me anything you know for sure of such deeds.

**Speaker.** There was a person, by name Benevenutus, from the region of Gubbio who, in accord with the meaning of his name, was endowed with the blessing of a divine gift; his was the grace of a venerable life, outstanding in the uprightness of his conduct, and he left to those who came after him an eminent example of a holy way of life. While he had not been educated in school [see Lk 7:15], he showed the power of words in actions rather than in speech, for he lived *blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord* [Lk 1:6 and see 24:19]. Finally, faced with a perfect opportunity for salvation, he affirmed clearly in what he did, that what he cherished in his pious heart was to put aside the delights of this world, and to strive with the whole force of his mind to join himself to the footsteps of glorious father Francis.

What things? Received into the Order of Friars Minor, immediately the man of God showed evidence of his humility. On the command of holy father Francis he humbly subjected himself to serve lepers, offering the duties of human decency to them, often washing with his hands their feet and bodies and, putting aside any disgust, wiped away the discharge flowing from the ulcers on their diseased limbs. He had the highest regard for the virtue of obedience so that ready and energetic he hastened to carry out without delay all the commands of his superiors, nor would he ever refuse an obedience imposed on him, as stated by those who saw it.

In sickness he showed a wonderful virtue of patience to all who saw him, to the extent that in no way did he show the least sign of disturbance; rather, according to the statement of Paul [2 Cor 12:10], he considered it to be something glorious to be sick in the external body, asserting he was then stronger in action and powerful; he showed that he held the power of Christ remaining as a guest continuously in his heart.

In his zeal for most holy poverty he made use only of the barest necessities of food and clothing and in his pious observance of what is right he kept the quiet of silence. He abounded in feelings of pity for the afflicted, the poor and the sick; in a sympathy of brotherly love he deplored the faults of others as if they were his own. Committed to

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<sup>1</sup> Known today as Tarquinia.

holy contemplation he tried to change his efforts at prayers into the concerns of tears; and although he often spent the night in prayer, he kept the custom of not appearing in public until the third hour, lest the delights of the sweetness he had experienced might be changed by work or seem to be lessened. As affirmed by others, the servant of God was so upright that there was *no childish thing* [Tob 1:4 DRB] in his words or actions nor did he show any sign of shallowness; on the contrary, he progressed with a grace of wonderful seriousness, and edified all who saw him as a mirror of virtue in praiseworthy speech and as an example of edification.

I do not know all the deeds done by this admirable person but, from the trustworthy testimony of worthy Friars and the truthful depositions of sworn witnesses, I have understood the few deeds here presented for the sake of brevity as a foretaste. How great his merit was with God, is evident from the wonders of his actions so that, as will be clear from what follows, the power of the Creator does not cease to act in Corneto in the province of Puglia.

To provide readers with a fuller trust in miracles, I have presented in these pages the names of the examiners recorded by the Apostolic See and at the same time I have shown the form of the commission, so that, like a lamp giving such bright light on the lampstand [Mt 5:15] of the Christian religion, the truth of his deeds might shine for all gathered in the unity of faith within the home of the Church, and that no grounds of suspicion of deceit be left for those outside the Church.

In the year 1236 from the Incarnation of the Lord, in the month of May, we, by the grace of God humble bishops, namely, R.<sup>1</sup> of Melfi, Risandus<sup>2</sup> of Molfetta, and Bonus<sup>3</sup> of Venusia, received the following commission from the Apostolic See:

‘Gregory bishop, servant of the servants of God, to my brother bishops of Melfi, Molfetta and Venusia health and apostolic blessing. *God is wonderful in his saints* [Ps 67:36 DRB; 68:35 NRSV]. To make clear the power of the divine might in a wonderful way and bring about in mercy the work of our salvation, God frequently honours on earth his faithful who after the completion of their work have been crowned in heaven; God does this by working signs and wonders in their memory, and so heretical perversity is confounded and the Catholic faith confirmed. We, therefore, as we should but not as much as we should, thank the omnipotent God for what has been done in our day to confirm the Catholic faith and confound heretical perversity by God *giving new signs and powerfully working other wonders* [Sir 36:6], by adorning with miracles those who held to the Catholic faith in heart, speech and actions. The beloved clerics and

<sup>1</sup> Richerius. See Eubel, *Hierarchia catholica mediæ ævi*, I. 349; *Acta sanctorum*, ad diem 27 iunii, n. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Not listed in Eubel, loc. cit., 350.

<sup>3</sup> See Eubel, loc. cit., 551; *Acta Sanctorum*, loc. cit.

people of Corneto have indicated to us in their messages and letters through the beloved sons, namely, the deacon Bealsamus, the judge James, and also some bishops and religious, that the Lord has given so much glory to the pious memory of Friar Benevenutus of the Order of Friars Minor that his tomb shines with many and great miracles; it would then be unworthy not to invoke him as one of the saints. For this reason we humbly ask for evidence to be sent to us of the miracles the Lord works through him. Because in such a holy business one may not proceed unless endowed with due maturity and seriousness, and because in the Lord we have full confidence in your discretion, we commission you by this letter to select religious and God fearing persons so that together you can enquire more diligently into the virtue of life and the truth of the signs, namely, of the deeds and miracles. You are to keep under seal the depositions of witnesses interviewed so that when asked for by us you may send them faithfully to the Apostolic See; if all of you are not able to do this work, at least two of you are to do it. Given at Viterbo, 22 March, in the tenth year of our pontificate.’

Therefore, for the sake of the work of God whose business we were to be concerned with and out of reverence for the person delegating us, we went in person to Corneto where with careful attention and diligent study we set ourselves, as we should, to carry out the command of the Apostolic See. In Corneto we enquired diligently from certain religious, namely, Friars Minor who had lived with Benevenutus, and with many other trustworthy persons about the virtuous life and praiseworthy way of life of the said Friar; the witnesses were put under oath by us both singly and as a group; their names are listed below, and they put before us all they knew of the aforementioned signs of his sanctity and the miracles to be examined.<sup>1</sup>

1. Friar Nicholas, guardian of the friars in Corneto, was sworn to speak the truth regarding the miracles of Friar Benevenutus. After taking the oath to ensure the truth of what was said, he stood before the tomb of the said Friar and, lest he err in his testimony, humbly asked the Lord to reveal to him by some clear prophetic sign what he should testify about Friar Benevenutus with certainty and without scruple in his heart. He looked towards heaven, opened a certain book and as the sign shown to him from heaven placed his finger on the page where the text under his finger read: *Indeed this was a just man* [Lk 23:47].

2. A soldier named Dactus from Corneto, while speaking of his belief in the miracles, said under oath that in the month of October he was supervising grape pickers in a certain vineyard, when he heard a loud shouting and wailing of women and children; surprised, he went

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<sup>1</sup> The Bollandists, *Acta Sanctorum*, for 27 June, have edited many miracles of B. Benevenutus ‘from the lists in the manuscripts of Anthony Caraccioli’; these are found, with some additions and different words, below in numbers 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 24, 25-27.

to enquire solicitously what had happened, and they answered that a girl barely three years old had fallen into a well. The soldier quickly went down into the well. Because of the depth of water of water he could not reach her with his hands but, using his foot, he managed to lift her from where she lay at the bottom of the well. When she had been brought up and placed on the ground, he began to test whether any breath of life remained in her. After completing his careful examination and finding that the girl was dead, completely cold, livid, and without any feeling or movement in her limbs, he began to discuss with those around him about the burial of the body. Because her parents were not present, a definite decision was left until they arrived. Meanwhile, the soldier and the others standing around encouraged all present to pray devoutly to Friar Beneventus, that he might intercede with God for the return to life of the virgin. While all were praying and uttering tearful groans in their sorrow, the girl finally spoke in a weak voice but audible to them. The soldier took hold her of her feet and lowered her head so that not a small amount of water came out of her mouth; she showed she was restored to life by opening her eyes. When her parents arrived and heard what had happened, they took their daughter and, with the crowd of people who had gathered, went to Corneto to thank Friar Beneventus in a fitting manner for the miracle worked. But because the girl did not seem to those watching her to be fully alive, they put her in front of the tomb of the said Friar. When she had been there for but a short time she received full life through his merits, so that she walked through the church in the sight of all, and with many accompanying her went home with her parents .

3. Another soldier named Tirellus, from Corneto, whose wife had borne seven daughters, prayed earnestly with his wife to Friar Beneventus to give them a son; they promised that they would give the name Beneventus to any son born should the saint mercifully carry out their wish. But when a son was born they did not give him this name as they had vowed. It happened that the child was covered with sores so that ugly blisters appeared all over his body; for this reason the parents out of shame and fear delayed having the child baptized. After almost three months, when the mother one night wished to feed the baby she lifted him up from the cradle, and after feeding him put him beside her in the bed. When she had been asleep for a short time the father woke up suddenly and saw the cradle; surprised that he could not see the child he began to look for him at the side of his sleeping wife. Not finding him, he quickly got out of bed and anxiously asked the wet nurse where she had put the child; informed that she had not touched the child, he woke his wife and anxiously asked her what she had done with the their son. The woman was amazed at this mention of her son and when she did not find him beside her, she quickly got out of bed and as anxious as her husband

looked for him and finally found him already dead beside the wall. When they had picked up the boy they discussed in their grief what should be done with the child who had not yet been baptized as they had promised. They shouted out this fact with wailing and tears to the priest of the church, to their friends and relatives who had been called. The father was scolded by all there for not permitting the boy to be baptized; all unanimously decided that on this very day the child should be buried secretly lest people who got to know of it might deride the parents of the child. All agreed to this decision except the father who called out and said: 'In no way is that to be done, but I will give back my dead son to the one through whom I received him living'. After saying this he quickly took the child into his arms and accusing the others went in the middle of the night to the tomb of the Friar. The mother, dressed in rough clothes, followed as she cried out and wept and many people accompanied her; the father placed his son on the tomb of the Friar and said: 'Holy Benevenutus, behold I offer my dead son to you and beg you by your merits to give him back to me alive'. Those present in sympathy for his sorrow, with laments and tears prostrated themselves on the ground and persevered in prayer until morning. And behold, as the morning bell sounded in the house of the Friars, the boy began in the sight of all to wake up as if from a sleep and to murmur; when his mother saw that he was brought back to life she hurried and, praising God with great joy, had her son solemnly baptized that very day.

4. A certain Peter with the surname Tacarus said, when speaking under oath of the reliability of the miracles, that once while standing in a part of Corneto with some others he saw a person driving a cart loaded with wheat. The person could not control the cart or restrain the horse with the reins so that the cart gathered speed down a slope just as a boy of twelve riding an ass happened to be in the path of the cart at the entrance of the gate. The cart struck the ass strongly, the boy fell in the path of the cart and because he was unable to move he went under a wheel. All present began to weep on seeing this and calling out with strong shouting said: 'Holy Benevenutus, help, help, lest the boy be crushed by the force of the cart'. The driver fled in fear of his life, since the right wheel of the cart was seen to pass over the legs of the boy. Many hastened to the spot to lift up the boy whom they thought had been fatally crushed but the boy began to say to those approaching: 'Do not be afraid. The cart did not hurt me as it passed, because Friar Benevenutus whose help I asked, saved me from its force as it passed over me'. The boy then entered Corneto with many others and went to the tomb of the Friar and gave thanks for the gift given by God.

5. Roger John Ferrarii from the village of Saint Agatha said under oath that one day out of reverence for the death of Friar Benevenutus he had climbed up a poplar tree to cut branches for providing shade;

he carried a cutting tool which was fixed securely with a cord. While he was engaged in cutting the branches it happened that a small branch supporting his whole body broke. He took hold with his left hand of another branch but feeling weak and thinking that the judgment of death was near, he called out in a loud voice: 'Holy Beneventus, help me'. The branch which he held as he was hanging broke and he fell on a branch of the tree striking his chest on it with such force that all who saw the accident completely despaired of his life; but, by the action of God through the merits of the Friar, the one who had fallen immediately got up unharmed and walked home praising God with due reverence.

**Listener.** Clearly the power of Christian faith is great and powerful before God since by it the body of a dead boy was restored to life from contact with the tomb of the man of God, as I recall you said above.

#### **Not every gift is due to the merits of faith**

**Speaker.** The power of faith is thoroughly praiseworthy and to be admired for its merits. But I am of the opinion that in truth not every display of gifts is to be ascribed to the merits of faith. Often the dignity of what is asked for exceeds the smallness of faith. The heavenly Creator from the presence or contact with holy pledges may want to develop a more worthy regard for the glory of God's name or the memory of the saints in the faith of weak people; to do this God gives the gifts asked for; these gifts would not otherwise be given to the ones asking in view of the poverty of their faith which God sees is small and weak. This was prefigured in the Book of Kings [2 Kings 13:21]. After the death of Elisha undertakers were burying a dead person, but fearful of *a marauding band of Moabites* threw the dead body into *the grave* of the man of God; *as soon as the man touched the bones of the prophet, he came to life and stood on his feet.* The undertakers bury the dead just as many people hide their sins using the excuse of the necessities of an earthly life. The Prophet asked that this be far from him as something harmful which blocks justice, when he prayed: *Do not turn my heart to any evil, to busy myself with wicked deeds in company with those who work iniquity* [Ps 141:4]. But often these, while their sins are perhaps unknown to their neighbours, are aware that they are known to demons, and while they despair on the basis of their own merits to go in prayer to the saints, they are fearful that the thieves of hell might throw down the lifeless corpse of their mind because of an imperfect confession, yet they certainly try to apply the relics of the saints to the sicknesses of their bodies. From contact with these relics sometimes a grace of spiritual life or even a bodily health which they wanted, all beyond the merit of their faith, is given through these relics; often because of the gift thus obtained, they

progress, as if by walking on their own feet, to more useful merits of virtues in both affection and deed.

**Listener.** I confess that what you say satisfies a hunger of the soul and always renews the affection of the heart by a prudent response to what is heard. Hence I ask you to keep to your former promises and open up without delay what remains.

**Speaker. 6.** A woman named Stellantia from Corneto stated under oath that she had a son who for ten years suffered from the sickness of epilepsy; he was disturbed both day and night for the ten years, often being forced by the sickness into water, fire or other diverse dangers. Having heard of the wonders which were happening, the mother, solicitous for the health of her child, made a vow and brought him to the funeral of Friar Benevenutus who was as yet unburied. While they near the body, the sickness attacked him in a stronger way than usual and many, unable to bear to see the horror of his suffering, went out from the church. Finally, however, by the merits of the holy Friar priest the boy was freed from his sickness to the extent that never again did he experience the usual symptoms of his suffering. The woman added also that one morning the son had been suddenly attacked by the illness as he was getting up, and from the balcony where he was lying he was thrown down onto the lower part of the house. When this happened the mother, struck with horror, began to feel this same illness which exhausted her miserably for all of five years; but when, as I have said, she stayed near the body of the Friar with her son, on the same day and in the same place she was completely cured.

7. Likewise Solimbria, wife of Palmerius from Corneto, said under oath that for five years she had experienced the sickness of epilepsy which sometimes urged her into fire, often though into water, and sometimes horribly affected her even at table or in church, in bed, in the marketplace or while making a journey. When she heard of the death of Friar Benevenutus she hurried to the place where already mass was being celebrated for his soul. When she approached the body just before its burial, she heard a voice in the air above saying: 'Say *Holy, Holy, Holy*, and what follows after these words'. Hearing this, she knelt, humbly holding his feet, and with attention and devotion begged him to pray for her effectively to God. As she prayed, the illness began to disturb her more gravely than usual, striking and tearing her to such a degree that many left the church out of a sense of deep horror. Later the suffering ceased and the woman got up totally free of her illness. When the inhabitants of Corneto heard of this, they hurried to the house of the Friars in a large procession; they took the body of the Friar for burial with due reverence in the church of St Peter in spite of the objections of the Friars.

**8.** Margarita of Dordogne testified under oath that after suffering continuously from epilepsy for six years she came in devotion to the tomb of Friar Benevenutus and promised that if God would free her by his prayers and merits, she would paint an image depicting the face of the Friar and place it near his tomb in memory of the fact. As soon as the woman made this vow the sickness began to trouble her, but before she left the place she was so completely cured that never again did she feel this suffering.

**9.** Bella, a woman from Corneto, exhausted for a space of three years from the disorder of epilepsy, and in this whole time finding no remedy for it, went to the body of the Friar before he was buried; as she prayed before him the sickness affected her gravely, so that twenty four times it prostrated her on the ground; those present saw this and in sympathy for her suffering most insistently asked Friar Benevenutus for help. About the tenth hour she was so cured that never again did she experience this suffering.

**10.** A noble lady named Amillina, the widow of the soldier Roger from Corneto, testified under oath that while she was lamenting her widowhood after the death of her husband, signs of leprosy began to be clearly evident on her body. From the sole of her feet to her head she was covered in ulcers which produced thick scales with a discharge. She was so affected by heat in the middle of winter that she could barely tolerate even an under garment. Her eyebrows were completely bald of hair while a discharge from her eyes deprived them of their usual light. Also the breath from her nose was very foul, her head was covered with sores and could not retain its hair; her voice became harsh and the nails fell from her fingers. She seemed so horrible to all that even her own sons and daughters wanted her to live with the lepers, completely cut off from other people. It happened that Friar Benevenutus while still alive came to her house to borrow a mare which the Friars needed for carrying thatch. She devoutly commended herself to his prayers and was consoled when he said: 'Be patient, daughter, and trust because the Lord will soon show mercy to you'. A short time later when the Friar was already dead and his body was lying in the church of Saint Peter where he was to be buried, the woman, not a little bashful and reverent, came to the coffin; there she prayed all night and with faith put the hand of the Friar on her face and limbs. When she did this the sores on her head began to disappear, the ulcers on her face and limbs began to dry up so that her flesh was freed completely from the disease of leprosy.

**11.** William, a son of Forcedis, when aged twelve, for a year and a half before the death of Friar Benevenutus was covered with ulcers on his whole body, his voice was harsh and the disease of leprosy left no hair on his eyebrows or eyelashes; beside this he had a foul smelling mouth and could not retain hair on his head; his eyes were red from continuous weeping of warm tears; his hands were distorted, and the

same boy lost the nails off his fingers and feet; for these reasons his parents completely withdrew from his company. As the Friar lay in the church of Saint Peter his mother and sister humbly reported on his leprosy before the coffin of the unburied body. When they had persisted in prayer there for three days and nights, the leprous boy began to touch the hand and feet of the Friar with his mouth and other limbs similarly infected. When he did this his mother and sister saw that his flesh was restored to its earlier state of health.

**Listener.** What do you think is the reason for such dire suffering in a human body, such as you relate of epileptics and lepers, in those particularly in whom no clear harm of actual sin has been added to original sin?

### **On the reason for temporal punishments**

**Speaker.** According to the diverse ways of looking at this question an equal number of causes or reasons can be given to the proposed question. If we want to follow the opinions of the orthodox Fathers, we would say with certainty that sometimes the crime of a father is handed on as temporal punishment to succeeding generations. For example, those unwilling to refrain from embraces forbidden by law in the time of menstruation, by a just decree of God leave to their children the sickness of leprosy, often also the illness of epilepsy or other illnesses, so that seeing the suffering of their children they waste away from compassion for the ulcers; they did not fear to beget children during a time stated to be unlawful by a clear sanction of public law. This is what we read of a possessed person in Mark [Mk 8:16-29]. From his infancy a boy was possessed by a demon who tormented him, and in no way would this have been put in the Scriptures, had not a guilt of original sin or the guilt of a paternal crime preceded it. Sometimes the suffering is incurred from the merits of the adults mentioned. When, for example, God in mercy sends a severe, final warning to correct the insanity of transgressors for the purpose of forgiveness, or if they persist in evil by a stubborn judgment of mind, God forms an image of eternal punishment showing the same strictness of justice. Often, as seen in the general rule for those to be punished, to test some, to humiliate others, sometimes to show divine virtue, these and similar things most kindly come from God, who knows to whom or how or to what degree it is expedient to pursue people.

**Listener.** What you say is most pleasing. But I ask you to continue, lest it be annoying that I often delay your story with my words; for I know for sure my words should give way to the development of your story.

**Speaker. 12.** A woman named Munelis stated under oath that when one night her brother had whipped her, she went outside in

indignation and in the middle of the night she called out saying: 'Come, devil, come into my body that I may be free from the hands of my brother'. When she had repeated this many times, she saw nearby two small bodies like Moors; on seeing them she died in some way from fear and fell to the ground as if dead. Her brother brought her inside and put her on a bench and there for two days she lay lifeless. She came back to life on the third day and was lucid for periods of time; for five years she was insane for most of the time and did strange things in words and deeds. Her husband and brother often carried her bound by chains to different churches of the region; since this brought about no change in her they did not take her any more. On hearing of the wonders worked by Friar Beneventus, they went there and with tears placed her still bound in the customary way with chains in front of his tomb. When she had been in the church for five days and was troubled more than usual by the demons, many people came to speak with the demoniac. The demon entered into discussion with all; he disputed with clerics and laity sometimes in plain words, sometimes in a vulgar way. On top of this he changed his voice, now singing, now shouting, now hissing, now barking, and he moved the hearts of those present to compassion for her. Standing with the others was an archpriest, named Peregrinus, who strongly exorcised the demon commanding him to state, should he intend to leave the woman, on what day or what hour or in what place this was to happen, and with what signs. The demon said:

On the next Sunday after the ninth hour in front of the tomb of Beneventus I will leave the body of the woman; in the hour of my departure the sky will be disturbed, and from it will appear lightning and rain, and thunder will resound.

At the time announced and when all the signs were evident, many of both sexes came from Corneto and, after a solemn procession with the clerics, the habit of Friar Beneventus was placed over the demoniac; at the touch of the habit the demon so cruelly threw the woman to the ground that all the bystanders thought she was dead. In the evening, as she emitted a foul odour and spat blood from her mouth, by the merits of the most holy Friar she was freed, and from that time never again was she troubled in the same way.

**13.** Friar Robert, a lay brother in the Friary of the Holy Spirit in Salsola, said under oath that when he suffered from a most severe pain his face began to swell so much that the severity of the pain caused him to lose his hearing and sight; sleep so eluded him that he had not fallen asleep for twelve days; he became angry to the extent that should anyone approach him incautiously he tore at them with his teeth; he threw stones at people passing by, and strongly struck a servant of the house on the forehead with a stick. For these reasons his

superior to restrain his insanity had his hands bound tightly with rope. One day during a lucid interval he made a vow that he would visit the tomb of the said Friar in the hope of regaining his health; when he made the vow he regained his hearing and sight immediately. However, an almost intolerable pain developed in one of his arms; but going, as he had vowed, to the tomb of the Friar he received through the merits of the most holy Friar a complete restoration of health.

**Listener.** Since I remember having often heard that no created thing of substance can be introduced into the rational soul, I wonder greatly how the devil taught an illiterate woman to dispute in plain words, and how was she able to forecast the signs of events which happened in the future.

### **On the power of demons over the possessed**

**Speaker.** In truth and without any doubt, as you state, we are taught by Catholic doctrine that, apart from the uncreated Spirit, no spiritual or corporal substance can enter substantially the human soul. But when the devil's harmful prompting is given entrance through carelessness, the poison of his evil joins itself to our affections; while he is not able to put harmful thoughts in our mind, he does not cease to foster such thoughts which lie in the depths of a heart. The Prophet says correctly of this: *See it is I who have created the smith who blows the fire of coals* [Isa 54:16]. The smith is the devil, because with many blows he shapes *the objects of mercy* [Rom 9:23], unconscious of their divine purpose, and transforms them by a thorough cleansing in successive bakings; he also puts fruit<sup>1</sup> in a fire to blow upon it, for example, when he succeeds in provoking by a flame of suggestion intentions already formed in the soul. God can sometimes allow this smith not only to enter but also to annoy the human body, as we read happened to Saul [1 Sam 19:9], to the fornicator in Corinth [1 Cor 5:5] and to not a few others listed in the Gospels.

Why, therefore, do you wonder, whether the devil was able to move the tongue of the woman to say what he wanted, since it was deservedly handed over to him and created for the purpose of uttering words, and since God allowed the devil to be able to adapt the tongue of a serpent as an organ for uttering the sounds of words? Just as the serpent was in no way capable of understanding the words it spoke, so too in the work and ministry of the certainly good angel the ass of Balaam spoke ignorant of what the purpose of the divine will might be achieving through its mouth; often by means of a possessed body the devil does and says many things of which the ignorant and simple are in admiration, while not knowing from whom the words and actions of the demoniac come. Demoniacs do not remember what has been done

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<sup>1</sup> The text here has plums.

when experiencing a lucid period or when *they come to themselves* [Bar 2:30] restored to perfect freedom by the grace of the merciful God.

Nor to one looking critically at the nature of the devils is there anything miraculous or wonderful in their knowing beforehand and announcing the signs of future times. Humans weighed down with corruptible bodies and thereby slower in understanding have worked out from the nearness or distance of stars and from the normal course of events how to foretell future storms or disturbance of the atmosphere. It is not surprising then if evil spirits, whose senses are by nature more subtle and who know which elements and qualities of the atmosphere are compatible, can foresee or announce to humans future changes of times in the near or distant future, or can deceive with lies or warn the faithful, according as by divine permission they are allowed or forbidden to do what they intend.

**Listener.** I still request that you continue faithfully with your story as you had started.

**Speaker. 14.** A deformed girl testified under oath of the truth of the miracles of Friar Beneventus and said that when her shins had been contracted for more than a year, she became deranged from the severity of the pain. She, during a lucid interval and persuaded by her sister, made a vow to God and to Friar Beneventus that, if she were to be freed from her illness, she would preserve her virginity for the Lord and each year, on the anniversary of the burial of the Friar, she would fast humbly going without bread and wine. When she had made the vow, the contracted tendons and the shin bones attached to the buttocks began to be extended with clattering and a noise of breaking so that, after a short space of time, she got out of bed and with her sister hurried to the tomb of the Friar and returned completely cured.

**15.** A priest named Clusanus from Baudelo stated under oath that while lying awake in his bed one night, without seeing any person, he felt a blow on his cheek and his mouth became so twisted that his deformity caused horror in all who saw it. His left eye also became so troubled with the eyebrows turned back that he constantly shed a flood of tears. On the advice of a woman from Corneto, who at the tomb of Friar Beneventus had been cured of a flow of blood, the priest went to the tomb and devoutly kneeling before it meditated on the penitential psalms as best he could. When the priest reached the verse of the fourth psalm which reads: *Hide your face from my sins* [Ps 51:9], it seemed to him that a hand touched his cheek, his mouth was brought back to its former shape and when the tears dried up from the disturbed eyes he merited straightaway to have full health.

**16.** Bonusinfans Corveseri from Corneto said under oath that when his wife Normanda had been deformed in both feet for two years she had to lie down without any strength in her limbs; she moved herself with her hands while held by a rope to a wooden frame. After the

death of Friar Benevenutus she was brought to his tomb three times, and on the third visit her feet were completely cured and she returned home.

**17.** A woman named Iusiana from Corneto testified under oath that her husband Girus Buccerius suffered for nine years from a most serious illness; his hands and feet were so dried up he would lie on the bed like a piece of wood, and from the beginning of the fifth year he lost the sight in his eyes. At the death of the holy Friar and before his burial, Girus was carried to the body. William, one of the bystanders, while holding the foot of the Friar placed it on all the limbs of Girus in the hope of a cure. On doing this, all the bystanders saw that the sick man was immediately healed and, with his lost sight restored, he returned home immediately without any help. But because many doubted that his sight had been restored, he was led through the streets of Corneto, so that they could test if he was able to avoid the potholes in the streets; Girus however not only avoided the potholes, but also warned those following to be careful.

**18.** An adolescent named Ianellus from Mons-Mairani was crippled in the feet, shins and shoulders and crawled on his stomach and hands along the ground. He was brought to the tomb of Friar Benevenutus where he kept vigil at night until one Sunday morning his strength was restored and he regained all his health.

**19.** Chura Maria from La Montagne testified under oath that for six years her hands and feet had been so deformed that she had to be carried by others to meet her needs. On the day of Friar Benvenutus' death she was carried to his body. A bystander moved the foot of the Friar all over her limbs and by his merits the soles of her feet, her feet and her hands were strengthened and restored so that she returned home praising God.

**20.** Thasura from Foggia, the wife of Matthew Rubeus from Corneto, said under oath that when troubled with a strong pain in her left knee, she came, sceptical as she was of miracles, to the place where the body of Friar Benevenutus lay. While talking with the women in the church the conversation turned to the miracles of the Friar but she answered:

What are these miracles of your saint? Even if he were to show some miracles, I would believe nothing of them; you make much of him so that he will remain in your parish.

As soon as she said this she was immediately struck in the same knee and her right foot was twisted from its normal position with the shin; falling to the ground she called out full of repentance:

Holy Benevenutus help me before God and if you will be merciful to me in this matter then every Friday I will fast on bread and water for as long as I live.

When she had made the vow, the pain in her knee went away and restored to health she left praising God.

**Listener.** It is clear there is much temerity and great danger in blaspheming the saints of God, when indeed God is wont to punish those blaspheming with the severe equity of the judgment of divine judgment.

### **On the sin of blasphemy committed in word or deed**

**Speaker.** Since the Saviour said to his disciples: *Whoever welcomes you welcomes me* [Mt 10:40], and: *Whoever rejects you rejects me* [Lk 10:16], it is clear that any injury or honour done to ministers is done rather to the Lord of these ministers. Therefore, who in their right mind does not see that often most serious and fitting punishments are inflicted on detractors of the saints who do not fear to insult the Lord of all when they imprudently blaspheme against the servants of God?

In this matter it has to be recognized that the crime of blasphemy is committed not only in word but also by indiscipline in action. God is often blasphemed by a word of sinners when his omnipotence is besmirched by the crime of envy. Some heretics and those wise in the ways of the flesh are accustomed to say, if God could have made human nature so that it could never consent to evil, and God did not do this, then God can rightly be said to be envious. And as the Apostle says speaking for those who upbraid God: *Why have you made me like this?* [Rom 9:20]. Sometimes in a presumptive bold rashness the justice of God who punishes is blamed, as some did in Revelation: *They were scorched by the fierce heat, but they cursed the name of God, who had authority over these plagues* [Rev 16:9]. Sometimes a quality of improvidence is attributed to the inscrutable wisdom of God, as the Psalmist says of some who rebuke God: *They set their mouths against heaven* [Ps 73:9], and what they said is shown when he adds: *How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?* [Ps 73:11] and again: *The Lord does not see; the God of Jacob does not perceive* [Ps 94:7]. Often the mercy of a patient God is called powerlessness, as when some feel themselves to be suffering from the malice of evildoers and ask God to have vengeance on their persecutors; they mutter all the time as they ask for it to be unleashed. It is rightly said of such people in Revelation: *People gnawed their tongues in agony, and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and sores* [16:10-11]; the same things are found in Jude:

*But these people slander whatever they do not understand ... They are grumblers and malcontents; they indulge their own lusts; they are bombastic in speech* [10 and 16].

The name of God is blasphemed by an indisciplined action, as we have said, when pastors, kings or lords of the Christian people besmirch the good name of the faith by a public transgression; in doing this they are not afraid when others in a false sense of security follow the steps of those who go before them. The Lord complains of this in some people through the words of the Prophet: *My people are taken away without cause, the rulers howl and my name is despised* [Isa 52:5]. Likewise, God is blasphemed by proud persons who arrogate the worship of God to themselves; we read in the Acts of the Apostles 12:21-23 that this was done by Herod. When Herod had been reconciled with the people of Tyre and Sidon he announced in his royal robes to the people that he had received from them the praises due to God and not to a man; immediately he was struck by an angel, *was eaten by worms and died*. He who did not reject the glory of God offered to him by a blaspheming crowd, was subjected rightly by divine judgment to be eaten by worms just when he was about to leave the earth.

**Listener.** I am pleased, indeed, to see how you have explained in a reasonable and useful way the cause and the types of punishments inflicted on the guilt of blasphemers. But now take up again the theme of your story so that you may hasten without delay to other things for which I long.

**Speaker. 21.** Arsenda from Lusianum, wife of Ressemandus, stated under oath that for three years her eyes had been covered with a very thick film; she was afflicted with such blindness that she could move about only when someone led her by walking before her. Before the burial of the body of Friar Benevenutus, she was led by relatives and friends to his body, and there praying through the night she wept abundantly and prayed that he might deign to cure her by his merits. In the morning, all present could see for themselves that the film over her eyes had been taken away by the tears; with the film gone from her eyes, she got up immediately and with sight restored returned home without the help of a guide.

**22.** Dactus, a soldier and constable from Corneto, said that his son Siginolfus developed a sickness in his eyes which left him without sight for six months. Towards the end of the sixth month his father vowed that if the Lord would cure him by the merits of the Friar, he would offer to the Church of St Peter two oxen for carrying stones. When he made the vow he had the boy lie on the tomb of the Friar where within a space of eight days he regained his lost sight.

**23.** Venerella, a daughter of Rogerius Fornarius, was troubled with a discharge coming from her right eye so that it was totally impossible for her to open either of her eyelashes. Her mother brought her to the tomb of Friar Benevenutus in search of a cure and kept her there for three continuous days; on the third day she rubbed her eyes and said to

her mother: 'Mother, look my eyes are cured because the piece of flesh which I carried has now gone as well as the film'. Many people from Corneto saw this and gave due thanks to God and to Friar Beneventus.

**24.** Tematica Transilgardi stated under oath that one day she lost all hearing in her ears; she remained in this condition for three years during which time she could respond to what was said only by nods and signs. On the day after the death of the holy Friar she went to his body and in tears asked for mercy; when in trust she had touched her ears and face with his feet, she felt a strong spirit leave her ears and she immediately regained her lost hearing.

**25.** A woman named Atra from Molfetta testified under oath that for a year and three months she had been afflicted with deafness; she was so troubled that she went humbly to the tomb of the holy Friar and devoutly asked for mercy; when she had been there for a little time she regained by his merits a hearing better than previously.

**26.** Domina Amfelisa said under oath that she mourned the loss of two sons and in her great sorrow struck her head with her fists and the palms of her hands; as a result she suffered for six years from continuous head pain and from total deafness in her ears. People dear to her brought her to the body of the Friar which was still unburied, and touched her head and ears many times with the hand of the most holy Friar; once this was done all pain disappeared from her head and with her hearing totally restored she gave thanks to God.

**Listener.** Apart from the general benefits given to the human race by the coming of Christ, not to recognize the gifts of healing received through the merits of the saints would seem to be a wrongful robbing from God.

### **On the ingratitude of some sinners**

**Speaker.** What I say does often happen, for example, that the sick or those suffering from a defect in their limbs, while they are suffering from the torments of the sickness or the defects of nature, busy themselves with bent necks to divine worship and works of piety in the hope of a better good. A good example of such people is Antiochus of whom we read in the books of the Maccabees:

*He was seized with a pain in his bowels, for which there is no relief, and with sharp internal tortures. 'It is right' he said, 'to be subject to God; mortals should not think that they are equal to God [2 Macc 9:5.12].*

Also he promised to adorn the temple with excellent gifts and to give back offerings suitable for sacrifice from what he had taken; *in addition to this he promised he would become a Jew to proclaim the*

*power of God* [2 Macc 9:17]. But when such people do not get the mercy of God which they wanted, forgetful of the past pains and defects they suffered, they are ungrateful and forget equally the grace of their benefactor. Wisdom says rightly of such: *Do not forget the kindness of your guarantor* [Sir 29:15], and further on adds: *A sinner wastes the property of his guarantor, and the ungrateful person abandons his rescuer* [Sir 29:16-17]. A sinner runs away from the guarantor when the sinner does not carry out the vow promised after being given the health asked for; moreover, an ungrateful person deserts the one healing, since by an evil deed the ungrateful person contradicts the work of healing grace. Often the just God, on seeing in some people the fault of such ingratitude, by a just decree allows them to fall back into a condition similar to that from which they escaped or even to more serious dangers. I will give one example.

27. After her marriage, Morena, a woman from Gaudianum and a daughter of Constantine, developed a terrible swelling from dropsy; for this reason her husband despised her and greatly confused she went back to her father's house. At the time of the death of Friar Benevenuto the woman stood before his body and began to feel a healing in parts of her body. The following day she went back again to the tomb and felt in herself a similar blessing of further healing. Returning on the third day for the same reason she fully regained perfect health. On her return to the guest house her relatives came to congratulate her on the recovery of her health, and, moved by shallowness of soul she said to her mother: 'I prefer now to feel in my body the previous sickness to which I was accustomed than to be covered with such shame in the presence of these women'. When she said this, in the sight of all present, the swelling of dropsy returned as before. Immediately, she was brought to the tomb of the holy Friar since she could not get there on her own; there with great devotion she begged the Lord that the stupid words she had spoken not be held against her for punishment but that God might in mercy receive her as a penitent for a fuller proclamation of God's glory. After her prayer the woman merited to receive a full healing from her relapse. After a few days her mother said to her that she should go to the examiners of miracles to record the wonders she had experienced; stirred by anger and shame she replied that she would never go into their presence. On the following night such sickness and pain filled her whole body that she thought she would die from the excessive discomfort. In the morning, feeling sorry for her boldness, she asked for mercy that the former sickness might go away and, hurrying to the presence of the examiners spoken of above, related all in order.

28. Something similar happened to Robert of Armento who for three months was enfeebled with paralysis, his mouth was horribly twisted to an oblong shape, he lost the use of his tongue and he could not use his hands to feed himself. When he made a vow to Friar

Benevenutus there appeared to him during the night while he was asleep a person dressed like a Friar. When the paralytic saw what he believed to be Friar Luke, a lector among the Friars in Puglia, with all his heart he asked his protection. The Friar standing there replied: 'I am not Friar Luke but be confident because you will recover from your illness'. In the morning, the paralytic raised the right hand of which he had lost the use and, as the feeling of paralysis went away, he knew that his other limbs were somewhat strengthened. An old lady, named Maralla, came and asked him how he felt. When he replied that he was feeling better the woman said: 'Do you want me to exorcize you with my incantations?' He answered: 'Yes'. Then, as she had promised, she sang over him and he lost once again completely the benefits received in his limbs. Finally, influenced by a priest and prompted by sorrow he vowed again to Friar Benevenutus, promising that he would bring a wax image to his tomb; having done this, by his merits he obtained a total healing of his limbs and rising from his bed he visited the tomb in person with the promised gift.

**29.** Thomas Nicodemi whose son was named Peter, described under oath the cure of his son Peter who for six months endured the heat of fevers from which he became deaf, paralysed and epileptic. His mother made a vow and carried him to the tomb of the most holy Friar; when he had been there but a short time, immediately he was so restored to his previous state of health that no sign of the sicknesses remained in him.

**30.** Palma Simonis from Corneto stated under oath that for fourteen years she was exhausted from a flow of blood which no medical opinion had been able to cure. At the death of Friar Benevenutus she came with some other women to the church of the Friars; going up to the unburied body she took hold of and placed the arm of the Friar on her body and on all her limbs with confidence. After praying she left with her companions, and never again had to suffer the flow of blood as before.

**31.** The master, Petracha of Minervinum, stated under oath that while in the villa of Dordogne busy in the imperial service, he was attacked by a sickness called by doctors *sqinancy*<sup>1</sup>; this sickness blocks the entrance of the throat so that for five days he could not eat, drink or sleep; if some liquid was put with force into his mouth, with the gullet completely blocked, it came out his ears or nose. He made a vow that if the Lord by the merits of Friar Benevenutus would cure him of this abject sickness, he would visit his tomb with gifts. Straightaway the abscess began to be somewhat mitigated and from then on he took food and on the ninth day was totally cured.

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<sup>1</sup> A disease of the throat.

**Listener.** Since, as you assert, this Friar was of such holiness, I wonder why the Lord is said to have worked none or but few miracles through him while he was alive.

**Why saints while alive are said to have worked none or but few miracles**

**Speaker.** Following the opinion of a Saint<sup>1</sup> an answer can be given, namely, that for a double reason it is much more useful to give praise to the memory rather than to the life of people; this is so when neither the adulation might benefit the one praising nor the honour test the one praised. But I think there is one special reason among others why God often makes the saints shine with miracles after their death more frequently than when they are alive: namely, to strengthen in the minds of the weak their faith and glory in the resurrection, when from touching the holy ashes, regarded by the carnal mind as useless and spent, various healings and even sometimes bodily life are mercifully and powerfully given. Scripture promised this to the saints approaching home from exile when it said:

*And brightness like that of the noonday, shall arise to you at evening; and when you shall think of yourself consumed, you shall rise as the day star. And you shall have confidence, hope being set before you, and being buried you shall sleep secure. You shall rest and there shall be none to make you afraid; and many shall entreat your face. But the eyes of the wicked shall decay, and the way to escape shall fail them, and their hope the abomination of the soul [Job 11:17-20 DRB].*

No one thinking as a Catholic is ignorant how clearly and without enigma this is fulfilled literally with the relics of the saints. The light poured out from the signs sometimes directs the enemies of the Christian faith to the way of truth and life, while the impious and those who rebel against the light are overwhelmed and confused by a just judgment of blindness. We acknowledge some wonderful signs worked by the living saints in the flesh, some of which *we have seen with our eyes and touched with our hands* [1 Jn 1:1]; I relate one of these, taken from the middle of the list, in which we read that the Lord worked this wonder while Friar Benevenuto was still alive.

**32.** A woman named Catania from Pescopagano testified under oath that her son Galterellus had lacked the use of his tongue from birth until his seventh year. She sent wine and bread to Friar Benevenuto who was lying sick in bed and the same boy humbly offered the gift she had sent. While he stood dumb before the bed of the Friar, Friar Nicholas the guardian of the house said to Friar Benevenuto: ‘The boy is dumb and has not spoken in his seven years;

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<sup>1</sup> S. Maximus Raurinensis, *Homilia* 78 (PL 57, 419).

teach him something so that he might speak'. Friar Benvenutus took the bread and asked the boy what it was. Since the boy could not express with his tongue an idea which was in his mind, Friar Benevenutus said to him: 'Say bread'; immediately with his tongue freed the boy said: 'Bread'. Then showing him the wine he said to him: 'Say wine'; the boy replied: 'Wine'. When the boy returned home he who had been dumb spoke before his parents and neighbours; greatly and rightly joyful of this they thanked God and Friar Benevenutus.

**33.** Claritia Iacobi from Guisileum said under oath that after giving birth on the fifth of March her right breast with which she was feeding her child suddenly became swollen like a small inflated bottle as hard as stone and black and blue in colour. When she had despaired of the doctors being able to reduce the swelling in the breast, two ulcers appeared on the breast and gave her continuous pain. When the holy Friar died she went to the body and placed on her breast her hand which had touched his body; at this touch the tumour began to grow smaller accompanied with noise, as if the nerves of her breast were being torn violently; straightaway she regained her health, and no scars remained of the ulcers on her breast. She added that eight days after regaining her health, since she had no milk in this breast, she humbly begged the holy Friar to show mercy towards her also in this matter. After making the vow the woman immediately, as she stated, had abundant milk.

**34.** Bartholomew Gubianus testified under oath that when Palma his daughter had suffered for four years from the pain of ulcerated dropsy in her hands and feet, he despaired completely of doctors. When Friar Benevenutus died, bearers carried her in their hands to his body. One of the bearers named Basilius who was standing nearby placed on the Friar the right hand of the girl's injured limbs and then her diseased feet; after he did this, in the evening of the following day, by the merits of the Friar the discharge of the girl's ulcers dried up and she regained total health then and there.

**35.** Pasca, a woman from Dordogne, stated under oath that her mouth and nose were covered with an ulcerous dropsy so that from the ulcers she ceaselessly gave out a foul smelling discharge. Her friends and parents would have preferred her dead rather than the disgust of having her alive. She came to the tomb of the Friar where she prayed; she suddenly began to sneeze, and from the shaking the foul smelling ulcers were loosened and she passed a number of bones with rotten flesh through the openings of her body; when these had passed as all present could see the ulcers began to be made whole, and she received complete healing then and there through the merits of the Friar.

**36.** Ulixes Falconis stated under oath that his daughter, named Caratenuta, suffered for four years from glandular swellings on both sides of her throat. The only cure available was surgery. However, her

father, fearing the danger, would not give in to the doctors who said this. He made a vow, went to Corneto and humbly carried his daughter to the tomb of the holy Friar; there the girl passed the night in prayer and in the presence of her grandmother she was cured in the morning by the merits of the Friar.

**37.** Donna Maria, with the family name of Cica, testified under oath that she had two daughters, one of whom for four years suffered from a swelling in the throat, while the other endured such pain in a hip that for a space of six months she could neither stand upright nor move. The woman took her two daughters and went humbly to the tomb of the holy Friar. There she hastened to fulfil her vow, put her daughter with the swollen throat on the tomb, the other she placed before it. While she prayed earnestly for the health of her daughters, she merited immediately by the intercession of the most holy Friar the cure of both her daughters. The same woman added that a thumb on her hand had been so full of pain that she could not do any work with the hand. She touched the tomb with her thumb and then and there it began to sweat; as the sweat lessened so did all the pain.

**38.** Galudibilia Fortunati testified under oath that she had suffered for four years from an arthritic gout in her hands so that she could neither bring them to her mouth nor do any work with them. She went to the body of Friar Beneventus before his burial; when she had prayed, she was immediately restored to full health by his merits.

**Listener.** When souls are stripped of flesh it is clear they lack the organs of the senses with which they were able to see or hear the bodily troubles of people. How then are they able to be aware of the prayers of those praying or even their sufferings so as to offer them to the ears of God?

### **How the saints recognize the prayers and sufferings of people praying**

**Speaker.** The question you ask is indeed difficult and beyond my ability. However, I think it can be said in accord with the opinion of orthodox Fathers that it is clear the souls of the saints *in the shelter and the light of God's presence* [Ps 31:20; 89:15] look with clear vision on God's truth; in the mirror of eternity they recognize whatever needs to be understood in what concerns their joy and what concerns being of help to us. They offer what we ask for but not as if it were unknown to God; when God has to make a judgment on our vows, they consult God's truth, and come to know what God should give, and they often suggest in a clear way or more often secretly what is to be done. Therefore, I think the saints present to the divine ears the necessities and prayers of people in this way; clearly they intercede for us, which they would never do unless they learnt of it by listening to *the spotless mirror of the working of God* [Wis 7:26].

They are so at one with the truth and justice of the divinity that they could want nothing at all other than what they know is pleasing to the divinity. We are to pray then so that their merits help us poor people and so that they may desire what is good for us, because when they want it clearly they are able to do whatever they have in mind. Hence things visible announce to many the gently given grace of the divine dispensation, and either mercifully direct those praying or confirm by the evidence of what is done that what was asked for in prayer had been granted by God. To make this clearer, note what I said in the double example.

**39.** Friar John of Altopassus stated under oath that while preaching with a companion in the province of Puglia he collected a large sum of money and came finally to Corneto to ask for an annual alms from his fellow friars. While the Friars were travelling through Corneto on this business, it happened that his companion who carried in a purse the money referred to above, lost it without realizing his loss. On the next morning when both needed the purse with the money it could not be found and so they began to feel greatly saddened. When they had remained in this anxiety for three days, and out of shame did not tell others the reason for their anxiety, they went humbly to the tomb of Friar Beneventus where they prayed most devoutly that by his merits he might be able to recover the lost money. The following night someone in the habit of the Friars Minor stood beside this Friar John and said to him:

Get up and go to the swine herd of the Abbot of Venusia. His name is John and you will find him leaning on a staff beside a pig pen; he found this money in such a place and hid it in a different place in a pig pen. If he denies having found it say to him: Friar Beneventus stood beside me this very night saying that you had found the guest's lost money and have hidden it secretly in a pig pen.

In the morning the Friar got up joyfully and told the vision to his fellow Friar; together with his companion they hurried to look for the swine herd as they had been advised. When they found the person leaning on the staff as it had been told to them, they demanded in flattering words that the lost money be handed back. When this person continued to deny it, Friar John said to him:

Miserable person, you will not be able to deny this, because Friar Beneventus on this very night appeared to me and said that you had found and hidden it beside the pig pen.

Hearing this the person was amazed at the knowledge of his secret and then and there confessed the truth; hurrying to the place where he had put the money he gave back to the Friars all the buried money in the purse just as he had found it.

**40.** A Friar of the Order of Friars Minor, named Giles, said under oath that while Friar Benevenutus was still alive he had lived with him for almost eight years. After the death of Friar Benevenutus, the same Friar was worn out from a severe temptation of the flesh from which neither by prayers nor other spiritual exercises was he able to be freed. Remembering his former friendship, he commended himself humbly in prayer to Friar Benevenutus. When he had prayed, Friar Benevenutus with a cheerful and joyful expression appeared to him in a dream as he slept and said: 'Friar Giles, give me your cord and take mine which I give to you'. When he had done this, Friar Benevenutus put his cord on him which he then wore. From this contact the temptation left the Friar who from the protection of divine grace never again experienced this temptation.

**41.** Sabinus of Adimola stated under oath that he had a field full of cumin<sup>1</sup> all of which at the time for harvesting was invaded by locusts which gnawed it. When he heard of this he ran to the field with his wife. Seeing the crop completely covered with locusts he vowed to both God and Friar Benevenutus that, were God in mercy by the merits of the Friar to defend the cumin from the plague of locusts, he would give a measure of cumin to the church in which the Friar was buried. As soon as he made the vow the locusts disappeared; on the following day he reaped the field which was fresh in appearance and he faithfully dedicated one part to Friar Benevenutus; when on the third day he went to collect it, he found it intact and unharmed, even though the plants around it were completely gnawed and eaten.

**42.** An archpriest, Peregrinus from Corneto, swore that with six priests he came at certain times over the period of the three days during which the body of Friar Benevenutus lay in the church of St Peter before his burial; the three days were for the devotion of the people. He touched the limbs of the Friar which seemed to him to be not the limbs of a dead but of a living person. The veins of his hands seemed to be full of blood and the nails of a reddish colour; the fingers also appeared to be smooth. He said that all the limbs of the Friar were firm but soft and gave off a perspiration with a pleasant odour.

**43.** Friar Nicholas of Traictum, guardian of the Friars in Corneto, testified under oath that when he and the other Friars washed the dead body of Friar Benevenutus with warm water, his limbs were getting as stiff as one dead for some time; because of this stiffness they were hardly able to clothe him in the habit of the Friars. However, by evening of the same day, when the body had already been carried to the church of St Peter, and Friar Nicholas with the other Friars went to give due honour to the corpse of Friar Benevenutus, his limbs which before were rigid were now soft when touched by a hand, as if they were the limbs of a youth. Nicholas could then, as he might choose,

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<sup>1</sup> A plant like fennel with aromatic seeds.

turn the head forward or backwards, to the right and to the left. The fingers of his hands could be moved and the other limbs appeared to be more those of a living person than of a dead person, while all his flesh remained moist as of one perspiring.

The truth of the above works of divine majesty which concern the glory of God and the praise of the most holy Friar, but of which many have been passed over in silence for the sake of brevity, has been examined according to the limits of my ability. To avoid burdening the reader I have selected these few from many which are more certain so that the pious devotion of the Friars may be upheld and that their devotion may hold them to the praise of the Lord; whoever knows other and similar deeds may relate them for the building up of the faith, and may they always be well able to add what concerns the honour of the divine majesty.

## III.

## ON FRIAR AMBROSE WHO IS BURIED IN CIVITAVECCHIA

**Listener.** I acknowledge you have told me much about these two admirable friars; I now ask you, as you have promised, to add something about others of whose deeds you have knowledge.

**Speaker.** Friar Ambrose who came from the town of Massa, was outstanding for his praiseworthy life and virtuous actions and renewed the ancient glory of Civitavecchia with heavenly signs.<sup>1</sup> From infancy he entered the way of simplicity and, although involved in secular duties, was happy to keep his soul immune from those vices in which the world abounds by a general corruption in its children. From a youthful age he showed by his pious actions an admirable nobility. As a boy in the first flowering of youth he gave himself to the study of letters. When he saw some of his siblings heading for the slope of vice, as is wont to happen at that age, he judged that he should from now on prepare a home for the Holy Spirit; he embraced celibacy and adorning the beginnings of puberty with the glory of purity, consecrated himself to the Lord as first fruits.

When Ambrose reached maturity he could feel the snares of enticing prosperity ready for him; disdainful of the pleasures of the flourishing world he became one who dedicates himself to the evangelical promise, exchanging riches for poverty and temporal for eternal gains. In the same town of Massa he took on with humble devotion the life and habit of the Friars Minor, so as to buy *the pearl of great price* [Mt 13:46]; he put aside all his possessions which were to be distributed to the poor, and going with bare feet he wrote a statement of his aim, namely, to separate himself from the scorned world.

By divine clemency he pursued the grace of conversion, putting the virtue of obedience before sacrifice [1 Sam 15:22], going wherever holy obedience commanded to serve the needs of the Friars even when *hungry and thirsty, cold and naked* [2 Cor 11:27], and he offered himself to the Lord as a sacrifice full of marrow [Ps 65:15 DRB; 66:15 NRSV]. Frequently giving himself to *prayer* he moistened the *bed* of conscience with *tears* [Col 4:2 and Ps 6:7].

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<sup>1</sup> This formula was first used by St Cyprian, *On the Unity of the Church*, ch. 6, *The Fathers of the Church*, Washinton: Catholic University of America Press, 1958, vol. 36, 101: 'Does anyone believe that this unity which comes from divine strength, which is closely connected with the *divine sacraments* ....' Perhaps the author borrowed the words from the liturgy.

Often content with bread and water, he tempered the promptings of carnal concupiscence.

As one who was devout, ready and moved by feelings of compassion towards the unfortunate and sick, he dedicated to them a needed ministry. He ministered the service of human kindness not only to Friars but also more zealously to seculars known and unknown to him, mercifully visiting any confined to bed and with courteous zeal getting medicines he knew to be suitable for wounds or illnesses.

He frequently prepared meals for the Friars, gladly washed the plates and did other lowly services. And if sometimes from the defect of the weakness of human nature, as is common, he spoke against someone, immediately with his cord hung over his shoulders and prostrate on the ground he humbly asked pardon of the Friar. Putting up patiently with annoyances done to him, he was happy not to hurt the offender, rather, quickly putting the offence aside, he drew from the one offending a full affection of heartfelt love.

The servant of God, Ambrose, persevered in such exercises for almost fifteen years after his entry into the Order; then it pleased the Lord to put an end to his work, and the Lord deigned to send an angel messenger to inform him of his imminent journey from this world. On one of the last journeys of his life to the Church of Saint Peter of Mechera, he was accompanied by a Friar of our Order named Tobias at whose suggestion he agreed to tell him the mystery of the revelation made to him; but then he put off telling this, either from being pressed by the difficulty of the journey or perhaps from the certainty of the awaited result, namely, the end of his life. However, later, before the debt of the flesh was loosened, he did tell it.

The day before he began to suffer, as he was about to leave the world, and mindful of the Friar seated beside him he spoke to him privately as follows:

An angel told me that I was in obedience to be buried in Saint Peter so that when brought there the illness from which I am now burdened might run its course. The angel also indicated that the sick person was to be transferred to Civitavecchia where our Friars are preparing to build a church. The angel also showed me terrible and horrible punishments of purgatory, stating that from the illness which I suffer I am to be brought from the world to Christ.

All these things were predicted by the servant of God to take place in the way he had described, so that from the evidence of the subsequent events seen in faith we know they were fulfilled.

Nor do I think it should be passed over in silence that on the day on which he died at about the morning hour he, joyful in appearance,

made a sign that he had seen something. When one of the friars assisting him asked if he had seen St Francis, he replied: 'Not at all'. When asked if an angel had appeared to him he gave no answer to the one asking. He foretold the death of a citizen known to him and whose name had been divinely revealed to him; he said that Guillelmus had died, and he told those assisting him that he Friar Ambrose was to follow him between the ninth hour and evening. And so indeed did it happen.

It is clear that the merits of the servant of God were highly regarded by the Almighty who deigned to adorn him not only with a spirit of prophecy but also with virtues and clear miracles. These acts of divine power occurred especially in parts of Civitavecchia and while the evidence of a miracle could not be hidden from those living nearby because of its brightness, his fame reached even those living far away. For the sake of all who are envious of the faith, all who become blind in the light, I have taken and noted in these pages a few from the forest of miracles, adding the names and the task set for the commission of delegates who were scrutineers of the Apostolic See. The names and task are as follows:

Gregory bishop, servant of the servants of God, to my venerable brother bishops N. of Civitavecchia, N. of Soana and to my beloved son N., Prior of Saint John of Piazza Armerina, a member of the Order of St Augustine in Civitavecchia,<sup>1</sup> health and apostolic blessing.

By the wisdom of God, Jesus Christ always renews his Church with wonderful signs to show clearly the power of his might and to bring about in mercy the cause of our salvation. Frequently also Christ works signs and wonders on earth in memory of the faithful whom he crowns in heaven. By these signs and wonders heretical obstinacy is confounded and the Catholic faith confirmed. Therefore, we thank as much as possible the Son of the eternal Father who, in our day to the honour and glory of his name and to increase devotion in all the redeemed by his precious blood, *gives new signs and works other wonders* [Sir 36:6], powerfully making those shine with miracles who have held the Catholic faith in heart, speech and deed. As indicated to us by the advice of our beloved son and by the people of Civitavecchia in their letters, the Lord of all power conferred with glory on Friar Ambrose of pious memory, a member of the Order of Friars Minor, that he should shine with so many and such great miracles as to be worthy to be prayed to as one of the saints. This is the reason why they have asked and begged us to listen to the

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<sup>1</sup> These were Rainerius, bishop of Civitavecchia, Gulielminus, bishop of Soana, and Prior Cittadinus. See Fumi, *Processo della canonizzazione del B. Ambrogio da Massa*, in, *Miscellanea francescana*, I, 77.

evidence of what divine kindness did through him. In such a holy business one must proceed only with maturity and due seriousness and in the Lord we have full confidence in your discretion. We commission you by apostolic letters to summon before you religious and other persons worthy of trust, and to enquire diligently about the deeds and miracles of the said Friar. You are to do this following the procedure we send you in our Bull. As we have indicated, you are to keep under seal the statements of the witnesses summoned. The procedure for your commission is as follows: The genuine witnesses you summon are to be examined carefully under oath on the life, character and miracles of Friar Ambrose. You are to question them about their statements: how do they know this, at what time, on what day, where? If they speak of prayers offered through him they are to be asked what words were used, the names of those of whom miracles are said to have been worked, did they know them previously, how many days before did they become sick, for how long were they sick and for how long have they been healthy, also from where they came? They are to be questioned carefully on all the circumstances and on each point by using set questions designed to be helpful. The detailed evidence and the words of the witnesses are to be consigned faithfully to writing.

Given at the Lateran, 22 May in the fourteenth year of our pontificate.<sup>1</sup>

**Listener.** Since, with due respect to the faith, it seems right and fitting to take part in ceremonies praising the merits of the saints and to venerate them with every worship of good will, why is it that holy mother Church, as if jealous of these saints, so subtly examines and investigates the truth of the wonders reported about them?

#### **Why the Church is so slow to canonize saints**

**Speaker.** In truth, slow and necessary is the process dealt with here, so that in no way does the Church *believe every spirit*, but rather probes by testing *to see whether they are from God* [1 Jn 4:1]. For according to Scripture: *One who trusts others too quickly has a shallow mind* [Sir 19:4]; and whoever would believe does not hurry because *one who moves too hurriedly misses the way* [Sir 19:2]; the spouse of Christ, in *the washing of water* [Eph 5:26ff.], must clearly avoid staining with a *spot* or by a false *wrinkle* of duplicity the glory of miracles given to her; were the Church to approve as true what is false it would stain the purity of the faith by this ambiguity. Were this to happen by accident, outside the intention of the Christian Church,

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<sup>1</sup> Wadding, *Annales Minorum*, vol. 2, ad annum 1236, n. 7, Quaracchi: Tipografia Barbera, 1931, 470; Sbaralea, *Bullarium Franciscanum*, vol. 1, 280.

which could be an occasion for the enemies of the Church to speak against it, this could easily stir up for the weak *a stone that makes them stumble and a rock that makes them fall* [1 Pet 2:8]. Holy mother Church does well and acts prudently when, mindful of the difficulty in believing and the risk of alienating other children of her womb, it supports the piety of the Catholic faith by broadening the consent of faith; it does this when the truth shines out more clearly from a public testimony which in no way can become an occasion for perfidious suspicion.

**Listener.** Because I see you have answered my doubt with a clear reasoning, I beg you now to go on with the rest of the story.

**Speaker. 1.** Christopher, from the guest house of the Holy Angel of Posterula in Civitavecchia, spoke under oath of the miracles of Friar Ambrose and affirmed that when his right hand had been shrunken for ten years and his shoulder dehydrated, he came to the tomb of the said Friar to beg for a return to health; when he had persevered there in prayer together with scourging, he returned home with his health restored through the merits of the Friar.

**2.** A woman named Avenante, wife of Ugolinus Melchinus from the village of Saint Andrew, testified under oath that she gave birth to a son whose right hand was so shrivelled that in no way could it be held out or bent. She vowed to God and Friar Ambrose that if the Lord would free her son in mercy through the merits of the Friar, she would bring a waxen image to his tomb and each year on the anniversary of his burial she would provide the food necessary for two poor people. After making the vow, then and there her child received the health for which she had prayed.

**3.** Ryldebraldinus Ranutii from Corneto stated under oath that on doing something wrong his right hand was raised high, the bone of his shoulder remained displaced so that he could do no work with it especially since it began to be totally dehydrated. Tortured in this way he invoked humbly the help of Friar Ambrose who appeared to him in a dream during the quiet of night and said to him: 'Do not be afraid, from now on you will be healed'; and taking his extended hand straightaway he was restored to health.

**4.** Domina Aldbrandina, wife of Odo Napolleus, testified under oath that she had a daughter who for two years was so dehydrated that she was like a skeleton; whatever she ate or drank was straightaway vomited up undigested. Seeking help she made a vow and had her sister take the girl to the tomb of Friar Ambrose. Brought to the tomb in search of a recovery to health, the girl immediately got up, as all present could see. When she returned home, she took food and drink which she kept down and began to put on weight.

5. Gegorius Peneriae from Civitella stated under oath that one of his legs had been shrivelled for two years; he also so suffered from an abscess that he could neither get out of bed nor move. He promised God and blessed Ambrose that if he were to get help through Ambrose's glorious merits he would personally bring a wax image to his tomb. On making this promise, he was cured from the suffering of both the contraction of his leg and the abscess. With many companions he walked on his own feet to the tomb of the holy man.

6. Domina Amata, wife of Andrew from Paterno Calabro, testified under oath that her son John had been deprived completely of the use of the limbs on his left side for more than a year. She made a vow to Friar Ambrose and with many neighbours brought her son to his tomb. She passed a whole night there in prayer and on the following morning the boy, fully cured through the intercession of the most holy Friar, returned home with his mother praising God.

7. Benincasa from the village of Saint Stephen stated under oath that when one day he wanted to go to Adglianum a person asked him pressing to return his shoes just when he was hurrying to get on with his journey. It so happened, that his left foot was broken so that from the tightening of the nerves the sole of his foot was turned upwards. He vowed to Friar Ambrose that if the Most High would in mercy deign through the merits of Ambrose to free him, he would remain always in his service. Immediately the bones of his foot began to clatter a little and the sole of his foot turned back. He was restored then and there to health, and the next day visited on his own feet the shine of the holy man.

8. A woman named Peace reported under oath that when for ten years her whole body had been tormented and her legs so constricted that she was unable to get up, a man moved by pity for her carried her in his arms to the tomb of Friar Ambrose. When she was put down at the tomb she made a vow and said: 'Blessed Ambrose, I beg your mercy promising you that if through your merits I obtain health, I will serve you as a devoted servant all the days of my life'. On invoking the Friar the woman was so restored to health before all present that she was able to return home by herself, healthy and sound.

9. Bonagura, a citizen of Perugia, affirmed under oath that he was carrying a wine-vessel with some companions who, oppressed by the weight, fled unmindful that the whole burden would come on to him. He was left useless for ten months and afterwards, forced by poverty, began to beg crawling on his hands. He made a vow to God and to Friar Ambrose that if in mercy he could be cured through the Friar's merits, each year on the anniversary of the Friar's death he would provide what was needed for two poor people; in the presence of many standing around he regained his full health.

**10.** Domina Balseverina from the village of Saint Dominic said under oath that her son Nicoletus was smitten in his left arm, neck and throat with a tumour which was reddish in colour so that all despaired of the health of the child. She took her son and hurried to the tomb of the said Friar so that she might present him in the hope of getting a cure from him. When she could not touch the tomb because of the large crowd there, she asked humbly to be given some of the ground on which he had been washed. When a Friar gave her this, she hung it around the neck of her sick son who, through the merits of the most holy Friar, regained his longed for health.

**11.** A woman named Urbevetana stated under oath that her son Belbrunus for two and a half years had become so shrunken that his knees were inseparably joined to his chest, and he was so dehydrated that he seemed to be only skin and bone. The anxious mother seeking the health of her son brought him to the tomb of Friar Ambrose. Asking for mercy she placed the child on the tomb; his bones began to rattle, the sound being heard by those standing nearby, and shortly after being lifted from the tomb he was able to return home with his former health restored.

**12.** Domina Richa from the village of Saint Iuvenalis testified under oath that her daughter had been lame for two months, was bent towards the right because of gout, and her right eye was so covered by a film that she could see nothing with the eye. When Friar Ambrose died she came to his tomb humbly asking for mercy for her daughter; on invoking the Friar the girl was freed completely from the suffering of such torments.

**13.** Domina Tramandata, wife of Benevenutus Montanarius from the village of Saint Constantius, stated under oath that when her husband laughed at the miracles of Friar Ambrose, ironically calling him a saint, his right hand became so painful that it was useless for work and he could not even use it to bring food to his mouth. Persuaded by his wife he made a vow to God and to Friar Ambrose and through the merits of Ambrose regained his longed for health.

**14.** Beatrix, wife of Simon from the village of Saint Saviour, testified under oath that for six years her right side had been so paralysed she could not get up from bed nor do any work. One day a relative named Clara brought her a small piece of the habit of Friar Ambrose. Taking it devoutly and humbly, she put it on her paralysed limbs and made a vow to the Friar that if through his merits the Lord would look on her in mercy she would visit his tomb bringing a wax image; when she made the vow the woman regained full health in the presence of many people standing nearby. Early on the following morning she walked on her own feet to the tomb of Friar Ambrose to carry out her promise.

**Listener.** As stated in Wisdom, the Lord *made himself both small and great and he takes thought for all alike* [Wis 6:7]. What then can we think is the reason why such a speedy recovery is given to some, while to others neither their own prayers nor those of others nor even works of piety have this effect?

### **On prayers answered and prayers not answered**

**Speaker.** If you ask me for an understanding of the divine will, I can aptly reply on the basis of the same authority of Scripture which you quoted: *You are righteous and you rule all things righteously, deeming it alien to your power to condemn anyone who does not deserve to be punished, nor can anyone say 'What have you done?'* [Wis 12:15 and 12]. And the Apostle says: *Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one object for special use and another for ordinary use?* [Rom 9:21]. I can reply to this adequately in a way in agreement with Christian piety. If God gives one thing to a person and denies the same thing to another, what God does will be just. Whatever merit is seen to be ours, the whole is formed by preceding grace, and anything of ours apart from the gifts of the divine bounty God accepts with the gift of helping grace and completes its perfection in this life or in glory. Therefore, whether or not God has given a grace it is a mark of generosity that God's hand gives a blessing which is evidence of hidden justice. Now, however, if you ask about the cases of those receiving gifts, I remind you I have answered this question before,<sup>1</sup> when treating of lack of faith and a need for sin to be taken away as a double barrier to grace. Now, because you pursue even further the question of prayers and works of piety not answered, I see I have to reply with words and arguments from the saints. If one of these saints says that someone praying was not heard, as you propose in the question, know that the reason for this is that this person has not prayed as faithfully, devoutly, with perseverance in prayer and the habit of prayer as is necessary; or the person was interrupted by some distraction; or the person was praying for grace for a person refusing grace; or lastly either consciously or unconsciously the person asked for something which would not be helpful for salvation. When these conditions are found in a person, namely, piety, perseverance, praying for oneself and for salvation, the saints state one is to hold that, according to the warrant of God's liberality and the fittingness of the one asking, what is asked for is obtained by the devout, or, if perhaps the request is not fitting, what is asked for is given always in an equal or even greater blessing.

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<sup>1</sup> See above pages 16-17.

**Listener.** It is sufficiently clear from what you have said that often sin is the reason why the vows of people asking are not heard, for the God who in the Gospel encourages the tardy to ask is always ready to bestow gifts. But now I ask you to get back to the list of deeds so as to continue in the same order with the wonders of the man of God.

**Speaker. 15.** Domina Gratia, daughter of Damien, from the village of the Holy Apostles, testified under oath that for five years she had suffered from epilepsy. In time as the sickness developed, her neighbours would be horrified as her tongue would burn like fire. She prayed to God and to Friar Ambrose and on invoking the name of the Friar she was straightaway cured so that from then on she never suffered from the same pain.

**16.** Marcus Abbasarius, from the village of Saint Iuvenalis, confirmed under oath that when his son Mercuinus was suffering from epilepsy, he made a vow to Friar Ambrose that if the Lord would in mercy free him from this sickness, for the rest of his life he would provide on the anniversary of the Friar's death what was needed by four poor people. After making this vow the boy was immediately cured so completely that no sign of the illness remained.

**17.** Domina Diamante, wife of Clusius from the village of Saint Faustinus, stated under oath that for the past eleven years she was so totally blind that sometimes on nine occasions in a single day she would be horribly disturbed. She made a vow to Friar Ambrose and came to his tomb humbly and devoutly begging for mercy. From the time the woman returned home she was completely cured through the merits of the most holy Friar.

**18.** Pellis, from the village of Saint Mustiola, stated under oath that his brother Leonardus had suffered for two months from epilepsy and would become disquieted up to forty times within the space of a day and a night; he twisted his mouth as if he were possessed, and disturbed people with his loud cries. On one occasion he said among other things: 'Bring me to the tomb of Friar Ambrose'. With a covering placed over Leonardus, Pellis himself with six companions carried him to the tomb of the Friar where Pellis made a vow and said:

I promise you, holy Ambrose, that if through  
your merits you free my brother from the  
terrible sickness which afflicts him, I will visit  
your tomb with a wax image and devoutly  
serve you for the whole of my life.

He made the vow and spent the whole night in prayer; on the following morning, through the merits of the Friar, Leonardus was completely cured and returned home on his own feet.

19. Sibia, wife of Odo, confirmed under oath that her son Guido suffered from the illness called madness so that when disturbed he seemed truly to be possessed. On the advice of a soldier named Tinatius she made a vow to God and to Friar Ambrose saying: 'Saint Ambrose, help me as I pray to you for the health of my son, and if you do this I will visit your tomb bringing a wax image'. When she made the vow, through the merits of the most holy Friar, the boy never again suffered from this illness.

20. Ventura, son of Yldeprandus Crassus from Montorio nei Frentane, testified under oath that when a woman named Gratia had been troubled by demons for four years to such an extent that she could hardly be restrained by four men, her dear ones brought her often to visit holy places but not even there were the demons expelled. Finally, while Friar Ambrose was still alive and staying in the Church of the town called Saint Victoria, others brought her to this place. As requested by the bystanders, Friar Ambrose commanded the demons to leave, and in obedience to his command they left without causing any harm.

21. Palmeria, daughter of Albasia from Viterbo, stated under oath that while on a journey she came thirsty to a well; she asked a youth there to give her a drink as he drew water for travellers. As the youth offered water to the thirsty woman, another woman arrived wanting to snatch the water for herself. Palmeria refused to give her the water, and she angrily cursed Palmeria saying: 'Drink the water and may a thousand demons enter your body'. Palmeria drank the water from the well and left. Eight days later she gave birth to a son who died; she lamented excessively and began to tear herself strongly with her hands and to shout out. Often priests came to exorcize and drive out the demons which tormented her in this way; as they read over her in the customary way from the Gospels or other prayers, she began to be more violently troubled by the demons. One of the demons called himself a judge and no one was able to better him in argument. Palmeria added that before Friar Ambrose died, the demons shouted out: 'There is one born and still alive who will make us flee'. After the death of Ambrose they called out saying: 'Let us go to Ambrose who drives us from our dwelling'. Then her husband Blasius took her to Civitavecchia and placed her at the tomb of the holy father. When he had prayed there with fervour and devotion imploring mercy for his wife, through the merits of the most holy Friar she regained her health. **Listener.** According to my understanding, it is a rashness to be punished when the mouth of a person given to cursing is at fault, especially when, as you state, the demons were given such power over the body of the woman from another's curse.

### On words of cursing rightly and wrongly uttered

**Speaker.** The habit of cursing is to be avoided by the just, lest it happen that a curse against someone, uttered without a just reason, makes the person subject to equitable punishment before the face of God. Hence Isaac the patriarch when blessing his son Jacob who represents the just said: *Cursed be everyone who curses you* [Gen 27:29]; as if he had said clearly: Whoever, wishing to harm without a reasonable motive, hurls a spear of cursing at an innocent person, is guilty and liable to a similar punishment now; the person also sometimes takes on the fault of wrongdoers which as the Apostle warns is to be avoided: *Wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God* [1 Cor 6:10]. By this word the wonderful preacher condemns the custom of cursing and preaches that those addicted to this habit will incur a punishment to be paid. The Psalmist also speaks of those who curse: *Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness* [Ps 13:3 DRB];<sup>1</sup> those who pour out words of cursing from this evil habit and vomit out these words, show what bitterness of anger thrives within them. But in truth such people do not get off scot-free, because often it is allowed that, from the merits of the person against whom the curse is directed, the desired misfortune happens as in the example under discussion; a curse may be sent out but by a just judgment of God it sometimes will be turned back against the very ones who uttered the curse not mindful of a zeal for justice. Solomon was right in saying: *Like a sparrow in its flitting, like a swallow in its flying, an undeserved curse goes nowhere* [Prov 26:2]. A bird flying in the sky and a swallow restlessly moving in giddy swoops return to rest in the nests which they left; and a curse uttered against an innocent person, since it does not find a home in this person, goes back to and remains in the person who uttered the curse as a bird goes back to the nest. It is written: *Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, and a stone will come back on the one who starts it rolling* [Prov 26:27].

The just from a zeal for good are accustomed to direct the spear of a curse on sinners as they deserve; the just desire to inflict on sinners the suffering of a temporal punishment or the rigour of a divine censure so as to bring them by penance to health. I can say with prophetic certainty that the punishment will never be taken away when called down upon detractors. Paul directed that the fornicator in Corinth be handed *over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh* so that *his spirit may be saved* [1 Cor 5:6]. Eliseus the prophet on his way to Bethel cursed those jeering at him and exposed them to bodily death by being mauled by bears, so that anyone confused by demonic

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<sup>1</sup> These words are not in the NRSV in Ps 14:3.

troubling might also look to penance for salvation. Those jeering at Eliseus were a figure of the derision of the Jews by which they insulted Christ the Lord asking him to come down from the yoke of the cross. These people just mentioned prefigure by a temporal death that an everlasting punishment is to remain with the perpetrators of a perfidious action.

**Listener.** What you say is very pleasing, but to one hungry in the stomach of the mind please continue to feed me with the dishes of your story.

**Speaker. 22.** Domina Margarita, wife of Albonetus, stated under oath that her son Daniel had suffered for seven months from a rupture which medical skills could not cure. On the day of the death of Friar Ambrose she went with her son to be present at the funeral rites of the Friar; the woman took the hand of the Friar and with it traced the sign of the cross on the place of the rupture asking for the grace of healing; as soon as she did this, the swelling decreased and the boy returned home with his mother and felt no further pain.

**23.** Palmerius, a farmer from the village of Saint Laurence, affirmed under oath that from lifting a heavy object he had suffered from a rupture for seven years and his intestines came down into the bladder. Despairing of doctors, he made a vow to Friar Ambrose through whose merits he regained his health. He also added that when warned by the Friars to come on a certain day to testify to the miracle, he did not come at the prescribed time and fell back into a more severe suffering. Repeating his vow to God and Friar Ambrose he promised that, if they deigned in mercy to spare him, without delay he would testify to the truth. As soon as he said this his intestines, which had fallen again, were brought back to their right place.

**24.** Cinchius Odonis from the village of Saint Faustinus stated under oath that his son had been ruptured for two months. After getting remedies for him from many doctors but making no progress with any of them, he arranged with a doctor to cure him with surgery; however, fearing the death of the boy, the doctor would not enter into the contract. One day towards evening the man and his wife made a vow to Friar Ambrose and on the following morning they found the boy fully cured through the merits of the holy Friar.

**25.** Domina Laetitia testified under oath that her son Andriotus had suffered a blow in the genitals from which he was swollen in his chest and bladder. Because of inclement weather she did not dare to bring him to be treated by doctors, but she made a vow and brought the boy to the tomb of Friar Ambrose. She continued to pray there for the health of her son and, in the sight of all the bystanders, the boy was healed; he put away the bindings from around him and returned home healthy and active.

**26.** A woman named Riccadonna, mother of Henry Roculus from the village of Saint Iuvenalis, stated under oath that her daughter Benenata so suffered from a large tumour caused by an abscess in the neck and shoulder that she could not turn or move her neck. The woman made a vow to Friar Ambrose that if in mercy the Lord might look upon her she would visit the Friar's tomb bringing a waxen image; next morning the tumour broke and after a foul discharge had come out she was excellently cured. The woman added that when her son Henry suffered from pain in the heart and she could find no one who could give an effective remedy for this, she made a vow to the most holy Friar and placed her son on his tomb; she had prayed there for a short time asking for a cure and at the invocation of the servant of God the boy was then and there cured.

**27.** Beneamata, daughter of Bonsignolus from the village of Saint Iuvenalis, affirmed under oath that she had suffered from a most dangerous tumour in her head and could neither sleep nor rest her head in bed even a little. When she made a vow to the most holy Friar, in the presence of her sisters the tumour broke through her nose and immediately through the merits of the Friar the woman received complete health.

**28.** Seramina, wife of Arvinus from the village of the Holy Angel of Posterula, testified under oath that her husband was close to death from a large tumour which made his limbs cold as if he were dying. She made a vow to Friar Ambrose that if her husband in mercy was cured, for the whole of her life she would give substantial alms to the poor. When she made the vow the tumour broke immediately and he vomited a discharge mixed with blood through his mouth; getting up from his couch he was completely restored to health.

**29.** Gemma, wife of Rainaldus Floremans from the village of Saint Christopher, stated under oath that she had a tumour in the chest and suffered such acute fevers from the stress of the pain that she seemed to be completely deranged in her mind. The doctors despaired of her life but her husband promised Friar Ambrose that if his wife was restored to health he would offer devoutly a wax image and have a lime-kiln built for his church. When he made the vow straightaway the tumour broke and she vomited a discharge mixed with blood from her mouth, the fever subsided, and on the following day she walked to visit the shrine of the blessed Friar.

**30.** Domina Supercla, wife of Acomandus from the village of Saint Constantius, testified under oath that she was afflicted with many illnesses and moreover had a tumour on her thigh which prevented her from getting up from her bed or bending her legs. On the anniversary of the day on which Friar Ambrose of blessed memory left this world she made a vow to him in her many troubles, promising to bring a wax

image to his tomb. When she had made the vow, immediately she felt a lessening of the pain; she asked for her clothes, got up from her bed and hurried to the body of the Friar. On her return home through his merits she stayed free of any illness.

**31.** Divitia, wife of Benetendus from the village of the Holy Angel, testified under oath that her daughter Ficta Montagna for fifteen days had on her neck an awful tumour which discharged a large amount of liquid, and because of this she felt much shame. One evening her mother made a vow to Friar Ambrose and by the following morning the girl got up restored to her former health.

**Listener.** Women from an unhappy custom are commonly proud of their bodily beauty often, even when it is lacking, seeking it by false appearances, and so by a just judgment they are afflicted sometimes bodily in this life by grave punishments; they suffer punishment in the very thing in which they represent the fault of pride present in themselves and are an occasion of ruin to others by a harmful appearance.

#### **That bodily punishments are often a sign and punishment of inner fault**

**Speaker.** We know that not only women but men also, although not so generally, take pride in the appearance of the body and they should thank the Creator generously for giving such gifts of grace, and should defend them more strongly. Hence Ezekiel said to the prince of Tyre: *Your heart was proud because of your beauty* [Ezek 28:17]. The justice of this remark is added: *I brought out fire from within you; it consumed you, and I turned you to ashes on the earth, in the sight of all who saw you* [Ezek 28:18]. Because he was proud over the bodily beauty given to him, it was right that a punishing fire should come from his very flesh, so that he might bear punishment in the very thing which he stupidly claimed as his own while it was God's glory. So the last words are apt: *I turned you to ashes on the earth, in the sight of all who saw you*. He was reduced to ashes on the earth, because of oneself a person has only rottenness and is a worm, and one is turned from the puffing up of pride by any humiliation. All watching see this as an example of unhappiness, namely, that they have to bear a serious shame of punishment before those to whom certainly they have been harmfully an occasion of scandal. Isaiah says of the vanity and punishment of women:

*The Lord said: Because the daughters of Zion are haughty and walk with outstretched necks, glancing wantonly with their eyes, mincing along as they*

*go, tinkling with their feet; the Lord will afflict with scabs the heads of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will lay bare their secret parts [Isa 3:16-17].*

One can often see an apt proportion between the infliction of bodily punishment and the fairness of the one punishing. What other meaning has a tumour in the body than to indicate a tumour of pride in the mind? Pride of the mind is often hidden from the eyes of others, but it is opened for all to see when the Lord judges a suitable punishment has to be inflicted. Hezekiah, king of Israel, after the total defeat of the Assyrians by divine power, felt pride in his heart and did not give due thanks to God for the victory; he was rightly afflicted by an ulcer in his body which showed clearly to everyone the pride hidden in his heart.<sup>1</sup> A further text says of proud Israel: *Israel's pride testifies against him* [Hos 5:5]. Through the punishment of exile, the sin of pride hidden in the heart of a proud people, was brought into the open; but the fault of the heart was taken away by the laments of penance, just as the humbled king was cured by a poultice of figs. To those bent under the bitterness of penance the merciful Lord gives a sweet infusion of consolation. This is what *the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation* [2 Cor 1:3; see Lk 15:11ff.] did on meeting his prodigal son; the father not only received the penitent but fell upon his neck as a sign of former familiarity and was consoled in kissing the one freed by the judgment of perfect reconciliation.

**Listener.** I admit willingly that it is completely right for you to stray a little from the order of your story when I see that sometimes you reply at length to my words in a way of much value to me.

**Speaker. 32.** Ranerius Christiani from the village of Saint Iuvenalis stated under oath that for twelve years he suffered from a channel of gout in his left foot for which no remedies had been able to cure him. Other people could hardly bear to be near him because of the stench and his sister encouraged him to commend himself humbly to Friar Ambrose. On invoking the Friar he began to feel better, and three days after making his vow he was totally cured of his illness.

**33.** A woman named Iacoba from the village of Saint Andrew testified under oath that her daughter Claravisu clearly suffered in her head from the sickness called lupus. One evening while Friar Ambrose was still alive, the woman met him as he passed through the area. The woman humbly and devoutly begged him to give her advice and help on the sickness of her daughter; the Friar looked at the sickness, touched it with his hand and made the sign of the cross over

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<sup>1</sup> See 2 Kings, chapters 19-20.

it. Next morning when the girl got up the mother looked at the place of the sickness and saw imprinted there a sign of the cross; on the third day the girl was completely cured from the sickness.

**34.** Stephen Herman from Hylglanum stated under oath that for two years the sickness called cancer was evident in his shin-bone so that a large part of the whole leg seemed to him to be infected. He had not been cured by doctors even though he had paid them much money. He made a vow to Friar Ambrose and within two days was cured totally of the dried up sickness.

**35.** Berta, wife of Scannus from Pisa, testified under oath that her son Maximianus had suffered for a year and a half from the sickness called rabies which caused a horrible swelling of his whole neck and head. One evening she made a vow to Friar Ambrose and on the following morning when the boy got up from his bed he was seen to be cured most excellently.

**36.** Theodora, wife of Manens a carpenter from the village of Saint Andrew, stated under oath that her daughter Morvida had been afflicted for three months with a hardened gout, but had been cured totally when the mother made a vow and invoked the help of Friar Ambrose. When her husband returned home, the mother told him that their daughter had been cured through the merits of the holy Friar. Her husband acted unworthily and began to curse the saint of God. Hence it happened, so it is thought, that the daughter fell back more seriously into the illness. Lying on her sick bed and hearing that a girl from Montepulciano had been healed through the merits of the Friar, Morvida said:

Holy Ambrose, do you free strangers and abandon your own household? I ask you in frequent prayers to free my unfortunate self through your merits; if you do this, then each year on the anniversary of your death I will give to one poor person whatever is needed.

After making her vow the woman immediately recovered so fully that never again did she feel any trace of this pain.

**37.** Mathaliona, wife of Rainutius a merchant from the village of the Holy Apostles, confirmed under oath that when Friar Ambrose was near the end of his life she went to where he was with her daughter Massana who for four years had a tumour in the throat which was horrible for anyone to see; she asked the Friar to make the sign of the cross over the sickness of the girl. He did this and the girl was fully cured on the following day.

**38.** Tornambene a butcher from Civitavecchia stated under oath that he had suffered for four years from heart trouble, during which time no remedy was effective. A neighbour encouraged him to make a

vow to Friar Ambrose that if he, Ambrose, would look on him in mercy, he would visit his tomb with a wax image. After making the vow, he immediately got up from his bed and never again felt any such pain.

**39.** Domina Iacoba Aldobrandi from Lubrianum testified under oath that she so suffered for four days in her throat from the sickness called livid that she could neither eat nor drink, and as she weakened, she lost the use of speech and fully despaired of health. She was taken quickly to Civitavecchia where she made a vow to Friar Ambrose that if he would free her from this grave illness, she would walk on her own feet to bring a wax image to his tomb. In the morning the woman got up from her bed and found herself fully restored to her earlier state of health; she returned home with joy and took care to carry out diligently what she had promised.

**40.** Domina Gisla Devica Canutii confirmed under oath that for twenty four years<sup>1</sup> she had been deprived of the sense of hearing. She went to the tomb of Friar Ambrose where she made a vow and then immediately heard the divine office being celebrated and, as many in the church could see, she showed by gestures and signs that she was fully cured.

**41.** A woman named Sclaralda, wife of Aegidius from Vallis Platta, testified under oath that her son suffered from a flow of blood so that his life was totally despaired of; she promised Friar Ambrose that if he would in mercy free her son, she would visit his tomb with a waxen image; having made the vow the boy was then and there cured of the flow of blood.

**42.** Caradonna, wife of Girardus from Vallis Platta, stated under oath that for four months she carried in her womb a dead foetus which could not be expelled by any art or skill. Distressed for three days and nights she lost the use of speech and her husband made a vow to Friar Ambrose that if he would in mercy cure his wife, he would bring her with a wax image to his tomb. After he had made this vow, the woman gave birth to the dead foetus and was freed immediately from her pain through the merits of the Friar.

**43.** Gilius from the village of the Holy Apostles stated under oath that for six years he had suffered from such severe dysentery that no one could bear to be in his presence because of the smell. He invoked the name of Friar Ambrose and merited to receive immediately full health.

**44.** Bonacursus Rainaldi from the village of Saint Faustinus affirmed under oath that the mouth of his son had an unbearable

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<sup>1</sup> Fumi, *Processo della canonizzazione del B. Ambrogio da Massa*, in, *Miscellanea francescana*, I, 131, 'for fourteen years'.

odour, much of his tongue was gnawed to pieces and also some ulcers horrible to look at broke out on his cheeks. When no doctor could be found to care for him, the boy asked his father to take him to the tomb of the holy Friar. The father agreed and did this and through the merits of the Friar the boy was cured that very day.

**Listener.** The merits of this Friar are certainly great in the sight of God for by his intercession so many kinds of healing are obtained; there are many who owe him thanks, people for whom mercifully the lifting of such suffering was obtained.

### **On gratitude to God and whether health is always more helpful for salvation**

**Speaker.** I agree with what you say, namely, that those so cured are obliged to give much back to God, but I also think that we are bound to no less a debt of gratitude, we who, although we have not felt such sufferings in our body, could well have borne such or even worse, had we not been saved by the preserving effect of grace. It is written: *The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end* [Lam 3:22]; and the Psalmist says: *If the Lord had not been my help, my soul would soon have lived in the land of silence* [Ps 94:17]. As if by joining the two sentences it was said clearly: It is only the mercy of God which guards us from the dangers of the present life lest we be overcome, only this mercy in the same way preserves us when we fall by holding us up lest we be held by the teeth of hell. Isaiah says: *If the Lord of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we would have been like Sodom, and become like Gomorrah* [Isa 1:9]. For:

*Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which, in the same manner as they, indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire* [Jude 7].

So we from our youth always have a tendency to move to what is evil, to turn to the depths of evil; unless we be protected by the seed of grace we would pass into being fuel and food for the eternal fire because of our sins. Therefore, if you think those whom you know have received gifts of healing are debtors of grace, believe also that those preserved free by mercy from falling into similar situations are bound by bonds of deep gratitude.

What person can prove conclusively whether or not health of body or limbs always serves as a benefit to the soul, since often we see strength taken away from just people without clear reason while

on the other hand we see strength given to sinners as *instruments of wickedness* for *sin* [Rom 6:13]. It was more beneficial to the future doctor of the Gentiles to lose his eyesight, for while held in the night of ignorance and persecuting the members of Christ he was led to be watchful in prayer. Perhaps also it was a more useful gift of grace to Tobias senior to lose the light of his eyes after so many works of mercy, so that from the disturbance of deeds and the distraction of his worries he was recalled to the inner life of contemplation. In contemplation he could recognize how much sweetness he lacked because of the disturbance of being worried *by many things* [Lk 10:41]. Or certainly, as it is written, *this trial the Lord permitted to happen to him, that an example might be given to posterity of his patience* [Tob 2:12 DRB]; he who was anxious to show a perfection in works of mercy, was to provide also an example of patience by bearing manfully his blindness. Therefore, no one is exempt from giving praise to God or is immune from a debt to grace; either one shares in gifts of health or other graces, or has taken gifts already given, or in consideration of our fragility God has exempted us from punishments lest we be punished violently for a fault. Whatever happens to us is of benefit to pious minds, and the example of Paul and Tobias inspires in us a love of our generous Father and due acknowledgment of graces given.

**Listener.** What you say is pleasing. But I still ask you to go on as you had begun and not omit anything of what you remember of the deeds of this man.

**Speaker. 45.** Domina Guilgla, wife of Franculus from the village of the Holy Apostles, stated under oath that when she ridiculed the miracles of Friar Ambrose, her neighbours claim that she lost her eyesight on returning home. She was immediately sorry for her scepticism and ridicule and vowed to the Friar that were her sight to be restored she would publicly proclaim the fault of her blindness and his holiness. On doing this, through the merits of the Friar her health was restored and she made a public confession praising God and the most holy Friar.

**46.** Francesca, wife of Compagnus from the village of Saint Faustinus, testified under oath that her son Francis had his right eye so covered with a disease that he could see nothing and he continually rubbed the eye with his hands. His mother made a vow and brought him to the tomb of the man of God where she placed him on the tomb; when he had been there for a short time he got down and immediately by the prayers of the holy man was fully cured.

**47.** Domina Godivilla, wife of Peter from Holy Cross, confirmed under oath that one day she left her son Angelo healthy and safe at home while she went to a nearby river to wash his clothes; on her

return she found her son deprived of hearing, sight and speech. He remained in this condition from afternoon until early morning, when the mother made a vow and brought him to the tomb of Friar Ambrose. The mother spent the night there in prayer and in the morning the boy received his sight, hearing and, before all present, began to speak.

**48.** Domina Franca, from the village of Holy Mary stated under oath that she set out during Lent for Rome to pray there and to visit the station churches as was her custom; because her sight was failing she would not have been able to return to Civitavecchia unless her son had guided her. When she returned home she was not able to visit the tomb of the holy Friar on her own but, guided by her neighbours, she came to the tomb where she spent the night in prayer and around the middle of the night she regained her lost sight.

**49.** Ligerius, treasurer of Civitavecchia, stated under oath that his son Benevenutus and several others went to the river Palea to swim; as Ligerius had advised, they climbed down and swam close to the bank of the river. When Ligerius left them for a little while to go to other places, his son went into deeper water and sank in the fast flowing river. Another boy who saw this ran quickly to Ligerius and told him what had happened to his son. Ligerius ran to the whirlpool but drew back on not finding his son; tearing his hair *with loud cries and tears* [Heb 5:7] he called out: 'Holy Ambrose, give me my son!' Gualterius, one of the bystanders when shown the place of the whirlpool, dived into the depths, found the boy and carried him already dead from the river. When the boy had been placed on the bank of the river, suddenly against all hope the boy came alive, opened his eyes and called out: 'Holy Ambrose, help me!' When Ligerius heard this he took his son and returned quickly to the town with many accompanying them, and he brought his son safe to the tomb of the holy Friar.

**50.** Montaria, wife of Ugolinus a saddler from the village of Saint Christopher, stated under oath that Clara Zaldonis gave birth to a boy but to the women present the child seemed to be premature. The midwives, wanting to see if the child was alive, put him in warm water to test whether by breathing or moving, the child would prove to be alive; when it was clear that he could neither speak nor use any of his senses, in fact his colour belonged more to a dead person, they all together began to call out in tearful voices:

Holy Ambrose, humbly we beg your mercy, that you would deign to show the glory of divine power on this child, so that, until he receives baptism his life may be returned to him.

At this prayer immediately the boy revived and after receiving the grace of baptism lived a further four weeks.

**51.** Altagratia Ioannis from the village of Saint Mustiola stated under oath that her son Francis would lie in his cradle and once when she was overcome by sleep for a long time, the infant turned this way and that and fell from the cradle; rolling on the ground he died from the cold. When the mother woke she looked in the cradle and not seeing her son called her husband saying: 'Where is our son?' When the husband heard this he was surprised, got out of bed, and weeping he too looked for the boy whom they found cold and without any sign of life beside the cradle from which he had fallen. Instantly, calling on the help of Friar Ambrose they prayed humbly for their son; the boy immediately began to move and through the merits of the Friar regained his health.

**52.** Leonard from Montepulciano affirmed under oath that his son John while looking carelessly from a window in the palace of Dominus Ugolinus fell from a height of five paces and four feet; the men and women who were close by in the street found a whitish liquid coming from the ears of the boy. When his father arrived he took his son in his arms and carried him, wanting to find out if any breath of life remained in him; but in the judgment of all the bystanders his brain had come out of his head, hence all affirmed that he was dead. The father made a vow to Friar Ambrose, and the boy immediately came to life as one woken from sleep and in the sight of all present was given back his health.

**53.** Balduinus, son of Barthelotus, suffered shipwreck near the island of Liliun, and was submerged in the water from the third to the ninth hour. Men and women ran to the shore hoping to save the drowning man; Lupicinus dived naked into the sea, found the submerged man and brought him from the sea already dead. They lifted him up by the feet so that the water he had swallowed might come out of his mouth; when this proved of no avail they prepared to bury the dead man. Montagna, one of the women standing there, advised them to invoke the help of Friar Ambrose. They did this and immediately the dead man came back to life and gave due thanks to God and to Friar Ambrose.

**54.** Domina Rosa Magaloti from the village of the Holy Apostles stated under oath that one night she put her young son to bed but while she was sleeping Friar Ambrose appeared to her and said: 'Get up, get up, because your son has fallen between the cradle and the wall'. The woman awoke, called out to her husband, told him about the vision and they looked in the cradle for the child. Not finding him, they hurried to the place indicated by the holy Friar, found him and lifted

up the boy safe from the place where he had fallen as the Friar had said.

**55.** A clerk, Guido Petri Brunae, affirmed under oath that one night he was too sick to sleep. There appeared to him a venerable man like a shining star dressed in the habit of the Friars Minor. He presumed this man was Friar Ambrose and he asked him about his glory and condition. The Friar replied: 'Blessed son, do not delay to wake your wife from sleep because your son is dying; he fell and is caught between the bed and the wall'. He woke his wife and both of them quickly got out of bed and found the boy dead in the place indicated. Without delay they bound themselves by a vow to Friar Ambrose and joyfully held their child now restored to life for which they gave due thanks.

**Listener.** Gregory says: 'when a good or bad spirit takes a soul leaving a dying person, the spirit will keep this soul unchanged for all eternity'.<sup>1</sup> How then can what we read be true, namely, that a Roman emperor was taken from hell in view of prayers offered and later admitted to eternal life?<sup>2</sup>

#### **On Trajan and others called back to life after being damned**

**Speaker.** If you remember what was said earlier,<sup>3</sup> you will recognize what I say now in answer to your question. On the matter of the final divine judgment one must hold what blessed Gregory defined about deceased persons, namely, as already stated, that those saved by a definitive sentence do not benefit from prayers offered, nor do those subjected to eternal punishment rise again because of prayers offered to snatch them away. So it is written: *Whether a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it will lie* [Eccl 11:3]. For a tree to fall to the south means that the soul of a deceased person is assigned already to the possession of eternal joys, or to be in purgatory with a sure hope of future freedom; to fall to the north

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<sup>1</sup> I have not been able to find this sentence. But in *Dialogue Four*, n. 29, *The Fathers of the Church*, Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1959, vol. 39, 225 one reads: 'The saints, then, rejoice in bliss, and we cannot but believe that from the day of their death the reprobate burn in hell.'

<sup>2</sup> Paulus Diaconus, *S. Gregorii magni vita*, n. 27 (PL 75, 57); Ioannes Diaconus, *S. Gregorii magni vita*, l. 4, n. 44 (PL 75, 205); Cfr S. Bonaventura, *Sententiarum* I, dist. 43, dubium 7, *Opera omnia* (1, 778); *Sententiarum* IV, dist. 20, pars 1, dubium 3, *ibid.* (4, 314); *Major Life*, Part 2, II, n. 1, *English Omnibus of Sources for the life of St Francis*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1987, 753.

<sup>3</sup> See pages 24-26.

indicates a soul irrevocably destined for eternal flames because of the quality of their sins.

You need to examine more carefully the calling back of Trajan through the merits of blessed Gregory. I think what we read of people called back to life by the many prayers of saints can be applied to him without prejudging a better opinion. A better opinion could be that, although beyond faith based on charity they were taken from this present life and assigned to hell, the condemned accepted that they were not sentenced by God definitively to remain there permanently.<sup>1</sup> It could be that in the eyes of the Judge they developed at the moment of death some disposition of deep faith or good works while still alive or punishment of the heart, which certainly according to the pleasure of the merciful God in due time could lift one to better things, that is, to the effect of grace gained by the merits of the saints. The Psalmist says of the irrevocable moderation of divine judgment towards some, and of the wonderful mercy of God towards others: *The Lord is king forever and ever; the nations shall perish from his land. O Lord, you will hear the desire of the meek; you will strengthen their heart, you will incline your ear* [Ps 10:16-17]. Who are more correctly called *the nations* than lost infidels or sinners, even Christians, who act like *the nations*? Those, namely, who *despise the riches of his kindness* [Rom 2:4], who while still on earth did not want to put an end to sin, will certainly by a just judgment be made to *perish* from the land of the living while the Lord will reign forever and ever. However, other sinners who acknowledge their poverty in virtues and good works, seek the Lord from a desire for correction and prepare their hearts for grace, even if they do this less than they should, the intention of their inner disposition will not fail to reach the ear of the merciful Father. God gives mercy beyond their merits to all who are led to pray to the saints, but God does not deny justice, which God would clearly do if those persisting in sin were to be freed from the punishment due to sinners. We have said that through the prayers of the saints a person may be brought back to gain merit, so as to balance the evils of a past time with the newness of a spiritual life, and they then produce more fruit from the root of charity. This is not contrary to the truth of the Judge, who does not act in an unworthy way, but who by sparing makes clear the glory of omnipotence, who by declaring strongly an abundance of piety and abundant sweetness, chooses to show mercy rather than be angry.

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<sup>1</sup> So also S. Bonaventura, *Sententiarum* III, dist. 22, q. 5, ad 5, *Opera omnia* (3, 462); *Sententiarum* IV, dist. 45, art. 1, q. 3, ad 1, *ibid.* (4, 942), distinguishes between a definitive sentence and a non definitive sentence.

## IV

## ON SOME OTHER FRIARS

**Listener.** Your clear reasoning has wonderfully satisfied my interest. Now I ask you to continue as you began and tell of other Friars of our Order.

**Speaker.** Although I know from Scripture that *it is good to conceal the secret of the king*, but also that it is good *to acknowledge and reveal the works of God with fitting honour* [Tob 12:7], I freely admit that your interest prompts me and your attentive listening moves me to do what you ask. Hence, as you ask, I am happy to add the deeds of some other Friars so that the works of divine praise, even though spoken in plain language by the faithful, may increase devotion. The signs of holiness which shine through our Friars the servants of God, especially those known to have lived in parts of Italy, cause wonder to all near and far; so it is my intention, with the help of God's grace, to shorten the record and to bring out in a surer style what now for a long time has been hidden from the knowledge of the faithful by a certain negligence.

FRIAR GRATIAN WHO IS BURIED IN OSIMO<sup>1</sup>

There was a priest born in the region of Romagna, by name Gratian, who developed wonderful simplicity; while still alive and with Christ leading the way he did deeds to be admired in the whole world.

1. When a woman of the town of Osimo lost the sight of one eye she came to the man of God to ask for health and she brought her son who had lost the sight in both eyes; she humbly asked the man of God in front of many people to make the sign of the cross both on her eye and on the eyes of her son. Friar Gratian in pure simplicity and full faith came to the centre of the group and in the sight of all present made the sign of the cross on the eyes of both of them. When he did this the mother and son returned home blessed with the health they had requested and gave due thanks to God.

2. A youth from Vectice suffered from such delirium that he disturbed his neighbours with hissing and howling and he tore his clothes with his hands and teeth. His mother brought him to Friar Gratian. When the Friar made the sign of the cross over him,

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<sup>1</sup> This is the Gratian who had been Minister of the Friars in Romagna and whom St Anthony, after the celebration of the General Chapter in Assisi (1221), took with him, as recorded in the first legend of the same Saint, *Life of St Anthony (Assidua)*, ch. 6, Padua: Edizioni Porziuncola, 1984, 9.

immediately the boy was cured and from then on was never again subject to this sickness.

3. A man from Ripa Transonis carried a heavy load of wood on his shoulders but fell so seriously that he suffered a rupture and developed a lump like an egg on his flank. Relying on the merits of Friar Gratian to be cured, he asked the Friar to make the sign of the cross on the place of the rupture. The Friar gladly did this and said: 'Have faith, my son' and he touched the place of the wound, blessed him and sent him away. When the man returned home he found the lump had gone completely.

4. Leopardus Salvi suffered for a long time from a most serious ailment in his feet so that he could not walk at all. He had himself carried to a place where he knew Friar Gratian was stationed. When he asked the Friar to make the sign of the cross over the place of his pain, the Friar before all present humbly agreed. The sick man also asked for his feet to be washed with the water used to wash the feet of the Friar; when this was done, immediately the pain went and he was cured so that he never again felt this pain.

5. A man from the hamlet Castagno Secco had been so deformed for ten years that he could not get out of bed. He was carried to the place where the Friar of Osimo lived. He earnestly asked Friar Gratian to lay his hands on him, and the Friar took his hand and encouraged him to get up. Immediately through the merits of the Friar he got up and on his own feet returned to the bishopric of Osimo where, to the glory of God, he told both those he knew and did not know about the miracle done to himself.

6. A boy from Castrum-Ficardi lost the sight in both eyes and was brought by his father to Friar Gratian. Before many people present there the Friar made the sign of the cross on his eyes and he regained his lost sight.

7. Another totally blind boy was brought to Friar Gratian while he was still living. When the Friar made the sign of the cross on his blind eyes, the boy, as he had requested, immediately was able to see the light of the sky, so that before all present he could put a thread through the eye of a needle on his own.

8. A boy in Osimo, born with shriveled and closed hands, was brought to the tomb of Friar Gratian, who through his merits opened his hands in an instant; before other Friars of our Order who were standing there, he opened and held out his hands restored to right health.

9. A woman from the diocese of Osimo did work not allowed on a feast day and suddenly by a divine judgment her arm was shriveled. She went to the tomb of the Friar, invoked his help, and immediately merited a cure of her hand.

**10.** A woman from Osimo had both hands shriveled so that she could do no work. She was brought to the tomb of the Friar and after she had stayed there for a short time she returned home healthy and safe through his merits.

**11.** One day in Trabes Bonantis, when Friar Gratian was preaching to people who had come together, lightning began to flash, loud thunder was heard, and a violent wind mixed with rain fell on them so that the people who had come hurried to get away from the place. But Friar Gratian exhorted all who ran and said to them confidently: 'Do not run away, my brothers and sisters, because the Lord will provide suitable weather now for the word of God'. The Friar prayed and, to the wonder of all who saw it, the rain divided into two parts and like a stone thrown away the rain did not touch any of those who stayed; in fact over the large crowd of people seated in the place of preaching the sun shone so that the men and women who saw what happened attributed it to divine power.<sup>1</sup>

**Listener.** Clearly the words of James are seen to be fulfilled: *The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective* [Jas 5:16]. When the elements obey a human voice, the great power of the prayers of the saints is made manifest.

#### **That almost nothing wonderful is done without constant prayer**

**Speaker.** Since the Lord made the world for people and everything which God created is subject to the will of God, it is clear that for a person who persists in the good of obedience things below the person will also obey. But because humans became disobedient towards their Creator, they lost justly the power given them over lower things. Therefore, if the just long for the former dignity of their first condition and conform themselves, as much as possible, to the freedom of the divine will, is it surprising if changes in weather obey in some way a will conformable to God? The prayers of the elect derive their power from God who certainly wants to happen whatever the saints desire usefully or justly. So Moses in rescuing the people at the Red Sea changed it into dry land by his prayer and by a just judgment he brought back the water again on the pursuing Egyptians [Ex 14:21ff.]; Moses overcame Amalek not by arms but by prayers [Ex 17:9ff.]; and frequently Moses averted by prayer a plague, often even death, which God threatened to bring on the stiff necked people. Joshua also, as he was taking revenge, delayed by prayer for the span of a whole day the sun and moon in the sky [Josh 10:12ff.]; Gideon, as a sign that the people of Israel would be freed, used fleece wet with dew and then

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<sup>1</sup> A completely similar miracle is attributed to St Anthony by Ioannes Rigaldus, *Vita S. Antonii*, c. 8. See St. Gregory, *Dialogues*, book 4, ch. 12, *The Fathers of the Church*, Washington: Catholic University of America Press, vol. 39, 1959, 128.

used dry fleece while the earth around was wet [Judg 6:37ff.]. Samuel closed the lips of the idols by the judgment of his prayer, and by his plea brought rain and thunder from the sky at the time of harvest [1 Sam 7:5ff. and 12:18ff.]. Elijah obtained from God that for three years and six months no rain would fall on the earth, and after another prayer obtained that rain would fall and germinate the proper fruit in the earth [1 Kings 17:1 and 18:42ff.]; by the constancy of his prayer he called back from the dead the son of the widow [1 Kings 17:17ff.] and often called down fire from the sky [1 Kings 18:34 and 2 Kings 1:12]. Elisha received a double spirit by the prayers of his ascending master, namely, prophecy and the power of working miracles [2 Kings 2:9ff.]. Elisha by his prayers brought to life from bodily death the son of the Shunammite woman and struck with blindness the Arameans who were pursuing him [2 Kings 4:32ff. and 6:18]. Hezekiah by prayer added fifteen years to his life and forced the sun to go back ten intervals to the east [2 Kings 20:6 and 9ff.]. Tobias senior removed blindness by prayer and took away the shame of barrenness from Sarah the daughter of Raguel [Tob 12:8ff. and 8, 3ff.]. The three youths in the furnace put out the force of the enclosed fire [Dan 3:23ff.]. Daniel, the man of desires, closed the mouths of lions lest they touch him [Dan 6:16ff.] and obtained freedom for the people by constancy in prayer [Dan 9:1ff.]. So too Susanna refused the licentious priests and by the shield of prayer and the arguments of the prophet turned a sentence of death into the law of revenge [Susanna, chapter 13]. Judith by prayer atoned for the ignorance of the people tempting the Lord and with a dagger cut off the head of Holofernes [Judith, chapters 8 and 13]. By prayer Esther averted a disaster threatening the people and had Haman, the enemy of her people, hung from a gallows [Esth 4:16 and 7:9ff.]. The Maccabees overcame the force of the enemy by humility in prayer [1 Macc 7:36 and 2 Macc 8:2ff.]. So too Peter cured the paralytic Aeneas and released Tabitha from the bonds of death [Acts 9:33ff.]. Paul blinded for a while the magician Elymas and also by prayer brought Eutychus back to life when he slept and fell to his death [Acts 13:8ff. and 20:9ff.]. Why need I go through the single examples in the holy Gospel since hardly ever was a wonder worked without constancy in prayer? The one master Christ the Lord advises all of us to get everything through prayer: *Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you* [Matt 7:7]. Christ is teaching us the power and value of prayer, his generous readiness to give, warns us of laziness in not asking and comforts us with a certain promise that whatever we will ask for in a proper way will be given unless we block it.

### FRIAR MATTHEW OF NARNI<sup>1</sup>

**Listener.** I would like you to tell me what you know of Friar Matthew of Narni. He was a person approved among the Friars for his virtues and he clearly shone with signs of wonderful holiness.

**Speaker.** I remember hearing of many of his deeds but I will relate, as you ask, but a few which are connected to things concerning the Friars.

1. Friar Concordius was afflicted for three years with a paralysis which left his whole body so useless that with much discomfort he had always to be carried by the hands of the Friars for all the needs of nature or custom. When he was brought one day to the tomb of Friar Matthew he begged earnestly for mercy and recovered immediately with such speed that he got up in the group of Friars standing there, and could move his hands and other limbs as his will directed and could walk on his own feet.

2. A most noble lady of Narni on returning home from the country was struck so amazingly by a burning wind that her face was burnt and her hair hung down dried out. The woman could not rest or sleep because of the pain and disturbed her whole family with her tears and cries. Mindful of the holiness and merits of Friar Matthew she prayed humbly to him in the presence of her household. In the morning she was so fully healed by his merits that no trace of the burning could be seen on her body.

3. Ugolinus from the town of Narni had suffered from paralysis for ten years. He commended himself with devout prayers to Friar Matthew. During the following night while he was asleep in his sick bed he saw Friar Matthew carrying a flowering rose in his hands which, it seemed to him, the Friar gently placed on the paralyzed limbs like an anointing. At daybreak he was made strong and got up from his bed. Grateful to God for the gifts received in his cure he went joyfully to the tomb of the Friar.

4. A woman from the hamlet Laion had been paralyzed for many years and was brought to the tomb of the man of God on an ass; when she had prayed there for a short time in the presence of Friars and seculars she got up immediately; strengthened, she walked around the house of the Friars with joy, giving due praises to God.

5. The relatives of another woman, who was worn out from most difficult disturbances by demons, brought her bound to the tomb of the Friar. When she was crying out before the tomb with loud screams,

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<sup>1</sup> This Matthew, Vicar of the Order, was with Friar Gregory of Naples when St Francis set out for Egypt (1219). See Iordanus de Iano, *Chronica*, n. 11, in, *Analecta franciscana* (I, 4).

the covering fell from her head and in it the bystanders found a most foul scab; the woman lay down on the ground and began to sleep sweetly in full quiet. She woke from sleep, saw the Friars who were present and began to sing due praises to the Lord.

6. In the town of Narni a woman tortured by a tumour and fever despaired of the doctors and everyone thought that she would die on the morrow. But she committed herself in prayer to Friar Matthew whom she saw speaking to her that same night as she slept. The Friar ordered her to lie on the place of the tumour and in the morning, when all her neighbours waited for her to come out, the woman through his merits was found to be fully cured from both illnesses.

7. A youth named Marcoaldus had his mouth twisted horribly on to his neck. He prostrated himself before the tomb of the Friar and called on his help; when he had been there for a short time, through the Friar's merits his mouth immediately returned to its proper place.

8. A similar thing happened to another youth from the town of Narni who fell asleep while guarding his vineyard; on waking he found his mouth had become terribly distorted. When his mother saw this she began to call out loudly: 'Holy Matthew, I beg you deign to free my son'. She hurried with her son to the tomb of the Friar, and immediately, as all present could see, she merited to obtain the cure of her son so that the boy called out praises to God in a high pitched voice.

9. A woman of Narni while walking in the solarium of her home fell down so severely that her leg was completely fractured. When a doctor, by name Gregorius Cyterhii, came to her and saw the fracture, on account of the prevailing inclemency of the atmosphere, he covered the wound with medicines until such time as he had fulfilled a vow to visit the tomb of blessed Francis; he did this and then returned to Narni. But the woman, more than a little tortured, committed herself in the meantime to Friar Matthew and put a relic of the Friar which she had on the wound. When she did this, in the presence of Friars whom she had asked to come to console her, she immediately got up and, walking back and forth through the home, related to the returning doctor the miracle done to her.

**Listener.** It is sufficiently clear that often we call on doctors of the body needlessly, while, as Scripture states: *All things can be done for the one who believes* [Mk 9:23], as can be seen in the woman just mentioned.

### **It is wise to call on doctors when it is necessary**

**Speaker.** Certainly, according to a word of the Saviour, it is quite true that by faith one may receive a favour which sometimes God gives from a sure cause and at a suitable time. While the faithful feel they have experienced this or have administered it to others by a ministry

of cooperation, it is not without value, as you may think, to consult often experts in medicine about the cure of disorders, so that they can bring us their needed skill. Indeed, with the help of Christ they are able to judge with their physical skills human conditions and the causes of pain which, once identified, they are competent to tell us many useful things, to warn us against things harmful, and by suitable medicines prepare the way to health. Otherwise to spurn remedies which God has placed in the talents of the human race for its benefit and to seek health from God by means of faith is not to worship God in a piety of faith but rather to tempt God. Hence it is written: *The Lord created medicines out of the earth, and the sensible will not despise them* [Sir 38:4]. Therefore, if God put the power of medicines in what grows on the earth for the benefit of people it is stupid or a kind of presumption, as we have said, to despise them. The same wise person said: *Honour physicians for their services, for the Lord created them; for the gift of healing comes from the Most High* [Sir 38:1]. To honour physicians for their work and efforts on behalf of the sick is to respond to a temporal gift. According to the warning of the wise author we must never neglect this but rather go to the physician when necessary; when skill cannot find a remedy nor nature heal, we have recourse to the merits of one powerful in faith and to the offering of prayers for the grace of healing, which presumes a sincere piety of faith in the Creator. Scripture says: *We are powerless ... We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you* [2 Chron 20:12]. For as long as human fragility with its lesser powers can do what is needed, it is quite imprudent, relying on the merits of faith of oneself or of another, to test higher powers or to force the freedom of divine grace by a judgment of human presumption. However, the just correctly and even sinners faced with a final necessity often have recourse to the help of the name of the Saviour and the prayers of saints. Provided, as we have said, this be done not from a kind of presumption of faith or the worth of one's own merits, but relying on the goodness of God and the merits of the saints, they can be confident they will obtain what they ask for in humble prayer.

**Listener.** As I hear it, much caution in discernment is needed for understanding Scripture, so that in one rule of faith the single passages might come together, for what is placed here and there through the pages of Scripture is regarded by some as being in conflict. But now forgiving my ignorance I ask you to go on to further deeds and what you know to be beyond your promise, you will not burden me to solve.

### FRIAR ROGER WHO IS BURIED IN TODI

**Speaker. 1.** Sabina, wife of Petrus Bonifilii from Forgnola, suffered from a most serious illness for two years and as she weakened she came close to insanity; she cried out with terrible shouts and breathed

out with continual sobbing. She came to the tomb of Friar Roger in Todi and was restored to her former state of health through his merits.

**2.** Another woman named Verzera, from the town of Blasius, stated under oath that she had been troubled for three and a half years by deceptions of the demons. Finally she invoked the help of Roger and was fully freed through his merits, never again experiencing the suffering of this illness.

**3.** Maria Ioannis Berardi from the hamlet Megium suffered from madness, striking her head with the palms of her hands, beating her breast, and all the time tearing her clothes. Her husband brought her to the tomb of Friar Roger where with terrible howling she sometimes barked like a dog, at other times she bellowed like cattle. When she was worn out and fell asleep for a while in front of the tomb, she was immediately cured by his merits, and gave due thanks to God.

**4.** Ferracellus from Todi had a eye so covered with a type of web and a pupil covered with a film that he could see nothing for three years. Standing humbly before the tomb of the Friar he obtained his long lost sight, as stated by one who deprived of the light of sight later got it back.

**5.** A boy named Valentine for five years had no sight in his left eye. In front of a large number of people who had gathered, he came to the tomb of the Friar and was immediately cured.

**6.** A girl by name Maria, from Todi, for eleven months was much troubled by an ulcer in her left eye which continuously discharged fluid. Her parents brought her to the tomb of Friar Roger and in the presence of her mother and father and many others she was fully cured through his merits.

**7.** Polus Georgii Bancotelli had been deaf for five years and could hear nothing. He came to the tomb of the Friar and immediately regained his long lost hearing.

**8.** Martin from Pralon testified under oath that when his son Martin became paralyzed he lost the use of speech and was deprived completely of the use of his right arm. When the father made a vow to Friar Roger, his son through the merits of the Friar obtained the use of his limbs and the ability to speak.

**9.** Friar Conservus testified that he had seen a woman broken down with paralysis. When Friar Roger died she came to his tomb and asked for mercy with much emotion and tears. When she had been there in prayer for a short time, in the presence of Friar Conservus, other religious and lay people, she was wonderfully cured through the merits of the most holy Friar.

**10.** From when she was an infant, a holy woman had been crippled and shrunken so that her feet were twisted back, her hands joined and her mouth twisted in an ugly manner. On the evening of the day of

Friar Roger's death she came to his tomb where she was excellently healed on the following night before many witnesses.

**11.** Friar Simon from Narni publicly declared he had seen a youth, lame from his mother's womb, come to the tomb of the Friar and was so cured in a moment that, as three Friars and other lay people who were present saw, he leapt up praising God and blessing his servant through whose merits he had received the health for which he had so longed.

**12.** Dialta, wife of Bonapressus Rupetus from Todi, for many years was bent over and deprived of the use of all her limbs below the waist. Her loved ones brought her to the tomb of the Friar and through his merits she received fully the grace of her longed for health.

**13.** Sibilina from Aqua Laureti was bent over for eighteen years, suffered from an ulcer in her kidneys and could in no way get up nor extend her limbs. She came to the tomb of Friar Roger and was immediately so fully cured that, as the companions who had come with her saw, she straightened her body in an upright position, got up and stood by herself.

**14.** Laetitia, daughter of Tudinus from Todi, for three years had her knees bent up to her throat and her feet also deformed. She came to the tomb of the Friar where she stayed for a little time and begged for the grace of healing; immediately she extended both her feet and knees at the same time and most excellently cured gave thanks to God and to the most holy Friar.

**15.** Gualfredutia Philippi was totally deprived of the use of her feet and her left hand for eight years. She was so healed in front of the tomb of the Friar that she walked to and fro before groups of people.

**16.** Master Paul confirmed the truth of his testimony before many, that, when he could not rest or sleep from being weighed down with sickness, he dreamed he had three spherical bodies so arranged around a kind of sun that no matter where they turned they could not rest. The Friar appeared to him in his dream and said: 'Do you want to be cured, Master Paul?' He replied: 'I do so want'. The Friar said, 'Hold on to what does not allow you to sleep'. When he awoke from sleep he found in his hand a silver spoon which he said he now owns; and immediately he recovered with such speed that never again did he experience any trouble or upset from this suffering.

**Listener.** In your explanation of the statement of the Saviour it is indeed apt that riches in this world should, on the evidence of the Gospel, be called *thorns* [Matt 13:22; Lk 8:14].

### **That riches and delights are rightly compared to thorns**

**Speaker.** Words of truth may seem to be absurdities to lovers of the world and to all who are wise in the way of the flesh. However, they

are confirmed as true from the outcome of events without an explanation by another interpreter, and show as clear as light how rightly they are likened to thorns from the multiple stings of anxiety and unease of mind by which they cause distractions. So Solomon says of the acquirer and lover of money: *For all their days are full of pain, and their work is a vexation; even at night their minds do not rest* [Eccl 2:23]. Indeed, to meet the desires for earning money *today's trouble is enough for today* [Matt 6:34], but at night the care of worry is doubled for the avaricious who are more disturbed in the quiet when those resting after work have at least the benefit of sleep; the fear of robbery rightly tortures one whose heart is excessively immersed in transitory things. So it is written: *Terrifying sounds are in their ears; in prosperity the destroyer will come upon them* [Job 15:21]. By the strength of the affection by which one clings to what is loved, the thought of loss stirs up a sadder ringing in the ears, so that sometimes such a one thinks any sound along the wall is due to thieves breaking in. Stirred by an unnecessary suspicion at a time of peace and security, when there is no threat, in the heart of such a one is a thought of violence. Or if one thinks but rarely in this life of heavenly things, then suddenly fearful of a plot by an invader, the mind goes back to the usual unnecessary cares to save money. *For where his treasure is, there his heart necessarily will be also* [Matt 6:21], as if this is the place of quiet for the heart to stay.

I will also call *thorns* the delights of carnal persons, which, when present, sweetly touch the taste of the flesh. Such delights never give satisfaction to the concupiscence which they incite. The care of the flesh is satisfied with the desire for harmful pleasure but it causes a disturbance in the person, because it certainly changes these delights into torments by disturbing in superfluity the fragility of nature. Hence, the cause of the pain of an indulgent person is rightly discerned by Solomon, when the paucity of rewards in the present and the punishments for superfluity are made clear. For he says: *Healthy sleep depends on moderate eating; he rises early, and feels fit. The distress of sleeplessness and of nausea and colic are with the glutton* [Sir 31:20]. Excess in superfluity hinders digestion in the stomach, for it necessarily produces harmful gases and dangerous fluids. And through this an immoderate person rightly endures also colic and other pains during the time for rest, so that from the subsequent punishment such a one may experience how harmful to oneself is carnal pleasure. The frugal person who uses these for a just reason and not for the sake of pleasure escapes this trouble. It is abundantly clear why the Saviour compared riches and pleasures to thorns which certainly wound their followers with innumerable stings.

**Listener.** What you say is most pleasing, but I ask you again to continue and console me with the customary order of your story.

### FRIAR PAUL OF THE MARCHE<sup>1</sup>



**Speaker. 1.** Rosa, daughter of John, at the age of twelve, suffered a most severe illness so that many believed she was a demoniac. She claimed that three black persons in human form troubled her greatly. When she was kept at home she hid herself in most narrow places; when she could escape from her parents she went through hedges and caves into deserted and inaccessible places; brought to churches she was in total dread of things spiritual but said that a certain Paul, and no other, would cure her. On hearing this her father brought her to the church of St Paul; but when they got there she said to her father: ‘This is not the Paul of whom I spoke; another Paul who is a long way away will cure me’. She was brought to the monastery of the Saviour where some relics of the servant of God were kept and when these relics were placed on her she immediately regained her former health.

**2.** Deotama, a sister in the monastery of the Saviour, suffered intense pain in her hands and feet. When the relics of the man of God, which were in the monastery, were applied to her she quickly regained her health, and was happy to give thanks to God and to Friar Paul.

**3.** Domina Blanzaflor, wife of Marcoaldus from Holy Angel, was tormented gravely for a long time with kidney stones and other illnesses. She was brought to the tomb of Friar Paul and through his merits immediately obtained full health.

**4.** Flora, daughter of Albert Barilus from Mons-Melonis, had for a long time lost her sight. Brought by some women to the tomb of the man of God she asked there for the grace of healing. When she had persevered there in prayer asking for mercy she received her lost sight.

**5.** Berta, daughter of Bentivolius from Camerinum, had for a long time been unable to speak. She came humbly and devoutly with her sister Bona to the tomb of Friar Paul. When she had stayed in front of the tomb for some time, suddenly she began to speak praising God and blessing his saint.

**6.** A man from Mons-Ciari was so crippled with paralysis in his feet and hands that he could not lift his hand to his mouth or even walk. He was brought to the tomb of Friar Paul through whose merits he was immediately straightened and walked home unimpaired.

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<sup>1</sup> He was Minister Provincial in Marche, Ancona (1223-1224). See Celano, *The Life of Saint Francis*, book 1, ch. 28, n. 77-79, in, *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, New York: New City Press, 1999, 248-249; *Miscellanea Francescana*, X (1906), 17ff.; *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, vol. 5, 200.

7. John from Mons-Ulmi for a long time could not use his feet to the extent that he could not in any way walk even supported by a walking stick. He was carried on an ass to the body of Friar Paul before his burial and in front of the corpse he humbly asked for the grace of healing. He was cured through the merits of the Friar and he who was carried to the body returned walking on his own feet.

8. Bonus Ioannes testified under oath to the truth of the miracles. His left leg had been contracted from infancy and moreover he suffered greatly from epilepsy. He came to the tomb of Friar Paul and when he had persisted in prayer there immediately the shriveled leg was restored and fully cured; from that time on he never again felt the suffering of epilepsy.

**Listener.** Certainly, the outpouring of divine goodness is evident in such easy cures of diverse sufferings; but perhaps they provide no less value for sinners who see them, because few fear to offend God when terrified by bodily suffering or even by the fear of death which no one can escape.

#### **That God sometimes uses a rod of correction to recall a sinner**

**Speaker.** Clearly, the great goodness of our God in showing mercy is multiple and skilful for salvation. God uses a wonderful argument in recalling people not only in *a spirit of gentleness* [1 Cor 4:21], but also with a rod of correction when God gathers *the flock of the pasture* [Ps 79:13] and keeps them in virtue when brought back. To soften the stubbornness of persons who are brought to amendment only by the rod and to invite those fleeing, sometimes God stirs us with sufferings which God inflicts; sometimes, however, by other misfortunes God castigates and teaches the obstinate. God says through the Prophet of the troubles which God sends to recall us mercifully to God: *I will hedge up her ways with thorns; and I will build a wall against her* [Hos 2:6].<sup>1</sup> Because often after our sinfulness God sees us drifting away, God stings the heart interiorly with the thorns of spiritual trials and with a wall of external bodily suffering hems in the way of sinners, so that taught by punishment and recognizing from an actual experience the sweetness of grace and the bitterness of sin, we may finally return in health to God even if reluctantly. Hence the Prophet rightly adds speaking for penitents: *'I will go and return to my first husband, for it was better with me than than now'* [Hos 2:7]. Job says: *Bold as a lion you hunt me, you repeat your exploits against me* [Job 10:16]. For a proud lioness cannot be tamed from its violent ways by

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<sup>1</sup> See Celano, *The Life of Saint Francis*, book 1, ch. 2, n. 3, in, *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, New York: New City Press, 1999, 184.

blows, but should it see its cub being whipped it puts aside its ferocity of spirit; what did not happen because of suffering in its own body, is wonderfully achieved by blows on another. Like a lioness, a proud sinner is captured when, even though the sinner does not accept the discipline of personal troubles, he or she is turned to repentance at the sight of the sufferings of others. Solomon says further:

*I passed by the field of one who was lazy, by the vineyard of a stupid person; and see, it was all overgrown with thorns; the ground was covered with nettles, and its stone wall was broken down. Then I saw and considered it; I looked and received instruction [Prov 24:30-32].*

A sinner, known as lazy and stupid, remains inactive instead of cultivating the fruit of the vineyard in this life as if it were the cold of winter; the sinner combines signs of stupidity with not using the ability to work, and in the summer of the eternal retribution the sinner must beg as did the foolish virgins [Matt 25:1ff.]. As the sinner is empty of works, so the sinner lacks a reward from the divine Judge. Lustful feelings overrun the field of the sinner's body, and thorns of stinging thoughts drive from the vineyard of the mind the fruit of spiritual justice, because where sin exists the sinner is curbed by external difficulties and interior trials in the present life. This is indeed a breaking down of the wall of spiritual protection. But from reflecting on these things a wise person profits by accepting discipline because, while a wise person considers the punishment we have mentioned as a just wage earned by sin, from the example of correction imposed on another the wise person concludes how useful it is for turning the faithful away from sin. Hence it is written: *Strike a scoffer, and the simple will learn prudence* [Prov 19:25].

**Listener.** Although often I force you by my words to deviate from the path of your story, I am usefully enriched by your replies and I see the fruit of this feast doubled, since I await not only a series of deeds but also your subtle teaching on the meaning of these deeds. But not to burden you needlessly with unnecessary questions, when you are ready continue what you have begun and by going on stifle the verbosity of my speech.

### FRIAR HERMAN FROM FOLIGNO

**Speaker. 1.** Bonaventura Florentii was so crippled for almost two years that he could not get out of bed or move. One evening he had his relatives bring him on a stretcher to the tomb of Friar Herman. Immediately, through his merits, as his relatives and many others watched, he was so cured that when given shoes for his feet he walked everywhere before all the people of Foligno.

**2.** A man named Iuncta from Foligno for two years had his tibias so shriveled and joined to his rump that forced by hunger he crawled with his hands on the ground and begged publicly. He came in faith to

the tomb of the Friar where he prayed and was immediately cured; his shriveled tibias were so restored he could move freely wherever he wished.

3. A girl, daughter of Correctus from Foligno, for two years had her tibias and feet horribly twisted. On the advice of a friend she got herself to the tomb of the Friar; when she had been there quietly for a little while, she began to get hungry and asked a woman friend for food. When the woman had said to her several times: 'Get up, and we will go to eat', her disfigured tibias and feet were healed, the girl got up and, after presenting herself to the bishop of the town, returned home on her own feet.

4. Bonafemina from Foligno while eating the vegetable known as leeks unknowingly swallowed a bone with the vegetables; when the bone reached the opening of her throat it so completely blocked the gullet, that she thought she was to die. In her heart she called humbly on the help of Friar Herman, and it seemed to her that a woman struck her a blow on the neck so that the bone sprang out from the passage of the gullet and with her own hand she brought the bone to the tomb of the Friar as a sign of gratitude.

5. Petronus from the hamlet of Trebium, while working on the building of the Church of Saint Felicianus, was lifting with companions some wood using a capstan. Owing to the heavy weight one of his companions let go of the capstan, a beam of which struck Petronus heavily; the beam swung around on the wall and hit him with force. He fell from a height of sixty feet to the ground and all presumed that he was irreparably shattered. When all of them with much wailing and shouting reached him, he who had fallen said:

Do not weep over me because I feel no damage in my body; while I was falling, a dove seemed to fly under my feet and it softened the blow to my falling body.

What happened was taken as a sign of the divine virtue of Friar Herman for Petronus fell on top of his tomb; till this happened the Friar was unknown to the people. Hence, after his body was discovered by this divine revelation, it became known to all that Petronus who fell onto the tomb of the Friar was kept unharmed.

6. Those who saw it claim that from an uncut rock, serving as an altar beside the monument to the man of God, in the middle of summer drops of water came out like manna. Some thinking that this was done artificially often wiped up the water; but when no fissure was found in the rock they attributed the water to the merits of the most holy Friar.

**Listener.** Brother, what do you think was the reason for the drops of water coming like manna from the tomb of the man of God?

**That the manna coming from the tomb of the saint certainly contains a mystical reason**

**Speaker.** If you expect me to give a natural explanation for the water coming out, I state I am completely ignorant of this since I do not know the place but I am not ignorant that in the ordinary course of nature water can be exuded. But if your question concerns the mystical reason, I think the reason has something to do with the bodily purity of the Friar. This is indicated by the water which ran out from the rock beyond the law of nature, because in his body the moisture of grace abounded and anointed the virtue of temperance beyond the rule of natural corruption. This is said to be quite similar to the heavenly manna, because to live in the flesh but beyond the flesh is not to bear *the image of the man of dust*, but *the image of the man of heaven* [1 Cor 15:49]. We read<sup>1</sup> of the apostle and evangelist John that from his tomb manna was seen to flow, so that the one who by a special prerogative of chastity was loved by Christ, remained a virgin in his flesh and was endowed with a gift of perpetual incorruption. Similarly, from the tomb of the glorious bishop Nicolaus a flow of oil seeped out as affirmed by those who saw it,<sup>2</sup> so that he who while living poured over the afflicted the oil of compassion and kindness [Col 3:12], even when dead, did not cease from preparing healing ointments for the limbs of the sick. So lastly, as some affirm,<sup>3</sup> from the limbs of St Catherine an oil of many uses for health came out, so that the purity of her life and doctrine provided a spiritual condiment for the minds of the sick; she showed herself abundant in *steadfast love* [Ps 130:7] and strenuous in her intervention on behalf of the faithful from her already dead body.

**Listener.** Dear brother, I ask you again that if you know of any deeds of our Friars, beyond those you have already described, do not delay to add them to the others.

**Speaker.** I know of many deeds done by many Friars in various places which, although fewer in number, I think what I have to say is wonderful for all who saw them and very pleasant for all who accept them. But in case I may be thought to burden the stomach with superfluous food I will continue in summary fashion, in the style of a compendium and go on as you ask.

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<sup>1</sup> See I. De Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. 1, n. 9, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, 55; B. Mombritius, loc. cit., 60.

<sup>2</sup> See I. De Voragine, loc. cit., vol. 1, n. 9, 55; B. Mombritius, loc. cit., 307.

<sup>3</sup> See I. De Voragine, loc. cit., vol. 2, n. 172, 339; B. Mombritius, l. c., 287.

### **FRIAR MARTIN<sup>1</sup> WHO IS BURIED IN ...**

1. A mentally sick woman named Marsenda came one day during a lucid interval to Friar Martin while he was still living and asked for the grace of healing. When the Friar sprinkled her with holy water and also burnt incense, immediately through his merits she was cured but the Friar strongly ordered her not to tell anyone what had happened for as long as he lived.

2. A woman by name Thomasina from the diocese of Urbinum was weighed down with paralysis and for many years many people regarded her as a demoniac. While Friar Martin was still alive she was brought to him; she accepted from him in the name of Christ a bunch of grapes to eat, and immediately cured she returned free of both sufferings.

3. A boy named Theobaldus from Mons-Albonus suffered from an ulcer in his leg and another in his body. He came in humble devotion to the tomb of the Friar. He began to call on the Friar and immediately both ulcers dried up, and after a short time through the merits of the Friar he obtained full health.

4. Another boy named Guidutius suffered from dysentery and fever for seven weeks. Brought to the tomb of the holy Friar he persisted in prayer there and at the one time was cured of both illnesses so that he went home praising God and his servant.

5. A certain Bonaspes from Curra Cabilini for many weeks suffered from a haemorrhage from the anus. Humbly he made a vow to Friar Martin whereupon he was cured straightaway through his merits and praised the servant of God with due reverence.

6. A woman named Matalia had for a long time been blind in both eyes and she came to the tomb of the Friar to fulfill a vow. As the woman stood in tears before the tomb, she received the grace of the desired sight and without help from anyone returned home.

7. Another woman named Gastaldella, paralyzed on one side and without sight on the other side, was brought by her loved ones to the tomb of Friar Martin. She persevered there humbly asking for mercy before she fell down and merited to obtain her sight and to be cured of the paralysis in her side through the merits of the most holy Friar.

### **FRIAR DOMINIC WHO IS BURIED IN SAN MARINO**

1. Berengarius, an archpriest from Mons-Feltrum, had a leg seriously ulcerated which no skill or effort of doctors could cure.

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<sup>1</sup> He is named as a witness in a document of 1223, in *Miscellanea Francescana*, X, 18; *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, vol. 5, 200.

Given up by the doctors, he made a vow to Friar Dominic and was fully cured after he had visited his tomb.

2. Boncompagnus from San Marino had been so bent over for twenty years that he could not walk without the support of a stick. He commended himself humbly to Friar Dominic and through his merits could immediately stand upright.

3. A boy from the region of San Marino had one foot so shortened that he could not place it on the ground. He strongly limped along, called on the help of the Friar and merited to be restored to health so that he could walk with his foot reaching the ground.

### **FRIAR BERNARD WHO IS BURIED IN MASSA**

1. A youth of Massa suffered from an illness of the bladder, was unable to pass urine and, with his whole body bloated, seemed close to death. He was brought to the tomb of Friar Bernard where he immediately felt better and asked for bread; when he ate the bread he immediately passed blood and was cured.

2. Another youth from Massa had an ulcer in his leg which in its shriveled condition was joined to his buttocks. He commended himself humbly to the Friar and within four days was fully cured.

3. The body of a woman named Beneventa was ulcerated for which the skill or advice of doctors was of no help. She made a vow to Friar Bernard humbly asking for mercy. After calling on his help she was in a short time so cured that with the ulcer dried up she never again felt pain from the fistula.

### **FRIAR PETER FROM MONS-ULMI**

1. A woman from Firmum was so bent at her buttocks that she was incapable of walking by herself. She came on horseback to the tomb of Friar Peter from Mons-Ulmi where she prostrated herself in prayer on the tomb and through his merits was immediately straightened and returned to her home on her own feet.

2. Another woman from Lafrenum came to the body of the Friar before his burial carrying in her arms her daughter who was close to death. When she approached the corpse devoutly, she placed the hand of the Friar upon the face of her daughter asking for healing. At the touch of the hand the virgin was immediately cured with such speed that all present saw the miracle and were astonished.

3. A man from Monte Robiano shriveled in one leg, in an arm and tibia, came to the tomb of Friar Peter and asked him humbly and devoutly to get mercy for him from God. When he had been at the tomb for some time he could not feel that the help he wanted for himself had been given, so he called out in a loud voice and said:

‘Saint Francis, give Friar Peter the strength to free me!’ On saying this, he stayed quietly for a short time on the tomb, when suddenly he was healed and returned home rejoicing.

**Listener.** Do you think this man was given the health he asked for because of the prayers of this Friar or rather those of our holy Father Francis?

### **How heavenly gifts are said to be given because of multiple requests**

**Speaker.** You have asked about a difficult matter, hidden from human senses and perhaps not to be solved fully by the words of my answer. However, I may say from a similar case what I think about the question, always ready to yield to a better opinion and conscious it is safer to learn than to teach. It is clear that a sick person with strong hope of a cure and with piety of faith came to the tomb of the dead Friar and, as the outcome of the incident teaches, obtained the grace asked for by perseverance in prayer; but when it was not given as quickly as he wished, he asked more insistently for the desired gift of healing by increasing the number of people to whom he prayed. Therefore, it can happen that a delay in answering prayers could increase the devotion of a sick person and when the appeal to one person was not enough to obtain the gift of health, it was obtained by adding a prayer to the master. With due respect to the piety of faith, it would rightly be thought that the merits before God of blessed Father Francis would be more effective in curing this person than the merits of Friar Peter whose help was sought; however, no honour is being denied to the disciple when more abundant praise is given to the master. So it was with a prophet, a disciple of a prophet, who when he struck the waters of the Jordan with the cast off mantle of his master did not find a way across; but remembering the power of his teacher whose name he was in no way ashamed to call on, he said: *Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?* [2 Kings 2:14].<sup>1</sup> The one who had just received a double share of the spirit of the master, could not effect the crossing by his own merits, but did it by calling on the merits of his master. Also when Gehazi placed the staff of his master on the dead child he did not succeed in restoring life; he returned to his master, admitted the uselessness of his weakness and not being envious increased the glory of his master [2 Kings 4:29ff.]. Therefore, whether we had said that the person was healed by the merits of one or both of them, it matters little to the piety of faith provided we do not take anything away from their glory by comparing one with another.

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<sup>1</sup> A similar explanation is given by St. Gregory, *Dialogues*, book 1, n. 2, *The Fathers of the Church*, Washington: Catholic University of America Press, vol. 39, 1959, 12.

**Listener.** I am happy to have asked what I did not know so that while I have given you matter for thought, I recognize your teaching on the order to be observed in giving honour without injury to the saints. But now I ask you to remember your promise and go back to what you began without delay so as to finish what remains.

### **FRIAR LEONARD WHO IS BURIED IN PRIVERNO**

**Speaker. 1.** In the hamlet Mons-Fortinus in Campania a boy named Jordan was born lame. He was carried by his parents to Friar Leonard of Foligno who at that time was living in Priverno and the Friar because of the devotion of his parents traced the sign of the cross on him; immediately as all could see the boy was given perfect health.

**2.** Giles of Mons-Fortinus had been blind for four years and was brought to Friar Leonard by a person walking ahead of him. When the Friar traced the sign of the cross on his eyes he received his sight through the Friar's merits, and gave thanks to God and to God's servant.

### **FRIAR TENTALBENE**

**1.** Friar Damien of Todi testified that he himself had seen a blind person come to Friar Tentalbene for healing; the Friar made the sign of the cross on the person who received his lost sight as he went away.

**2.** The same Friar testified that when a young paralytic was brought to Friar Tentalbene, Tentalbene made the sign of the cross over him and in the presence of Friar Damien the youth was fully cured.

**3.** Friar Damien testified further that he had seen a person suffering from extreme pain in the hands. Friar Tentalbene humbly made the sign of the cross over the person who was immediately cured in a most excellent way.

### **FRIAR JAMES OF ASSISI<sup>1</sup>**

**1.** A woman of Salsa Burgensis, when she suffered intensely from the illness of a fistula, humbly made a vow to Friar James of Assisi who is buried in Foggia. She made the vow before many people and by the merits of the Friar merited immediately to regain her longed for health.

**2.** Phillip, a money changer from Foggia, suffered for a long time from a quartan fever which no doctor could cure. He made a vow to Friar James whom he heard speak to him in a vision on the following night: 'Do not worry any more about the quartan fever because I will

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<sup>1</sup> See Celano, *Tractatus de miraculis*, n. 116, in, *Fontes Franciscani*, Assisi: Edizioni Porziuncola, 1995, 718.

cure you from this hour'. In the morning the man got up from his bed and never suffered again from this fever.

3. A citizen from Troianum suffered severely from a cancer in the tibia. He made a vow humbly to the Friar and when his full health was restored the devout person did what he had promised.

4. Matthew, a citizen of Foggia, suffered from a most grave illness in his leg and could not be cured. After spending much money on doctors he made a vow to Friar James and immediately by his merits regained his long lost health.

### FRIAR PETER OF TRANUM

1. A boy from the hamlet of Cangianum was oppressed with such a burden of illness that frequently livid in his whole body he seemed to be near death; often he would shout and cry out from the pain both day and night, and from the strong restraint of an inflamed thigh remained immobile like a trunk of a tree; he looked more like a dead than a living person. He was brought to the tomb of the Friar of Tranum through whose merits he obtained full health.

2. Bartholomew from Lucca but living in Cangianum climbed up an oak to collect oak-apple. The branch on which he was seated broke and he fell on to a wall of stones and broke his whole body on two stakes. He was brought by some people to the tomb of the Friar. There he made a vow and obtained swiftly and fully complete health.

3. A woman from Cangianum, daughter of the official Rainaldus, was so withered on one side of her body that she could feel no movement of life in it nor was she able to use it. Her father made a vow to Friar Peter and promised that he would have built in the church where the Friar was buried whatever structure the Friars should decide would be more useful. When he did this, immediately the woman was restored to perfect health.

4. A boy from Cangianum was washing himself in the lake named Baranum when a leech entered his body. He carried the leech in his body for many days and at times vomited up so much blood that often he seemed to be half dead. He made a vow to Friar Peter and immediately the leech passed out through his anus. With no further loss of blood, he was restored to health.

5. A deacon from the hamlet Capelum was so gripped each day by an illness that he could not get out of bed. He had himself carried on the shoulders of some men to the tomb of the Friar. Through the mediation of the Friar he recovered so quickly that immediately he returned home on his own feet. Fearful of a recurrence of the sickness, on the advice of a woman, he had a bath prepared for himself; immediately on getting into the bath he experienced the pain of his

former illness. Finally, moved by repentance, he had himself brought back to the tomb of the Friar where he made a vow and was so cured that never again did he feel the pain of the illness.

**Listener.** Since as I recall you have said, it is not a sin to use medicines for the body, why did he who took a bath to guard the health of his body fall back into the very illness from which he had been cured?

### **That both ingratitude and suspicion of superstition are displeasing to God**

**Speaker.** To spurn bodily medicine and ask God or the saints for health on the basis of faith or the dignity of their virtues is a kind of presumption or certainly is recognized as the sin of tempting God. Not to give due thanks for health given is the sin of ingratitude which will rightly be punished. A person bound to give thanks for a gift bestowed is guilty of ingratitude not only in not giving voice to praise or expressing it interiorly in devotion of the heart, but also in being at home because of a gift freely given and yet doubting the permanence of the gift. The person who suffered a relapse because of the sin of doubt showed the extent of ingratitude by seeking healing in a bath. Hence it is written: *Ask in faith, never doubting* [Jas 1:6]. One asks while doubting in faith who, although kneeling down in prayer in piety of faith, does not have full confidence in the goodness of the person to whom one is praying. It may well be regarded as ingratitude to be tempted to use such a remedy on the advice of an old woman; since indeed God often allows enchanterers to provide many bodily benefits of this kind by their spells or experiments; however, on account of the fictions of their superstitions and the suspicion of heathen error, they are condemned by the Church as enemies of a Christian Catholic cult and are in all ways to be avoided. Hence the legislator give an explicit warning:

*If prophets or those who divine by dreams appear among you and promise you omens or portents, and the omens or the portents declared by them take place ... you must not heed the words of these prophets or those who divine by dreams, to know whether you indeed love the Lord your God with all our heart and soul* [Deut 13:1-3].

To take the name of a prophet is to make judgments in ignorance about the future which belongs only to God. While occasionally such a prophet may speak what is true without being aware of it, this must be ignored by the faithful, because God allows us to be tempted to test or make us know or to make clear to others whether or not we love God by doing what is commanded, namely: *You shall not practise augury or witchcraft* [Lev 19:26]. Whoever does such a thing shows himself or herself to be an enemy of God and a transgressor of the Catholic faith.

**Listener.** Your clear argument has satisfied my doubt. Now, however it is time to go on as you began because by your words so pleasing to me I am drawn to listen.

### FRIAR OTHO WHO IS BURIED IN PULA

**Speaker. 1.** Peter from Pula, a town in Istrian, had an abscess in his throat of which doctors gave up hope. He humbly implored the help of Friar Otho. The Friar appeared to him in a vision and moving his hand over his face said: 'Do not be afraid, because you will be cured'. Peter in joy began to call his companion at which the Friar saluted him and disappeared. The sick man shortly afterwards was fully cured of his illness.

**2.** John, Prior of the church of Saint Mary of Orsaro, had a dried up shoulder and a withered hand. He rejoiced at receiving back the health of his arm and shoulder at the tomb of the Friar.

**3.** A noble girl named Chemota from the town of Pula had one leg so withered that she could not walk at all. Brought to the tomb of Friar Otho she prostrated herself there in tears and divine grace was so poured out so that she left healthy and upright.

**4.** Aliotus from Duo Castra had feet horribly twisted back. He came supported by walking sticks to the tomb of the Friar and through his merits obtained straightway full health.

**5.** Martin, son of Maza from Pula, was paralyzed and withered from the waist down. His mother arranged for him to be taken to the tomb of the Friar where for many days he lay asking for mercy; suddenly one day while he was calling on the holy Friar in a most devout way, he was fully cured and went away standing upright.

**6.** A boy, son of Mark a builder of walls from Pula, had his mouth twisted back towards his ear. He offered most devout prayers at the tomb of the Friar through whose merits he regained his former health.

**7.** A blind girl whose name was Maria came to the tomb of the Friar and there received the sight she longed for; she promptly gave due thanks to God and to the most holy Friar.

**8.** A totally blind boy remained for many days before the tomb of the Friar asking for healing. He received sight in both eyes and made known to all the miracle worked in him.

**9.** A woman named Avinata, wife of Alesius from Pula, had been dumb for many days unable to form any words with her tongue. She came with tears and devotion to the tomb of the man of God and through his intercession regained the long lost use of speech.

**Listener.** From what you have said the wonders related are known to have been worked by simple Friars, but little skilled in letters, with the exception of St Anthony; so I want to know if you know of any similar deeds done by learned Friars of our Order.

### The plan of God in choosing the simple and the wise

**Speaker.** It is sure that all devoted to simplicity have from the beginning been pleasing to God for God has *confidence* in them [Prov 3:32], and *God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise* [1 Cor 1:27]. For the wisdom of this world *is hostile* to the wisdom of God [Rom 8:7] and it was refuted by our Saviour who chose the simple so that no one might boast in the presence of God [1 Cor 1:29]. Nonetheless, from heaven God called the wise Paul that he might build for the growing Church a house of living stones [1 Pet 2:5] on the foundation which is Jesus Christ [1 Cor 3:11]. Likewise Peter, John and the other Apostles, called by Christ when he chose *uneducated and ordinary men* [Acts 4:13] whom the Spirit taught so that they quickly merited to go beyond the wisdom of the wise of this world. In the wisdom of Paul was there a lack of the grace of healing? Hear what he says:

*For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God* [Rom 15:18-19].

Did not the glory of working signs smile upon Peter and the other Apostles as needed by the early Church? But because, as it is written, *the wise will inherit honour* [Prov 3:35], it is not for the powerful Lord to give glory to the wise, unless the piety of faith needs it, especially since works of power do not create holiness but show it.<sup>1</sup> However, in my opinion, the Lord often gave this glory to simpler members of the Church so that, as Paul says, *there be no dissension within the body* [1 Cor 12:25] and so *that none of you will be puffed up in favour of one against another* [1 Cor 4:6]. For *whereas our more respectable members do not need this, God so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior members* [1 Cor 12:24]. But if knowledge of letters be compared to ignorance, all else being equal, you can apply the words of Solomon: *Wisdom exceeds folly as light exceeds darkness* [Eccl 2:13]. If you join holiness to knowledge then *the advantage of knowledge* [Eccl 7:12] joined to the riches of love is that it shines more clearly like *a seal of emerald in a rich setting of gold* [Sir 32:6] on necklaces set around with virtues. But not to delay too long on examples or arguments, I come to Friars of our day and I will not hide the wonders the Lord has shown through them.

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<sup>1</sup> S. Gregorius, *Homiliae in Evangelia*, l. 2, hom. 29, n. 4 (PL 76, 1216); and *Dialogues*, book 1, n. 12, *The Fathers of the Church*, Washington: Catholic University of America Press, vol. 39, 1959, 51.

### FRIAR ADAM RUFUS WHO IS BURIED IN BARLETTA<sup>1</sup>

1. A girl named Pasca, daughter of Nocetus, drank milk one day which had been given to her by a neighbour, when suddenly the milk turned black in the container, and what she had drunk she rejected in amazement. Astonished, she searched everywhere in the house with lights and saw a very black person with a large head but small in stature who said to her: 'You are dead, and it is now necessary for me to plunge you into a well'. Immediately the girl left the house uttering horrible sounds. Her womb started to swell and she began to be turned around and severely disturbed by a demon so that she could hardly be restrained by two or three men. Her father heard that the kindness of the Saviour was shown through Friar Adam Rufus, and with many neighbours he brought her to the tomb of the Friar. She kept vigil there with her parents from evening on through the whole night until six o'clock in the morning and through the merits of the Friar was fully cured from the attacks of the demons.

2. Maria, a resident of Rapolla, worn out by demons, came humbly and devoutly to the tomb of the Friar in Barletta. She stayed with other sick people before the tomb where she was suddenly struck dumb. When the Friars got up for Matins, she cried out horribly with the demon troubling her, she twisted about for as long as the demon disturbed her and with her eyes and other limbs deformed she appeared to be dead rather than alive. Finally, on the third day she vomited and was cured before many people and never again felt the pain of this illness.

3. Verdiana from Perugia for twelve years was so worn out with pains from the belly down that she could not help herself at all and often disturbed her neighbours with her shouts. She kept vigil at the tomb of Friar Adam and on the third night was cured so that from then on, walking upright, she suffered no more from this pain.

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<sup>1</sup> Distinguished mention is made of this Adam by Thomas of Eccleston, *The Friars and how they came to England*, ch. 3, London: Sands & Co., 1903, 150, and by Robert Grosseteste, bishop of Lincoln. In a letter to Friar Arnulfus, penitentiary of Gregory IX, Grosseteste writes: 'To your charity, which as with us comes before both knowledge and spiritual love, and moreover from showing a most excellent gift, as we learnt partly from the trustworthy reports of many, partly from a rescript of Friar Adam Rufus of happy memory, formerly our most beloved disciple in Christ, then our dearest friend, whom we piously hope is now in the curia of the highest Judge, we not only want to thank you but to thank you with the strongest devotion of which we are capable'. E. Brown, *Fasciculus rerum*, II, London 1690, 333. Some parts of an unedited question *De accessione et recessione maris* by 'Master Adam of Exeter as taught in his classes', is preserved in Cod. 138, f. 261 v 2, Bibl. comm. Assisi.

4. Philip endured pain for more than a year in his hip. At the time when Friar Adam was to be transferred to the tomb prepared for him, Philip humbly begged him to free him mercifully from his pain. When he invoked the Friar he so recovered in a moment that the neighbours who knew him were amazed.

5. Matthew, a judge in Serviens, when visiting the home of blessed Nicholas, before coming to Barletta, became so swollen in his leg and knee that without assistance he could not mount his horse. When he reached the town worn out with pain he was not able to get to the tomb of the Friar, so his wife with companions went there in his place. She put the wallet of her husband on the tomb and returned to the guest house; when she touched the knee of her husband with the wallet, the tumour on the knee broke instantly and in a short time he was cured. He came with his wife and companions to the tomb and before many people standing there related the miracle worked in him to the glory of God and of the most holy Friar.

6. Parisius from Sancta Sophia was weakened in the middle of his paralyzed body, had his mouth so twisted that his hand and arm hung useless, and without the help of others he could not lift himself even a little or walk without a stick. He came to the tomb of the Friar and prayed there. He was so cured that from a straight mouth he could talk without impediment and before all present he lifted his hand and arm above his head and walked without a stick wherever he wanted to go.

7. Margaret, wife of Paul a doctor, suffered pain both from giving birth and from a great fear of death which seemed to be close. Her husband gave his daughter a ring with which he had touched the body of Adam, and the daughter tied it on to her mother's necklace and the mother immediately gave birth and was cured of her pains.

8. Gemma, wife of Maraldus a coppersmith, troubled for eighteen years from a sickness called poisoning and worn out from a flow of blood for four months, could not be cured by medical help. When she was in the church where the body of the Friar lay she kept vigil for three days and three nights; she was cured from both illnesses, gave thanks to God and to his servant and left gifts for the church.

9. Gisus from Atrium Penne had been without sight for five years. He came to the tomb of Friar Adam and through his merits gained immediately to be able to see the light of the sky.

**FRIAR WILLIAM OF CORDELLA<sup>1</sup>**

1. Friar Gentilis from Deruta testified he had seen that, when on a certain day Friar William from Cordella was preaching to the people in an open space in the town of Tuscania, a blind man came to Friar William and asked him to make the sign of the holy cross over his eyes. The Friar humbly agreed to do this in front of the people and immediately with sight restored the man gave thanks to God in a loud voice.

2. The same Friar stated that on the same day a man so twisted in his shoulders for six years that he could not stand upright came to Friar William; when Friar William made the sign of the cross on him, as requested, in front of all present the man stood erect and giving glory to God returned joyfully to his home.

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<sup>1</sup> For this eminent man, penitentiary of Pope Gregory IX, negotiator of peace between Siena and Florence, preacher of the Crusade in France, see the notice of P. A. Van der Wyngaert, O.F.M., in *France franciscaine*, iv, 52-71 and 455.

## V

## ON VISIONS OF FRIARS

**Listener.** As you promised you have told of sufficiently many and greatly to be admired charisms of graces shown to the devout through the intercession of Friars; but since many Friars in the Order were dedicated to holy contemplation, I would like, if you know of any, to hear of any divine revelations given to them.

**Speaker.** I have heard of many such things of which you ask, many of which do not seem doubtful to me, things which have often happened to our Friars dedicated to the pursuit of contemplation; but because it is common for the deception of the demons to be active in these, I have omitted many and various visions while the few which I relate here, as you request, were given to me by most sure reports of Friars.

**1.** In a hamlet called Pesquitium where Friars of our Order were building a church it happened that two of the Friars helping both with the work and with the workers were enlightened from above by a divine vision. One night when they had gone to sleep, one of them woke up; he called out to the other to get up and invited him to say the hours. The Friar got up from sleep and began to say the hours when he heard a noise like the sound of stones crashing, and he asked the other what could it be? He replied: 'We will go together and see what it is that we heard'. Both went and together saw a large group of people carrying stones on their shoulders, all dressed in white clothes, moving in silence, and they carried such a quantity of stones to the place that the workers were able to complete the church in eight days.<sup>1</sup>

**Listener.** Brother, do you think it was humans or rather angels who gave this help to the Friars who were building?

## On guardian angels

**Speaker.** I think they were not humans but angels who are ready in accord with their usual ministry of giving counsel to help needy humans by showing the design of the merciful God. This is fittingly indicated by the clothes they wore since the white clothes illustrate angelic purity and cleanliness. So it is written: *And the armies of heaven, wearing fine linen, white and pure, were following on white horses* [Rev 19:14]. This is also represented by the silence in which

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<sup>1</sup> In his own style Thomas of Celano reports the same detail in *De miraculis S. Francisci*, n. 60, *Fontes Franciscani*, Assisi: Edizioni Porziuncola, 1995, 690-691.

the things of which we have spoken are said to have been done; this teaches us that works of fraternal assistance are never to be done to promote a praise of human applause, according to the warning of the Saviour: *So whenever you give an alms, do not sound a trumpet before you* [Mt 6:2]. Therefore, as I have said, I think that often angels, while being invisible to human eyes, provide help from heaven in doing what is useful or also in avoiding what is harmful; because, certainly, human weakness is never safe, hemmed in as it is by the affliction and plots of the adversaries, without the protection of angelic approval and help. The servant of a Prophet aptly expressed this meaning when he saw the Syrians pursuing his master and surrounding the city on every side and he said in amazement: *Alas, master! what shall we do?* But the Prophet not forgetful of protection from the angels said: *Do not be afraid, for there are more with us than with them.* The Prophet in prayer asked the Lord to open the eyes of his servant so that he might be able to see the army of heaven coming to help: *So the Lord opened the eyes of the servant, and he saw; the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha* [2 Kings 6:15-17]. The Prophet asked in prayer that the terrified servant who saw the visible enemies, might also see the invisible lines of angels coming close ready to help those fighting lest they despair entirely.

**Listener.** I conclude that it is a great providence of divine wisdom that *the spiritual powers of evil* [Eph 6:12] hostile to us cannot be seen by bodily eyes; because often fear swamps a person in the pit of despair, if the savage enemy in pursuit and the number of pitfalls are seen clearly.

**Speaker.** Truly, as you say, divine kindness looks mercifully on people according to the quality of each. Some are forgiven as weak, and the savageness of hostile forces and their ability to harm is hidden from them. Others are offered the opportunity to be crowned with fuller merit from the struggle with temptation; as stronger soldiers they are engaged many times in the conflict and in a visible confrontation with the ancient enemy.

2. Friar Clement from Tuscany, a man to be admired for his wonderful religious observance and life, while living in the hermitage of Garderia and remaining constant in prayer, was frequently attacked by the ancient enemy who was jealous of his virtue; the devil attacked

him under the form of diverse animals and tried to divert him from the purpose of salvation. One night, tired and exhausted from the long conflict, he entered his hut to sleep and went as was his custom to rest beside the fire. When he began to sleep the devil touched his hand with a burning stick. The Friar woke up and seeing who was standing there, took the stick and tried to strike back at the one wounding him, but immediately the enemy vanished from his sight; however, on the next day a burn from the fire appeared on his hand.

Another time, when the same Friar was in parts of Spain, he went out at night-time to pray and on a beam of wood genuflected incessantly. But the devil standing there struck him on the mouth and cheek at each genuflexion. When the devil kept this up for a long time he finally put out his hand to take hold of the one striking him; but as the devil fled he touched and struck the hand of the Friar and in it five wounds appeared so that for many days he could not use the hand at all.

**Listener.** The works of the evil spirits, especially the evil of envy, against the perfect are amazing; they do not cease to attack the perfect with such varied skills for causing disturbance. It also proves the great solicitude of the spiritual guardian necessary for those resisting; with this help one can break the stratagems of these temptations or even be able to flee safely.

### **On the multiple kinds of temptation**

**Speaker.** Many indeed, are the plots of the hidden enemy and they are known only by the most perfect; nor can one in any way avoid being caught except by careful protection not only human but also from the care of angels. Who is able to list how many snares the enemy places as he moves around, in how many ways he deceives by the use of deadly persuasion, with what promises he entices the unwary by deceptive promises, with what threats he frightens one away from serious work, in what ways he oppresses by bold moves of savageness, often stealing not only bodily but also spiritual goods, in what ways he bends the citadel of the mind with a threat of despair? But all these evil lies are less to be feared by holy people, for they are able to control or cause harm only to a willing and consenting soul. For a person to turn from all such plots of the devil, one needs the help of the person who can give freedom, so that one will be aware that strength is not in or from oneself, and that one must turn to the One

who *gives power to the faint* [Isa 40:29], and so learn how one may resist wisely the plots of the evil spirits. The variety of temptations to a just person is more a sign of effort than a sign of great power; if someone could be overcome by one spear of evil, the enemy would be needlessly working to find so many ways and plans for conquering. However, because one sees that there are many ways by which one can resist and overcome any one type of temptation, by turning oneself away from the variety of deceits one shows that any temptation can be overcome unless one allows oneself to be overcome. So James says: *Whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy* [Jas 1:2]. When a just person meets temptation it is normally regarded as a reason for danger not joy; but when the variety of temptations is experienced, a certain hope of victory is seen with the end result of future joy.

I recall having heard of something which happened to a Friar of our Order and which can illustrate quickly in a brief example the things we said about the great variety of temptations and at the same time also about the help of grace.

3. There was a Friar Simon from Populona in Tuscany who was committed to the ways of holy contemplation and who saw daily a bright star to the right of his head. When he moved his lips in prayer without stopping, whether he be resting or working, he saw clearly blackbirds, a kind of thrush, flying many times around his head, after which various temptations came and wonderfully afflicted him; when he persisted more attentively at prayer, very white birds came over the black birds which they chased away as well as the temptations. He claimed he had seen this same phenomenon in many other Friars according to what the Lord revealed to him.<sup>1</sup>

**Listener.** Certainly, it is clear from what you have said how much we are watched over by the love and solicitous care of the angels, who not only procure and guard good merits for us by their intercession, but also restrain and powerfully conquer the hostile powers lest they conquer.

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<sup>1</sup> See St Gregory, *Dialogues*, book 2, ch. 2, *The Fathers of the Church*, Washington: Catholic University of America Press, vol. 39, 1959, 59.

### On the care of angels for humans even sinners

**Speaker.** Were I to try to collect from the texts of Scripture the benefits the holy angels confer on us by their ministry, I know I am incapable of finding all of them, since I think they are known only to God. How they usefully and powerfully help us meet obstacles, whether we be sinners or tempted, I will set out in a few examples from Scripture. As we struggle in temptation the angels help us effectively as we read in Exodus in a fitting example.

*The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them [Ex 14:19].*

What is represented by the camps of the Egyptians and Israel other than the struggle between vice and virtue? In this fighting Israel as it fled would have been devoured many times by the thought of Pharaoh and the obstacles had it not been assisted by a pillar of grace and the protection of angelic power. It is expressly noted there: *And so the cloud was there with the darkness, add by day, and it lit up the night [Ex 14:20].* Day represents the temptation of prosperity while night represents the coming of hardship. In a temptation of prosperity clouds bring darkness so that we will not stupidly take glory at seeing what is prosperous, and the mind blinded goes on ignoring one's own virtues; but in hardship the fire of grace illuminates and comforts us, lest thinking only of evil things the mind slips into the pit of despair.

Again, if one despising the protection of angels gives in to the tempter with evil will, not even then does the angelic goodness desert the delinquent but tries to bring the person out from the prison of sin and prepare ways of avoiding it. Peter illustrated this when an angel brought him out free from the prison of Herod. For what is *Peter in prison* other than a sinner held in a tormenting conscience, a sinner *bound with two chains and sleeping between two soldiers*, namely, accused of the guilt of commission and omission; the sinner rests in the mire of sin hiding the longing to escape. With an angel assisting, *a light shines in the cell* when by the ministry of an angel one accepts the lighting up of sins, so that one might reflect on sin.

Secondarily, however, the angel *taps Peter on the side* when an angel moves a sinner to be sorry for what was done; wakes the sinner to the need for confession, and invites the sinner to *get up quickly*. An

angel leads one to the exercise of bodily penance, when the angel warns the sinner to *fasten your belt*, to protect your feet with *sandals* by an affection of love, to wrap the *cloak* of virtue around you, and to *follow* the angelic journey by heavenly desires [Acts 12: 5-9].

When the sinner is brought out of the prison of sin by the ministry of an angel, the angel by interceding for the sinner also tries to free or at least mitigate the punishment merited and demanded by the sins. This is well illustrated in Daniel when an angel who appeared to the three young men locked in the furnace drove the fiery flame out of the furnace [Song of Thr 26]. Here it is clear that the bitterness of our punishments is either taken away altogether by the mediation of angels or, if justice demands that we be not fully freed from them, angels inspire relief in our mind so that we can bear them with profit. Hence there follows: *The angel of the Lord ...made the inside of the furnace as though a moist wind were whistling through it* [Song of Thr 26-27].

I will relate, as you request, a vision revealed to a Friar concerning this care by which the angels watch over us.

4. Friar Peter from Assisi lived in the house of the Friars which is called Subpentonia<sup>1</sup> in Saint Leonard. One night when he was constant in prayer he saw a bright star of wonderful clarity and heard a voice three times calling him by his own name. He replied: 'Here I am', and the voice said: 'Do not be afraid, come with me, get up and I will show you what you have not seen before'. As the voice was speaking a youth appeared dressed in silk; the Friar immediately got up, *whether in the body or out of the body* he did not know [2 Cor 12:2], and followed. When they had gone a little way he saw in front of him a well from which came a terrible stench, and from its depths issued fiery water in which many people seemed to be immersed. Some were being put into the pool with head turned around, some from the side, some in the chest, some backwards, and a foul smoke with much harsh sound and shouting was seen to come out from the well. When he begged his guide not to lead him any closer they went by another path and came to most pleasant surrounding; here all present were praising God in a wonderful harmony of voices as joyful in heart they sang with sublime voices. He saw Friars of our Order standing in the middle of them, clothed in white garments, their flesh even brighter than the others. Since he knew that some living Friars and some who

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<sup>1</sup> Today known as the hamlet of S. Elia.

had died were here, he desired to be separated from his body so as to remain with these Friars. His guide said to him: ‘Come, we are to go from here’. *They went outside and walked along a lane* [Acts 12:10]. Immediately the angel said to him: ‘Do you know why you have been allowed to come and see this?’ He answered: ‘No’. The angel said: ‘Go and confess the sin you committed in the world’. *Suddenly the angel left him* [Acts 12:10].<sup>1</sup> The Friar *came to himself* [Acts 12:11], saw himself standing in a church, and from fear of the sin or rather of the revelation made to him was comforted with joy and began to weep most bitterly. On hearing his voice the other Friars woke up and were filled with much consolation in the Lord when they heard the full report of the vision.

**Listener.** From this story one can deduce not only the love of the angel’s care for us but as well the necessity of confession.

### On the necessity of confession

**Speaker.** I do not think it is beside the point to say something on the necessity of confession, since in fact one can hardly deduce from the canon of Scripture that anyone is bound by a command of the Lord to confess to a priest the quality of individual sins. Solomon indicates to a sinner how necessary is confession when he says: *No one who conceals transgressions will prosper, but one who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy* [Prov 28:13]. Those who do not confess but hide sins are turned from the way of salvation, so that they do not *guide their feet into the way of peace* [Lk 1:79] where the covenant of perfect reconciliation with God is reached and justice is revealed as the wicked are *justified by his grace* [Rom 3:24]. By being penitent and uncovering one’s situation in confession, a person shows he or she has reached the limits of justice; according to the Prophet: *Set forth your case, so that you may be proved right* [Isa 43:26], and Solomon says that *the one who first states a case seems right* [Prov 18:17], so that having confessed and spurned what one remembers one has done, the mercy of God follows. That individual confession of sins to a priest can be held to be necessary, is fittingly hinted at in Leviticus where through sacrifices ordered by law the forgiving of sins is distinguished. For we read:

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<sup>1</sup> See St Gregory, *Dialogues*, book 4, ch. 36, *The Fathers of the Church*, Washington: Catholic University of America Press, vol. 39, 1959, 233.

*When any of you sin regarding any of the various things that one may do and sin thereby, when you have sinned and realize your guilt, you shall bring to the priest, as your guilt offering to the Lord, a ram without blemish from the flock, or its equivalent, for a guilt offering. The priest shall make atonement on your behalf before the Lord, and you shall be forgiven for any of the things that one may do and incur guilt thereby [Lev 6:2-7].*

The horns of a ram stand for the stubbornness of disobedience by which we resist the divine precepts in sinning. Rightly then must a ram without blemish be offered in expiation, so that a disobedient person who knows from the prompting of conscience that wrong has been done, can have the stain of sin genuinely silenced or certainly immolated on the altar of penance for salvation. One is commanded to place before a priest a ram in accord with the measure and judgment of the sin, because a priest necessarily has to know the substance and circumstances of a sin, so that he may judge with due discretion between *one kind of assault and another* [Deut 17:8]; for the single sins which the penitent has committed, the penitent may intercede by offering to God worthy prayers more or less useful for the penitent.<sup>1</sup>

If you so wish I will tell of a vision, concerning things worthy of belief about the need for confession, which I heard was revealed to a woman through a Friar of our Order.

5. Friar Gismundus, buried by the Friars in a deserted part of a forest in Melfi, appeared to a woman from the same area as she slept and said to her:

Get up and go to the Monastery of Saint Stephen in Ripa and say to a monk named Tristagnus that he is to move my body from the forest where it now lies.

The woman did not bother to do what he asked so on another night he came and said to her: 'If you will not go to the monk, as I asked, I will make you unable to move from place to place'. She pretended to do what he had asked of her, when behold he came on a third night with some others and had her fiercely whipped. Taught by the lashing the woman took the message to

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<sup>1</sup> On this matter see Alexander of Hales, *Sententiarum*, p. IV, q. 76, m. 2, a. 1, 2, 3 (ed. Ludg. 1516), and S. Bonaventura, *Sententiarum IV*, dist. 17, p. I, a. 1, q. 4, *Opera omnia* (IV, 624), and p. II, a. 1, q. 2 and 3, *ibid.* (IV, 438-441).

the monk as she had been told to do. When the monk heard the message he went quickly to the Friars whom he asked to be allowed to transfer the body of the Friar for burial in another decent place. Out of humility the Friars refused not wishing to agree with the request of the monk lest they take steps by which presumption might be attributed to him as if the dead Friar had made his *fringes long* [Mt 23:5].

Meanwhile Friar Gismundus appeared to the woman a fourth time as before, and with him was a very large group of Friars who filled the whole sky. When she asked who they were he replied: 'These are my brothers who are freed and by the mercy of God will now enter paradise'. The woman looked to the side and saw a lake full of blood in which a large group of people were being tortured, among whom she saw Tristagnus the monk sunk up to his throat. In sympathy she said to the Friar:

Why do you not help your friend?' He replied: 'I cannot because he neglected to confess a sin for which without a doubt he will come to this place of torments unless he wipes out by confession what he did'.

When the woman asked him the name and kind of sin he replied:

Say to brother Tristagnus to confess the perjury which he committed at such a time and such a place on behalf of a woman while he was still in secular dress.

The woman came to the monk and said to him:

This is how I saw you, namely, being suffocated with others in a lake of blood for a sin of perjury which at such a time on behalf of a woman you committed against the Lord; and Friar Gismundus said to me that unless you take away this sin by confession you will not escape the punishment prepared for you and which I have seen with my own eyes.

The monk was immediately sorrowful on hearing this, remembering that what the woman said was true. He confessed this sin not only to a priest but also before the people to the glory of God and also so that the holiness of the Friar might be made known.

As the Friars were discussing about the transfer of the body of the Friar and thinking to bury him in a more decent place before the altar, a voice was heard from heaven saying:

What are you thinking of so uselessly? The Friar does not want to be buried where you have prepared a grave but would like to rest in the church of Saint Stephen in Ripa.

When the Friars heard this, immediately they sent for the monk and gave permission for the transfer of the body as he had asked. The monk in haste brought an outer garment he had carefully prepared in which to wrap and carry the body of the Friar. Meanwhile the Friar of whom we are speaking appeared to the woman saying to her:

Go and say to brother Tristagnus that he is not to wrap my body in the cloth he has prepared but he is to go to the forest to collect leaves of laurel and myrtle, with which to transfer my body humbly wrapped.

When the monk went to carry out carefully what the woman had said, a Friar, a companion of Friar Gismundus, secretly took and hid one of his teeth and a bone of a finger. Friar Gismundus appeared yet again to the woman and said: 'Go and say to the monk that he has not carried my whole body; one tooth and a bone of one finger are missing'. When the monk told this to the Friars, all were surprised and the guardian ordered all the Friars under obedience that whoever had done this should give them back without delay. The Friar was afraid to go against obedience which he accepted out of devotion and reverence for the Friar, and immediately gave them to the monk. The monk accepted them and with much joy returned to the monastery with the rest of the body which he had received and buried the Friar with due honour.

**Listener.** I note that it is of benefit to the faithful to foster for themselves familiarity with friends of God by works of charity in the present life; these friends show many gifts to the faithful not only while in the body, but also before God after their death they take care usefully of their needs.

**How much one gains from developing friendship with the saints  
by good works**

**Speaker.** In the Gospel the Saviour warned the sons of light with the words: *Make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes* [Lk 16:9]. These words clearly indicate how profitable it is to win the friendship of the servants of God with zealous service, which the Saviour announces is the entrance to the eternal home and is to be asked for. However, it is clear that if this is what the needy seek to share eternally by the mercy of God, it will come especially to those who were dedicated in this life to works of mercy and so merited mercy for themselves, as the Lord says: *Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy* [Mt 5:7]. That you may know this from a clear example I relate, as I heard it, something which happened to blessed Francis through a certain soldier.

6. In the hamlet called Zanchato in Champagne, a soldier by the name of Girardus, had lost fully the use of his eyes for four months. It happened that two Friars were passing through the hamlet and turned aside to the home of the soldier where they were received by his family with much courtesy. On the following night, blessed Francis appeared in a vision to one of them and said:

Get up, brother, and return to the home of the soldier in which you were received with courtesy, and say to him that for the sins he has neglected to confess he now suffers the pain of blindness, but what is worse, a punishment of eternal torment awaits him, unless he does penance for his sins.

The Friar woke up, told his companion the whole vision, and in the morning without delay returned with his companion to the home of the soldier. When their arrival was known, the soldier asked them the reason for their journey, and the Friar to whom the saint had appeared said:

We recently came here ignorant of certain facts, but blessed Francis last night appeared to me and revealed the reason why you are suffering blindness; you committed such and such sins which through negligence you have so far delayed to confess.

Hearing this, the soldier, quite disturbed and remorseful, wept copiously and humbly confessed his sins to the Friar. When he had made his confession and received a penance, he vowed to God that if he might be spared in mercy through the merits of blessed Francis, he would visit his tomb with gifts and with due honour. On making this vow before many people present, through the merits of Francis he immediately regained the light of his eyes lost for four months.<sup>1</sup>

**Listener.** Rightly was the soldier bound to give much veneration to the memory of the holy father, whose interest brought such sight to the whole person of the soldier for his salvation.

### How much the saints are to be honoured

**Speaker.** As the Psalmist says [Ps 138:17 DRB; 139:17 NRSV] the friends of God are to be venerated with much honour, even if we have received no benefits from them; we know they are friends of God and both reason and the authority of the Gospels teach us to give them reverence and devotion: *Whoever welcomes you welcomes me* [Mt 10:40]. Is it surprising then if you think, because of their prayers for needy mortals, they are worthy of honour whom God makes wonderful? The saints themselves give tributes of veneration to one another. Lest you doubt this I will relate, provided you listen patiently, a fact most worthy of admiration in which, as I have said, the saints show reverence to one another.

7. A Friar Rainaldus from the area of Rieti, a person of wonderful perfection and life, was going one day to the town of Rieti with a companion when he met a blind person; thinking to offer to guide him by walking ahead, the blind person knowing already that the Friars were close by, greeted them on bended knee on the ground and humbly asked that they trace the sign of the cross on his eyes. Friar Bernard, his companion, conscious of the faith of the blind person and the holiness of the Friar commanded Friar Rainaldus under holy obedience to do for the blind person what was requested. As soon as the sign of the cross was traced on the eyes of the blind person, he received his sight and followed the footsteps of the departing Friars

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<sup>1</sup> The same story although in different words is told again by Celano, *De miraculis S. Francisci*, n. 117, *Fontes Franciscani*, Assisi: Edizioni Porziuncola, 1995, 719-720. See S. Bonaventure, *Major Life. Miracles*, VII, n. 7, *English Omnibus of Sources*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1987, 774-775.

kissing the earth and shouting out: 'These are truly holy men and friends of God for when I was blind they gave me back my eyes'. After a short time when Friar Rainaldus seemed close to death, many Friars from his Province who loved him dearly gathered to guard him when he died. When heaven seemed close, his body began to be covered with sweat and there appeared on his face and habit flowers like snow falling from above. The Friars present were greatly surprised at this often wiping away the sweat; but it came back again and lasted on his body until after his death when it went with him into the tomb.

When he had lain there in quiet for three whole years, it happened that another Friar of great perfection passed from life in this same place; at his death the house of the Friars was filled with perfume, so that not only the Friars living in the house but also people at a distance smelt the fragrance. They opened the tomb of Friar Rainaldus since they had decided to put the body of the other Friar with it, and they found his body already three years dead with hands crossed but incorrupt as if it was buried only on this day; when the undertakers tried strenuously to move his body so as to make room for the other body to be buried, they could not. When one of the Friars preparing the burial announced this, they decided to place one body on top of the other in the tomb. When the Friars came in funeral procession to the tomb, the body of Friar Rainaldus, which had been buried for three years, moved as if it were alive, and made room for the Friar on the western side of the tomb; he sat up and for as long as it takes to say the Lord's prayer, remained in this position; also, as all the Friars and others standing there could see, he leaned on his side towards the eastern side and remained so until the body of the other Friar was enclosed in the same tomb. On seeing this the people and Friars present praised the power of the Creator mixing songs with tears.<sup>1</sup>

**Listener.** These things which I hear are most wonderful, and from the significance of the fact they raise a strong support for Christian faith, when, namely, the body of a man buried for some years indicates the glory of future resurrection and through clear signs effectively invites one to attain the state of the first people.

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<sup>1</sup> A similar wonder is recorded in St. Gregory, *Dialogues*, book 3, ch. 23, *The Fathers of the Church*, Washington: Catholic University of America Press, vol. 39, 1959, 155-156.

### Miracles are a support for faith

**Speaker.** It is proper to those weak in faith and an indication of *an adulterous generation* to ask *for a visible sign* [Mt 12:39]. Yet, while such people consent to signs more readily than to the testimony of Scripture, the Author of faith puts before those seeking such the sign of Jonah lest anything which might help faith is omitted. By increasing innumerable signs of virtue scattered through the field of evangelical endeavour, what is being done other than to draw our consent to believe in the invisible aspects of our faith and to place in the hearts of the elect the glory to be revealed in the children of God's kingdom [Rom 8:18]? Often however, it is done lest the merit of faith be allowed to be frustrated, according to the text, the light of future brightness *is covered* in God's *hands* [Job 36:32ff.]; and lest hope tired out becomes dulled, God commands the light as a clear sign *to strike* again, and by this tell God's friends of a future possession and that they can rise to it at a stated time.

8. Hence it is that a Friar from Florence named Roland, dedicated to holy contemplation, entered a church one day to pray when suddenly while striving intently at prayer, there appeared a ray of the sun coming down on the altar, and behold he saw a boy adorned with wondrous beauty standing in the ray on the altar, holding a golden crown in one hand, and with the other carried on his head a similar crown adorned with precious stones. The boy spoke to the Friar by name and said: 'Friar Roland, strive to persevere to the end in what you have begun, because this crown which I hold in my hand has been prepared for you'. Immediately the vision disappeared from his eyes, and the surprised Friar left the church; he went to a priest of the Order and asked him with much contrition: 'Help me, Father, because I am afraid that the Lord has allowed me to be deceived; for I saw such and such and the Lord promised me what I saw'. The priest, understanding the vision, tried to comfort the Friar to persevere in doing good in the Lord, and in accord with the promise made to *stand in awe and not become proud* [Rom 11:20].

**Listener.** Since the Lord, as you relate, deigned to reveal, through what I judge to have been an angel, a grace of such close familiarity and a crown of future glory already prepared, I wonder why he was afraid of the vision when he should rather have rejoiced in the Lord and given thanks.

### On a necessary discernment of spirits

**Speaker.** If, according to the opinion of Paul, *even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light* [2 Cor 11:14] to draw careless people with him into ruin, it is not a cause for worry that the Friar was afraid; perhaps already he had experienced deceptions of the devil and was not in ignorance of his cunning. Those accustomed to the devil's torturous artifices know never to believe his promises nor yield to his threats, but with the same constancy of mind to bear his flattering and laugh when he causes fear. Otherwise, if the perfect were to *believe* quickly in *every spirit* or not *test the spirits to see whether they are from God* [1 Jn 4:1], the flattering tongue of the serpent would often lead many away in an error of presumption, while others, clinging in their minds like stars to heavenly things, would be drawn down to the depths of despair by the tail of the poisonous dragon [Rev 12:4]. Meanwhile, if God sees that human ability is not equal to the task of such discernment God often teaches by an angelic teaching what we should do in such circumstances.

9. Friar Andrew lived in Andria in the diocese of Penne and was completely dedicated to the development of holy contemplation and devotion. One night when he was busy as usual with the delights of his meditation he heard a voice say to him:

Why, poor Andrew, do you mix up for no reason vigils, fasting and other penances when you surely know you are to be handed over to eternal damnation, and no matter how much you try you will not be saved.

Disturbed by what he heard, crying and uttering strong sobs from his heart he began to think for a long time what it could be. And while caught between hope and fear he fluctuated with worried thoughts, he heard a voice from heaven say to him:

Do not be afraid Andrew, nor let the first voice you heard terrify you; he who was the father of lies from the beginning could not speak the truth [see Jn 8:44]. Take comfort in the Lord to whom you are faithfully attached, and persevere in the good you have begun, because your salvation, if you continue, is soon to come; on the fifth day of the first week of Lent now close you will be called from this vale of misery to a crown.

As the determined time came closer, he called the Friars who were there, asking them to assist him as he died, confidently announcing to them the hour when his death would happen. When he told the Friars of his vision he showed them also a written record of it which he had made in a book in his own writing. He made a general confession and began to recite the office for the commendation of the dead in which the other Friars joined him; after doing this he paid the debt of nature and before them went happily to the heavenly kingdom.

**Listener.** As you have shown in a double example, the virtue of perseverance is to be crowned with a significant reward of praise for it reaches out only for *the prize of the heavenly call* [Phil 3:14].

### **On the virtue of perseverance**

**Speaker.** Truly, as you say, perseverance deserves much praise, for when it is present attacks of adversity can in no way overcome virtue; when it is absent no matter what height the building of good works has attained it suffers the damage of ruin. Not everyone who competes but the one who *competes according to the rules*, will be *crowned* [2 Tim 2:5]; nor do *all the runners receive the prize* but only the one who perseveres without tiring is *crowned with the prize* [1 Cor 9:24]. So, as you notice, the weapons of the Christian army taken up more fervently in no way benefit the perfection of spiritual victory, unless one persevere in a healthy way to fight to the death *for truth* or obedience. However, often when the Lord sees some weak or unwilling persons ready to throw away their weapons and go over to the other side to serve the enemy under the burden of battle and an inertia of fear, the Lord with an abundance of piety and grace forces them to remain by calling back the ones fleeing, as I will relate.

**10.** A Friar John from Foligno, in the area of Saint Terentianus beside the mountain Socrate, was worn out from the great distress of a daily temptation so that prompted by temptation he was thinking in many ways of returning to *worldly passions* [Tit 11:12]. One day overcome by the constancy of temptation he undertook a journey to Foligno; he arrived at the hamlet of Magliano Alpi which is beside the river Tiber and overlooks a large valley. Standing on a hill which sloped down to the valley he looked and saw that the whole valley seemed to be like a lake filled with blood; surprised at this the Friar was greatly afraid, nor did he presume to go any further, and immediately threw himself to the ground. The Friars of that place

pondering the departure of the Friar gave themselves continuously to prayer, and sent two to call back the wanderer if the Lord had in mercy in some way touched his soul. The two followed the track of the one who had gone ahead and saw him sitting alone on the top of the hill. Hurrying to him they took hold of the wanderer and brought him back with joy to the place he had left. He, immediately moved by remorse, humbly confessed his sin and related to the Friars how the Lord had frightened him.

**Listener.** It is clear what great kindness and love existed among the early Friars, who not only consoled those troubled in spirit, but also recalled by constancy in prayer those despairing under the weight of temptation, and they tried to take them back *in a spirit of gentleness* [Gal 6:1].

### **On love and mercy for sinners**

**Speaker.** Since the Saviour says: *The good person brings good things out of a good treasure* [Mt 12:35], necessarily then each person must be careful in his or her conduct and interests. If it is clear from the fruit of their work that the early school of blessed Francis was fully concerned with a great spirit of love and devotion. How could these works of piety and compassion have been there unless they had germinated in the soil of a good treasure? We, however, follow more the appearance of justice than virtue and sound off against the sins of delinquents with pharisaical presumption; we empty the bowels of mercy imprudently, while often we push to ruin the crushed reed of weakness with a storm of disapproval from a merciless heart as if it were *a leaning wall, a tottering fence* [Ps 62:3]. This is not the type of justice the master Christ set up for he recommended not a restriction of censure but an effort to save. For Christ struck with a whip made of cords those doing things not fitting to be done in the temple of the body. The obstinate who dare to resist in themselves are lingering in incorrigible malice, and certainly signify they ought to be punished with more severe punishments. However, the kind Judge absolved the sinful woman stained with many sins including adultery for which she was to be punished with bodily death; he said to one person be at peace, and to another instead of a penance he gave a warning against sinning again. But you say we avenge the injuries to Christ and scandals to people, when in fact we are allowing one sick sheep to infect by the vice of its corruption the whole flock of Christ. But if, as

you claim, we make the same judgments as Christ, why does Christ receive a penitent while we on the contrary condemn such a one with no hope of forgiveness? Or if we are seeking to build up the people, why do we not admit a sinner to due penance, so that just as the sinner was an occasion of harm to people, so also by public penance the sinner may teach others to be sorry for sin? But if, what I think is truer, we defend our reputation in this matter and provide a security against scandals happening, we should remember, because no one thinks more of virtue, no one is more devoted to it than one who has lost the reputation of being a good person; such a person does not want to lose his or her conscience, nor the conscience of others. But you say: How can I lose my conscience, the very thing which is able to save me? Clearly, although you cannot be a necessary cause for the loss of another's conscience, it often happens you have been an occasion to a weak person, a neighbour in despair, especially when such a person becomes used to these things and is ready to follow the common law of your judgment. You may know that one who has promised amendment has become hardened to scandals, is often found caught up by falling back in like things, or perhaps there is no amendment in the heart, but rather you judge that the person is probably forced by necessity to commit worse things in their soul; if such a person asks to be reconciled, while you do well in showing mercy from a strong desire for the salvation of such a person, for the reasons given above, if you do not accept back such a one on his return, with due respect for a better opinion, I do not think you have sinned.

I said earlier that this matter concerns the love and mercy of the Friars for sinners. I heard something which happened to a Friar while blessed Francis was still alive.

**11.** There was in the Province of Penne a Friar Peter from the hamlet of Saint Heritius, who had a strong desire to visit his paternal home. But when he frequently asked his minister for permission to do this, and never getting what he wanted, he said: 'I will go, indeed I will go, and I will see who can hold me back any more from this resolve'. Immediately he left the house and began his journey with Friars following him, trying to dissuade him from the journey with compliments. When they had no success in this, they set themselves to pray and sent two Friars to follow the fugitive so as either to bring him back or to bring news should anything happen to him. The Friar came to the exit from the vineyards and was strongly overcome by sleep; not being able to go any further he fell to the ground and fell asleep. However, blessed Francis who was still living appeared to him as he slept and said to him: 'Why have you *broken your yoke* [Jer 2:20]? Go back to your Friars'. When the Friar concealed his intention of not

wanting to return, Francis beat him strongly with the stick which he had in his hand. Keenly stirred by the pain from the blows which he felt in his body he immediately returned to the Friars; he was received with brotherly compassion and related what had rightly happened to him through the vision.

**Listener.** From the sting of the pain inflicted one may learn how much danger there is in going beyond the limits of obedience.

#### **On the foundations of the virtue of obedience**

**Speaker.** From many examples in Scripture it is easy to show the punishments inflicted on disobedience which the Lord almost never allows in this present life to pass completely unpunished. This becomes clearer by a comparison. In the knowledge of this fact the children of obedience find the reason why it is necessary for us and in agreement with the divine disposition to obey the precepts of the leaders who according to Paul *keep watch over our souls* for which they *will give an account* [Heb 13:17]. This so necessary matter of obedience is clear at least to all who think and who are aware of the laws which govern a creature, laws which teach us to obey superiors. For, according to the opinion of a Saint, the virtue of obedience is in harmony with a well founded nature, by which any creature obeys the will and wishes of its Author; by this one does one's duty guided by a rational soul for as long as one remains in this condition, being ready when it is fitting to be subject to lesser creatures. That you may understand a sign from an example of this truth, I will relate two most wonderful events which I learnt from witnesses most worthy of trust.

**12.** A Friar named Benincasa from Todi who lived in parts of Spain, through holy obedience procured the necessities for the Friars and carried in a basket some of the eggs he had procured. On his journey he crossed the top of a hill and tired out from climbing the hill he sat down on a side of the hill which was close to a very deep valley. He carelessly put down the basket with the eggs which began to slide quickly down the rounded and slippery hill without meeting any obstacle. The Friar, regretting his carelessness and negligence in losing the alms, ordered the basket under obedience to stop its

movement and not go any further towards the valley. As soon as he said this the basket, as if attentive to the force of the Friar's command, remained on the slope of the hill until the Friar could come and collect the basket with all the eggs unbroken.

**13.** Another Friar from Assisi, named Tebaldu,<sup>1</sup> while staying in Saint Laurence near the town of Ortona across the Tiber, was given an obedience by his superior to go immediately to a certain town for some necessities. He reached the Tiber anxious to carry out the command of the Father. When he could not find a boat, mindful of obedience, forgetful of danger, he lifted his habit and walked onto the water while the men and women standing near the river called out to him in wonder not to cross. But where the water would have been deep, where the Friar crossed, the river reached hardly to his knees.

Another time when the same Friar was sent to ask for and bring back fish but could find none either by prayer or money, he bent over and put his hand confidently in the river. He searched under the sand twice and both times drew out a fish the length of a hand and brought them back to the Friars.

**Listener.** The heart of this Friar who was not afraid for the sake of obedience to cross a river of such depth obtained much from having confidence in divine help,.

#### **On discreet obedience**

**Speaker.** Although, as Scripture says, we know *to obey is better than sacrifice* [1 Sam 15:22] and *an obedient person shall speak of victory* [Prov 21:28 DRB], it is important that in acts of obedience, no matter how perfect they may be, one has to be attentive. Those things which go beyond the laws of nature, or are judged to be impossible because they are outside the course and order of nature, unless perhaps the piety of faith demands it, I call by its right name not so much a confidence of obedience as a stupidity of tempting God. In matters also which concern conduct, to do under the pretext of obedience things which are judged to be either a clear cause of danger to oneself or an occasion of scandal to a neighbour, excepting truth of life, of justice and doctrine, does more to increase the anger of annoyance

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<sup>1</sup> Perhaps this is Friar Tebaldu of whom two stories are recorded in Cod. S. Antonii de Urbe, n. 58 and 72, *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, vol. 12, 382 and 389.

than to acquire the atonement of the grace of the Saviour. However, often for simple people doing such things out of fervour of spirit and purity of faith the merciful God from the abyss of judgments pursues for a praiseworthy purpose their vows which are hidden from us. But in no way do I think such things can be done by the disciples of truth who know *the secret of the kingdom of God* [Mk 4:11], unless it be by chance or rarely, as we have said, when the truth of Christian faith is required by adversaries. This is especially true when danger to the weak is likely, lest usurping uselessly the clearness of glory due only to God, they rightly fall into derision or put on themselves a hand of rash presumption or certainly impel their neighbours by an obstacle of indiscreet work to the ruin of death.

**Listener.** The great depth of faith of the Friar was evident when he looked for fish with his hand under the sand of the river and brought them to the needy Friars.

**Speaker.** As you state it, I agree that the faith of the Friar was clearly great; but who would dare to state for definite whether his faith or the necessity of the Friars merited this? For often by the ministry of one person something is done which was asked for by the merits of another. Thus when Israel was fighting with Amalek, the victory of war was not attributed to its efforts or power, but there is added expressly: *Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed* [Ex 17:11]. As if to say openly, that if Israel had overcome the Amalekites fighting against them, this was in no way due to their power, but was done by the prophetic prayer. So also when the servant of Elisha placed a few loaves before the people, the prophetic prayer multiplied them to meet the needs of many [2 Kings 4:42ff.]. Either factor could have obtained from God the grace of this provision, namely, the faith of the Friar taking hold of a fish with his hand under the sand, or the need of the Friars praying in the house. Lest you doubt the presence of the great care of God for the poor, I will relate the avarice of a woman towards the Friars for which she was justly punished by a remarkable event, which I remember happened in the area of Rome near the sea.

**14.** In the hamlet of Priverno during a time of need a woman by the name of Romana was unwilling to give a portion of bread which she had baked that day to Friars begging alms from her; she said she had nothing which she could give to the poor. The Friars left in their customary way and the woman sent the bread to her son working at the cultivation of the grape vines. When the youth received the bread

to eat after work he found that the bread was mixed with blood. On his return home from work he complained to his mother and showed her the bread mixed with blood which she had sent to him as he worked. The woman had wanted to buy fennel with this bread but when it was found, as we said, to be stained with blood, which was due to her mistake, she confessed before everyone and firmly resolved in her heart as far as possible never to deny anything to Friars begging.

### **Epilogue**

So, brother, while I have tried to meet your requests in a spirit of love, by the increase in the number of words, as is usual, I have exceeded the limits of a collection. However, I think I am to be forgiven more easily since you often put the point of view of the listener so earnestly that I was forced to digress from the proposed course of my story. I have tried to the best of my ability to draw out like a stalking beast the answers from a study of the paths of arguments everywhere through the closely planted shrubs of Scripture. Just as a dog set on hunting does not always direct its course by walking straight ahead, but either by following the tracks of a preceding animal, or alerted by the spilling of blood, sometimes from noticing with a keen nose the wafting of one smell, it hunts its desired prey now ahead, now through devious paths, now to the left, now to the right, now before, now behind with panting steps. In the same way it is necessary for one penetrating the hidden points in an argument, to meditate on what is true, what is false, what is similar, what is contrary, sometimes even on what went before and what came after, and finally on what has happened, so that one might be able to make clear that what is covered as it were with a cloud of slow understanding can be drawn out by the light of truth or that from the slowness of a weaker ability wrapped as it were in clothes of a child the stings of arguments might be dissolved.

Nor do I think there is anything great or profound in the course of what I have said to you with diligence or effort, but according to my ability I have tried to answer your questions by following the streams of opinions of older people, which, as I have said and unless I am mistaken, I recall having read of the opinions of the saints or doctors. Therefore, I make an end of these words, so that whoever knows I have said less about any point in what has gone before, should correct

the mistakes. I put a definite end to our conversation with these words, and in no way do I envy anyone knowing and telling more or greater deeds of the Friars but rather I am happy to have offered by my study some occasion for the glory of the Friars. I want readers of these pages to be warned of one thing, namely, as I said at the beginning of the work, the deeds of holy father Francis were committed to a sharper ability and more worthy style, while I have consciously and prudently omitted deeds of other Friars which I have heard of and read, lest the sameness or the repetition of like deeds or the number of stories might in some way annoy the ears of readers.

If it be thought opportune to write something about any of the deeds of which scant notice came to my attention, or for future deeds of Friars for the building up of faith, I will be content to have found someone to fill in my defects. I embrace any companion working to praise God by the increase of the glory of other Friars of our Order, and I will not think it unworthy to have found a fellow worker.

The end.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.