

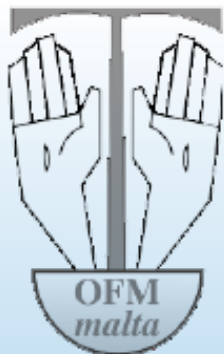
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EDITORIAL

PACIFIST FRANCISCANS?

I was once walking in High Street, Canterbury, together with another Franciscan Conventual Friar. We were both wearing our habits, me with my brown habit as a Friar Minor and he with his black habit as Friar Minor Conventual. It was Halloween and I was a bit apprehensive as to how we would be looked at on our way to see Greyfriars. Nobody took much notice of us, but at a certain point there was a young man dressed up like a punk who smiled and gave us a 'v' sign saying, "peace, brothers!" For me it was a revelation of how much the outward signs of being a Franciscan can associate you with the ideal of peace, whatever that may be in our contemporary world.

Saint Francis was a man of peace. He is best remembered for the so-called "peace prayer", which was erroneously attributed to him, but which echoes his ideals in any case. Yet, it is difficult to understand precisely in what manner Francis was a man of peace. Maybe nowadays the ideal of peace is associated with the pacifist movement, which denounces war and violence in so many parts of the world, and preaches a humanity in harmony with creation and with nature in general. It sometimes borders on to esoteric philosophy of a New Age style, viewing the inner potential of the human spirit to be able to arrive at inner harmony and to transmit that sense of peaceful wellbeing that is found in the origins of humanity.

Whenever peace is associated with such beliefs, it becomes an attractive lure to a kind of subculture in which the individual becomes the centre of the universe. Although advocating a positive attitude to peaceful co-existence, it does not go much beyond a self-centred practice of meditation or transcendental prayer. At the most it might degenerate into an attitude of protest against corruption and social injustice, but without offering any positive solution except that of street marches in which other social groups integrate to promote their own lobbies and interests.

This is why it is dangerous to promote this kind of pacifist attitude to Saint Francis and his Order. Unfortunately, we tend to fall into this trap whenever we speak of "justice, peace and the integrity of creation". I remember an episode way back in 1995, when the Franciscan Order celebrated a Plenary Council at Portiuncula Retreat House in Malta. One of the activities of the Council was a moment of prayer "in harmony with creation" at the Neolithic Temples of Haġar Qim. The local press had been invited to cover all the events of the Council, but journalists turned up only for this particular event. The following day we friars (most of us without our Franciscan habits, including some high-ranking figures) appeared on the papers as if we were a group of New Age pacifists meditating like druids in a Neolithic setting!

It is a mistake to mix the peace preached by Saint Francis of Assisi to current pacifist trends. This is the danger when we speak about Saint Francis and inter-religious dialogue, particularly with Islam. In 2019 the Franciscan Order, and particularly the Custody of the Holy Land, will be celebrating the 800th anniversary since Francis of Assisi came to Acre and then on to Damietta in Egypt, where the Fifth Crusade was fighting against Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil. It was the summer of 1219, and during a truce between the belligerents, Francis asked the Cardinal Legate, Pelagius Galvan, for permission to cross over to the enemy lines. The Cardinal reluctantly let him go, considering him to be a fool wanting to die as a martyr for the faith. Francis and Brother Illuminato made it to the very tent of Sultan al-Malik, and a memorable encounter took place. Contemporary chroniclers of the Crusade speak about the mutual respect that Francis and the Sultan demonstrated, to the point that the Sultan wanted to send Francis back to the Christian camp with costly gifts, which the Poverello refused. However, Francis received permission to travel freely in the Sultan's realms, and to visit the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem without paying the toll that the Muslim overlords demanded from Christian pilgrims.

So far so good. The only problem is that this event has been interpreted with the contemporary pacifist mentality on the part of some, who regard Francis as a kind of syncretist who willingly encountered the Muslim Sultan to have a cup of tea with him in his tent! The fact that Saint Francis went to the Muslim camp shouting loudly to the guards: "I am a Christian; take me to your master," seems to be forgotten. They also forget that Francis had a sincere desire to die as a martyr, even though he was not choosing death deliberately. He also went to the Sultan with respect and friendliness, but without the fear of preaching Jesus Christ and the Gospel. These elements are based on documented facts, and not on the fruitful imagination of a pacifist philosophy devoid of any Christian ideals of peace.

I sincerely hope that the upcoming centenary celebrations will be a sincere contribution to the cause of peace, but of an authentic and durable peace that is based upon respect for our identity as Christians and Franciscans, as well as for the identity of other religions. For a Christian peace is not an ideal. It is a person who is called Jesus Christ. To preach peace is not to impose forced conversions. That was the mistake that Francis denounced in his Crusader environment. Unfortunately, it is still present in pseudo-religious groups who want to convert by the sword. Francis teaches us to be Christians, by living the gift of peace, not by being pacifists on the side-lines of a cruel and violent world.

Noel Muscat ofm

BERNARDO OF QUINTAVALLE, FIRST COMPANION OF SAINT FRANCIS

*Bernardo Comodi OFMConv
Miscellanea Franciscana 113 (2013) 390-421*

In his *Testament*, Francis attributes the arrival of the first brothers and the birth of the fraternity to gratuitous divine initiative: “And after the Lord gave me some brothers [...]”¹ He did not have any intention to gather around him followers or disciples, and indeed he did not attempt any technique of recruitment; he simply wanted to give a meaning to his existence by living the Gospel in a radical way. The arrival of the first companions was totally spontaneous and unplanned; this was the origin of the astonishment, surprise and joy of the Saint in the assurance that this was totally a gratuitous gift of God.²

The Franciscan hagiographic accounts exalt the life and holiness of these first *brothers* or *companions*, who Francis loved with profound affection calling them affectionately: “These brothers of mine are my knights of the round table.”³ Their fame of holiness spread progressively in the first centuries of Franciscan history and ended up being in a certain way idealised and emphasised, as we can see, for example, in the *Actus beati Francisci et sociorum eius*, and their Tuscan version at end of the 14th century, known as the *Fioretti*:

“For just as the blessed Christ in the beginning of his preaching took to Himself twelve apostles who left all things, so also did Francis have twelve chosen companions who chose highest poverty [...]. And just as those holy apostles were admirable to the whole world and were filled with the Holy Spirit, so too these most holy companions of Saint Francis were men of such holiness that the world had not had such men since the time of the apostles.”⁴

In the various hagiographies of Saint Francis the names of these first companions are not always the

same ones, and they are not mentioned always in the same order. We can, however, affirm that “the first fraternity would have been formed between 1208 and 1209/1210 and comprised of men mostly from Assisi and a few from Rieti. Their names were: Bernard of Quintavalle, Peter, Giles, Sabbatino, Morico the Little, John of the Little Hat, Philip the Tall, John of San Costanzo, Barbaro, Bernard di Vigilante, and Angelo Tancredi.”⁵ Regarding their social extraction, they undoubtedly belonged to all social strata: there were nobles, knights, ecclesiastics, farmers, wealthy merchants, learned and unlearned alike.⁶

Among the first brothers, hagiographic sources dedicate particular attention to Bernardo of Quintavalle,⁷ structuring around his figure whole episodes, and they all agree in indicating him as the firstborn, the first disciple and follower of Francis.⁸ In this paper I would like to draw attention precisely upon this important personage of the so-called “Franciscan spring,” who is called “blessed” by popular acclamation, even though his holiness has never received an official recognition on the part of the Church. I will begin by recalling the sources that speak about him, and then I will present his essential biographic details, his spiritual profile, and I will dedicate some pages to the *blessing* given by Francis to him and to Elias. Finally, I will make a brief presentation of the unearthing of his mortal remains, which has recently been effected in the basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi.

I. The Sources

The first details concerning brother Bernard are found in the biographies, chronicles and

testimonies gathered in the *Fontes Franciscani*. They regard details which are not exhaustive, but significant, precious and important in order to delineate the biographical profile and to understand deeply the spiritual dimension of the first follower of Francis. I will make a quick reference to each source, starting with the official biographies.

The *Vita beati Francisci* by Thomas of Celano, when speaking about Bernard, presents first and foremost the episode of his *conversion*. After having been won over by the message of peace announced by Francis, by his holiness of life and by his spirit of prayer, of which he had become an admiring witness in his own house, in order to acquire the kingdom of heaven, Bernard decides to sell all his possessions and to distribute the money to the poor, according to the evangelical counsel. Then “he joined the holy man, Francis, in the same life and habit.”⁹ After this, Celano tells us that, when the number of brothers was eight, Francis sent them, two by two, for the mission. “Then brother Bernard with brother Giles hastened on the way to Santiago.”¹⁰

In *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul*, Celano presents in a rather different manner the account of the conversion of Bernard. Bernard wanted to follow Francis. So, he asked him counsel regarding his abundant material possessions; the Saint led him to an unnamed church in order to pray and consult the Gospel; after the triple opening of the text (the texts found were Mt 19:21, Lk 9:3, Mt 16:24 or Lk 9:23, which invite to sell all goods and give the money to the poor, not to take anything for the journey, and to renounce oneself), “Bernard immediately carried out all these things, without neglecting a single iota of this counsel.”¹¹ Further down Celano presents a prophecy of Francis regarding the tribulations, temptations and afflictions that Bernard was to suffer, and which were to be concluded by a total victory, a marvellous interior peace and his entry into the reign of Christ.¹²

Bonaventure of Bagnoregio in the *Major Life*, while speaking about the conversion of the first companions of Francis, affirms that “the first among these was Bernard, a venerable man,” who participated in the divine vocation and merited to be the first-born son of the blessed father. Then Bonaventure narrates the vocation of Bernard in a similar way as in the *Memoriale*: won over by the holiness of Francis and wanting to follow his example, Bernard asked for his counsel. The

Saint invited him to go together in a church - this time it is specified that it was the church of San Nicolò -, opened for three times the Gospel, read the three texts we have recalled above, and said to the newcomer: “If you wish to be perfect, carry out what you have heard.” Even the *Versified Legend of Saint Francis* by Henry of Avranches and *The Book of Praises* by Bernard of Besse, secretary to Saint Bonaventure, speak about the conversion of Bernard.¹³

In the *Letter of Greccio*, which Leo, Rufino and Angelo wrote on 11 August 1246, and which in the manuscript tradition forms the premise to the *Legenda trium sociorum*, the three brothers affirm that they were sending to brother Crescentius some information regarding Francis, and basing their account on the memoirs of brother John, who had gathered many stories “from that holy Brother Giles, and from Brother Bernard of blessed memory, the first companion of blessed Francis.”¹⁴

We now take into consideration the *Anonymus Perusinus*, whose author is reputed by modern critical analysis to have been brother John of Perugia, disciple, companion and confessor of brother Giles.¹⁵ He offers a good number of details regarding our personage: Bernardo and another citizen of Assisi, whose name was Pietro, who were drawn to the choices of Francis, expressed their wish to follow him. Francis took them in an unnamed church in the town and all three of them, with the help of a priest, consulted the Gospel for three times. After this followed the selling of their goods (many possessions in the case of Bernardo, few in the case of Pietro), the distribution of the money to the poor, the vesting and the entry into the first nucleus of the *fraternitas*.¹⁶ Later on, when they went to Rome in order to ask Innocent III to approve their *propositum* or *forma vitae*, Francis and the first companions decide to elect a leader in order to obey him in everything: “They chose Brother Bernardo who was the first to be received by the blessed Francis, and they did as he said.”¹⁷

The *Legend atrium sociorum*, after having affirmed that among the followers of Francis, “the first of these was Brother Bernardo, of holy memory,” narrates his encounter with the Saint in his own house and the episode of the triple opening of the Gospel in the church of San Nicolò; Pietro united himself to them, and regarding him it is said that he “also wanted to become a brother;” immediately afterwards follows the practical carrying out of what they had heard,

namely the selling of goods, which in Bernardo's case involved great wealth, since he acquired a large sum of money and distributed it to the poor of the city.¹⁸ In the same *Legenda* we find a long description of the mission of Bernardo in Florence, which he accomplished with another brother, and which became a witness of poverty and patience and rendered abundant fruit from the vocational point of view. The source also refers to the decision to elect Bernardo as leader of the group of brothers going to Rome for the approval of their *propositum vitae*.¹⁹

The *Assisi Compilation* or *Legenda Perusina* presents the moving scene of the dying Francis who blessed Bernardo, since "he began first and most perfectly fulfilled the perfection of the holy Gospel." It also presents the prophecy of the Saint regarding the tribulations and temptations that Bernardo would have to endure, finally overcoming them and victoriously end his days in serenity and peace.²⁰ These two episodes (blessing and prophecy) on the first brother of the Saint are offered also by the *Speculum perfectionis*, where we find the marvellous definition of the good friar minor as given by Francis, who summarises the life and the best attitudes of some holy brothers, among whom he praises "the faith and love of poverty which Brother Bernard most perfectly had [...]."²¹

Salimbene de Adam, in his *Chronicle*, informs us that he knew Bernardo in Siena, "the first one" among the brothers received by Francis, and that he lived with him for an entire winter in that town, enjoying his friendship, and having heard him narrate "the many and great works of Francis" and of having learned from him "so many good things."²² Dante Alighieri, while speaking about the mystical espousals of Francis with Lady Poverty in the XI *Canto* of the *Paradiso*, recalls also some of the first companions, beginning with Bernard: "the venerable Bernardo // went barefoot first; he hurried toward such peace; // and though he ran, he thought his pace too slow."²³

The *Actus beati Francisci et sociorum eius* and their vernacular edition in the *Fioretti* dedicate ample space to Bernardo, underlining the supernatural and miraculous aspects. When praising some of the companions of Francis, they particularly recall brother Bernardo who, since he was most humble, "soared like an eagle to the light of divine wisdom," and "made clear the most profound passages of Scripture."²⁴ They also recall

the journey of his conversion and vocation: the night when he welcomed Francis in his house, the request to follow Francis, the triple consultation of the Gospel in the church of the "vescovado" with the help of a priest, the selling of goods followed by the distribution of the money to the poor, the final words of praise of his contemplative spirit and of his poverty.²⁵ They also narrate various facts of his life as a brother: his obedience to Francis, the double pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostella (the first journey interrupted in order to assist a poor sick man), his meeting with the angel, the mission in Bologna and the first house of the brothers in that city, the blessing received from the dying Francis and the visit of Giles to Bernardo before he died.²⁶ In presenting the dream of one of the three robbers of Monte Casale who was welcomed by Francis, Giles and Bernardo in paradise, the *Actus* state that "Brother Bernardo had on his head the most beautiful crown of stars."²⁷ Finally, they mention Bernardo's gift of contemplation.²⁸

Besides the episodes coming from the biographies, chronicles and testimonies gathered in the *Fontes*, one could recall other authors and other texts which, more or less briefly, speak about and praise Bernardo. The most famous is Angelo Clareno, in the *Liber chronicarum sive tribulationum Ordinis Minorum*, who gives us various episodes, even though they are of dubious historical value: Bernardo, together with Giles, Angelo, Masseo and Leo, listens to some revelations and recommendations by Francis; the dying Francis gave him a special blessing since he was the first brother that he received; Bernardo is among the brothers who were greatly accused and persecuted by Elias, and in order to escape from the persecution he retired on a solitary mountain, all by himself, and built a small hut close to Mount Sefro; Bernardo pronounced a prophecy in which he said that the Order of Minors would always slip down into a lower level of holiness, until the time when it would be miraculously reformed and renewed.²⁹ I also refer to the *Catalogus sanctorum fratrum minorum*,³⁰ the *Chronica* of Nicholas Glassberger,³¹ the *Compendium* of brother Mariano da Firenze,³² the *Crónicas da Ordem dos frades Menores* by Mark of Lisbon,³³ the *Martyrologium Franciscanum* by Arthur da Moustier,³⁴ the *Umbria Serafica* of Agostino da Stroncone,³⁵ the *Biblioteca bio-bibliografica della Terra Santa* by Golubovich,³⁶ etc.

Besides the authors and text that we have

quoted, the principal and most exhaustive sources of information on Bernardo are certainly his biographies, which we find in voluminous and famous works, and which offer a biographical picture which is fairly complete, even though not always trustworthy under the historical profile, both because these writings come very late after the events they narrate and also because in the narration of the various episodes it is evident that the principal aim is that of spiritual edification. The first biography is the *Vita fratris Bernardi*, inserted by Arnald of Sarrant in the *Chronica XXIV Generalium*.³⁷ The second biography is the life *De frate Bernardo*, which Bartholomew of Pisa wrote in his *De conformitate*.³⁸ These lives are followed by those contained in the *Franceschina* by G. Oddi,³⁹ in the second volume of the *Annales* of Wadding,⁴⁰ and in the *Vite dei Santi e Beati dell'Umbria* by L. Iacobilli.⁴¹

II. Biographical profile

On the basis of the sources, it is possible to fix with certainty only some moments of the life of brother Bernardo. He was born in a noble and rich family from Assisi during the last decades of the 12th century and his father was called Quintavalle.⁴² Qualified as *dominus* before his conversion and having obtained a doctorate *in utroque* at the *studium* of Bologna, Bernardo was one of the most influential citizens of Assisi.⁴³ At the time of the conversion of Francis, he was a person among the most attentive, sensitive and benevolent towards the Saint, welcoming often in his own house, and asking him to enlighten him regarding the meaning of that radical choice that he made, and finally letting himself be won over by the message of peace of the Poverello, opening his heart to him and deciding to follow him by selling all his possessions and distributing the earnings to the poor according to the words of the Gospel. Besides these aspects, the *Vita beati Francisci* by Thomas of Celano underlines the exemplary nature of the action of Bernardo on those who, later on, were to join the group of friars minor, and presents a moving conclusion: Francis was overjoyed by the arrival of Bernardo. "The holy man Francis rejoiced with very great joy over the arrival and conversion of such a man, because the Lord seemed to be caring for him, giving him a needed companion and a faithful friend."⁴⁴

Effectively the decision of Bernardo had an extraordinary positive influence upon Francis, not only because the citizens of Assisi remained profoundly moved by the conversion of a man of such a noble status. In this way they also began to modify their attitude of contempt in the face of the son of Pietro di Bernardone. Moreover, Francis could now feel less alone, and he freed himself from the fear of a choice that the citizens of Assisi considered to be an extravagant *novitas*. Francis gained trust in himself and in his evangelical project; for this reason, he showed a particular affection towards his first companion all long the span of his life.⁴⁵

The *Anonymous of Perugia*, followed by other sources, presents the episode in a rather different way from that of the *Vita beati Francisci*. First of all it changes the immediate motive that pushed Bernardo to admire Francis and to enkindle in himself the desire to follow him: it was the patience that the Saint showed in the face of the citizens who ridiculed, despised and offended him, since they considered him to be mad. It was this attitude of patience that was to determine in Bernardo the decision to join Francis in his Gospel adventure. Then it affirms that with Bernardo there was also Pietro: both went to Francis and asked to follow him: "We wish to live with you from now on and do what you are doing." Another novelty is that all three of them went to church, prayed to the Lord and then asked the priest to open for three times and read for them the words of the Gospel regarding the *missio apostolica*. These texts were to become the inspirational themes of their *forma vitae*, as Francis announced to his two companions: "This will be our rule." The conclusion of the narrative is, however, substantially the same as that which is found in the *Vita beati Francisci*, namely the renunciation of all possessions, the distribution to the poor and the following of Francis: "Once Brother Bernardo and Brother Pietro sold their possessions and gave the money to the poor, as we mentioned, they dressed like the man of God, blessed Francis, and became his companions."⁴⁶ In this way the *fraternity* was born.

After Bernardo and Pietro, who followed Francis on 16th April 1208, arrived also Giles (Egidio) on 23rd April,⁴⁷ in such a way that the *fraternitas* was now made up of four brothers. Francis therefore decided upon a first apostolic mission - which consisted of a simple witness of life and some words of religious exhortation -

which came into effect in May-June 1208: Francis and Giles went to the Marches of Ancona, whereas Bernardo and Pietro went to another region which is not indicated.⁴⁸ Since after the return to base other brothers arrived, the Saint promoted yet another more vast evangelising mission, sending the brothers two by two and giving to each two their destination. In this mission, which was realised towards the end of 1218, Bernardo and Giles went towards Santiago de Compostella, but they did not arrive at their destination since, as the *Vita beati Francisci* states, after some time, the missionaries met all together around Francis.⁴⁹ Most probably, during the journey they stopped in various places; the sources register a stop-over for various days in Florence, where they arrived during a period of time when it was cold and where, in the majority of cases, they encountered lack of hospitality, refusal, scorn and ill-treatment of all kinds, which they patiently endured and forgave with all their hearts. However, they also met persons who welcomed them and were benevolent towards them, as was the case of a certain Guido who welcomed them as guests in his house. They even acquired some aspirants to religious life.⁵⁰

After the entry from this second mission, other young and adult men asked to be accepted in the small group of brothers, who Francis continued to form in religious life, in prayer, in manual work, in poverty and in fraternity, with his example and his words. Thinking of the missionary experiences already made, in order to avoid misunderstandings or equivocal interpretations on the part of the clergy and the lay faithful in a context in which many non-orthodox preachers proliferated, once the number of twelve brothers had been reached, the Saint began to project a papal approval of their ideal and life. He involved all the brothers, and elaborated a *propositum vitae*, a *form of life* with the words that he had heard during Mass at the Portiuncula and with those he had heard together with the first companions in a church in Assisi. In April-May 1209 all the group went to Rome in order to obtain the approval from Innocent III. In this circumstance, Bernardo was elected as leader and head of the group of brothers.⁵¹

In 1211, upon the request of Francis, Bernard went for another mission, this time in Bologna. He was ridiculed for his worn-out habit, insulted, and became the target for mud-slinging and stone-throwing on the part of children and adults who made fun of him. In Piazza Maggiore he was

approached by a doctor of law who, admiring his patience, asked him who he was and what was the motive of his presence in the city. Bernardo showed him a copy of the brief rule approved by Innocent III, and when the judge read it he marvelled at the radical and perfect Gospel life that it proposed, and invited Bernardo to his house. Afterwards he gave him a small house as a gift. This house became the first Minorite establishment in Bologna.⁵²

The following year, when Clare of Favarone went to join Francis at the Portiuncula in order to consecrate her life to God, Bernardo was undoubtedly present at that marvellous and joyful event; in fact, during the process of canonisation of the Saint, her sister Beatrice gave witness that, after a first period of time in the Benedictine monastery of San Paolo near Bastia Umbra, and before the stable settling down in San Damiano, “Saint Francis, Brother Philip and Brother Bernardo took her to the church of Sant’Angelo di Panzo,”⁵³ another Benedictine monastery on the eastern slopes of Mount Subasio.

One of the preferred places of pilgrimage in the Middle Ages was Santiago de Compostella. Bernardo also succeeded in reaching this place, after two attempts that had been unsuccessful. He made the first attempt in 1209 together with Giles, on the occasion of the second mission of the brothers, as we have said above. The second attempt can be dated around 1213. Francis, with a small group of brothers, among whom Bernardo, wanted to go with devotion to venerate the apostle James. During the outbound journey, having met a poor and sick man, Francis was moved and asked Bernardo to remain with him in order to serve and take care of him. Returning from Santiago he passed once again from that place, and found brother Bernardo still there and the sick man who was completely cured. They took the way back to Assisi, but the following year, as a gift to his obedience and charity, the Saint allowed his first companion to go to the tomb of the first apostle who had suffered martyrdom for his faith in Christ. Bernardo went, happy that, at last, he was able to crown his dream. During his return journey he also had the visit of a very beautiful angel who helped him to cross a deep river.⁵⁴ According to Wadding, in 1216, after the general Chapter celebrated at the Portiuncula, Bernardo was again sent by Francis in Spain with other brothers, with business regarding the Order, and he remained there for a number of years.⁵⁵

If the chronology of some of the facts that we have described is not certain, it is even more difficult to find a precise chronological place for some episodes, which are narrated clearly with a scope of edification, and which are relative to the relations between Bernardo and Francis, who held his first companion in great esteem and loved him in a special way. Once the two went together to beg for alms in a village, and each one was going around the houses. At the end of the begging, while Francis showed to Bernardo the bread that he had providentially been offered, Bernardo, full of a sense of guilt, prostrated himself at the feet of the Saint, and he asked for forgiveness and confessed that he had eaten the bread that he had been offered because he was dying of hunger. Francis embraced him tenderly and he told him: "My most sweet son, you are more than blessed for me; you are a perfect observer of the Gospel, since you have not accumulated anything and have not set aside anything for tomorrow, but you have directed all your thoughts to the Lord."⁵⁶

Another time, when Francis was nearly blind, he went into the woods where Bernardo was praying in order to speak with him about divine things. However, in spite of having requested to see him for three times, Bernardo did not respond. At that moment the Saint murmured in his heart, but when he was praying he came to know that his companion could not answer him because he was totally rapt in God. So, he went to ask him for forgiveness. The two brothers shared a unique obedience,⁵⁷ of which I will speak later on.

Another proof of the affection that Francis reserved for his first follower is the prayer that he made to God for him and for the difficulties he was going through. Bernardo was inclined to be very anxious in his temperament, he was also inclined to be pessimistic, to suffer from depression and went through great temptations. The Saint prayed a lot for him. Once, after having obtained a revelation from the Lord, Francis made a prophecy to the brothers regarding the victorious future of his friend, regarding his interior peace and his peaceful death. This prophecy came about to be literally as Francis had foretold.⁵⁸

According to the sources to which I shall refer later, Francis had a most high proof of his predilection for Bernardo some time before his death, when after having given to Bernardo a particular blessing, he asked a brother to write down some moving and consoling words: in these

words the Saint recalled the vocation of Bernardo, the first brother that the Lord had given him, and declared that he loved him more than any other brother, and commanded the minister general, the ministers provincial and all the brothers to love him and to honour him as if he were Francis himself.⁵⁹

After the death of Francis, we find some references to Bernardo in the *Actus* and in his biographies. For about fifteen years he dedicated himself unceasingly to prayer and silence, living by himself even for twenty or thirty days on mountaintops.⁶⁰ His contemplation made him penetrate profoundly the mysteries of God, in such a way that even famous theologians resorted to him in order to be enlightened. However, even in this phase of his life, Bernardo had to come to terms with his character. He went through moments of anguish when for eight days he did not feel his usual spiritual joys any longer; he was fortunate to be freed from his sadness thanks to the vision of a hand that was playing the chords of a violin in the sweetest melody that he could hear with his ears.⁶¹

In 1241 Bernardo lived for a period of time in the friary of Siena,⁶² but then we have no more details regarding him and we find him on his deathbed in an unspecified year, normally indicated between 1241 and 1246.⁶³ Upon hearing the news of his imminent death many companions came to visit him, even from distant friaries, among them his friend Giles. Bernardo addressed words of exhortation to all of them and then he died peacefully, conserving on his face a brightness and a joy which were truly astounding to behold.⁶⁴

Bernardo was buried in the basilica of Saint Francis close to his father and master Francis. The *Martyrologium Franciscanum* fixes his memorial on 10 July and presents a picture of him that introduces us into the third part of this paper: "Assisi, in Umbria, blessed Bernardo da Quintavalle, first companion of the Patriarch Saint Francis, who was adorned with an abundance of humility, patience and obedience, and who was endowed with the grace of ecstatic contemplation and after having lived a life of unique holiness, he gave back his spirit to God."⁶⁵

To be continued...

NOTES

- 1 Test 14 (FAED I, 125). Latin text in *Fontes Franciscani*, a cura di E. MENESTÒ - S. BRUFANI - G. CREMASCOLI

- E. PAOLI - L. PELLEGRINI - STANISLAO DA CAMPAGNOLA. *Apparati di G.M. BOCCALI, Santa Maria degli Angeli - Assisi 1995, 228 [= Fontes 228].*
- 2 L. PELLEGRINI, *Storia e geografia del "reclutamento" francescano*, in *I compagni di Francesco e la prima generazione minoritica. Atti del XIX convegno internazionale, Assisi 17-19 ottobre 1991, Spoleto 1992, 8-11*; P. MARANESI, *L'eredità di Francesco. Lettura storico-critica del "Testamento"*, S. Maria degli Angeli-Assisi 2009, 201.
 - 3 AC 103 (FAED II, 208); 2MP 72 (FAED III, 320).
 - 4 ABF 1 (FAED III, 435).
 - 5 G.G. MERLO, *In the Name of Saint Francis. History of the Friars Minor and the Franciscans until the early sixteenth century*, Translated by R. BONANNO, Franciscan Institute Publications, St. Bonaventure University, NY 2009, 40. Regarding the difficulty in individuating the first brothers, see W. BLOCK, *Vivere il vangelo con Francesco d'Assisi. Temi e figure della fraternità minoritica*, Bologna 2013, 19-36.
 - 6 E. MENESTÒ, *Leone e i compagni di Assisi*, in *I compagni di Francesco*, 40-41.
 - 7 G. ODOARDI, *Bernardo da Quintavalle*, in *Bibliotheca Sanctorum III* (1963) 63; R. MANSELLI, *Bernardo da Quintavalle*, in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, IX (1967), 287-289; L. DI FONZO, *Bernardo di Quintavalle*, in *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, I (1970), 605-606; D.E. CELIGUETA, *I primi compagni di san Francesco*, Padova 1995, 30-53.
 - 8 LMj III,3 (FAED II, 543-544); L3C Letter of Greccio (FAED II, 67); L3C 27 (FAED II, 85); L3C 46 (FAED II, 95); AC 12 (FAED II, 126-128); 2MP 107 (FAED III, 355-356); ABF 1 (FAED III, 436-438); ABF 5 (FAED III, 446-447); DANTE, *Paradise XI*, 80 (FAED III, 884): "the venerable Bernard // went barefoot first; he hurried toward such peace; // and though he ran, he thought his pace too slow." Even Angelo Clareno affirms that Bernard was the first brother. ANGELO CLARENO, *A Chronicle or History of the Seven Tribulations of the Order of Brothers Minor*, Translated by D. BURR and E. RANDOLPH DANIEL, Franciscan Institute Publications, St. Bonaventure University, NY, 2005, 69: "And he made Brother Bernard of Quintavalle to be called to him, who had been the first brother, and placing his right hand upon his head before all the brothers, he blessed him with heartfelt and unique affection." The AP 10 (FAED II, 37-38) presents Bernard and Peter together as first followers of Francis, but in paragraph 31 (FAED II, 48) it declares that Bernard "was the first to be received by the blessed Francis." The privilege of being the first-born son is not affirmed by Thomas of Celano, who in the *Vita beati Francisci* speaks about an anonymous companion who precedes Bernard. 1C 24 (FAED I, 203): "Among these there was a man from Assisi with a holy and simple character, who was the first to follow devoutly the man of God." But in *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul*, he states: 2C 109 (FAED II, 319): "Brother Bernard was the first small sprout (prima plantula) of the Order of Lesser Ones after the holy one of God."
 - 9 1C 24 (FAED I, 203).
 - 10 1C 30 (FAED I, 207).
 - 11 2C 15 (FAED II, 254). Regarding the difference of approach to the conversio of Bernardo between the *Vita beati Francisci* and the *Memoriale in desiderio animae*, see E. PÁSZTOR, *La fraternità di Francesco e Tommaso da Celano*, in *I compagni di Francesco*, 87-101; M.T. DOLSO, "Et sint minores". *Modelli di vocazione e reclutamento dei frati Minori nel primo secolo francescano*, Milano 2001, 123-133. Regarding the triple opening of the Gospel in order to know the will of God, an episode narrated in the *Legenda Maior*, *De Inceptione*, *Legenda trium sociorum* and *Actus*, in practice this was the ancient custom of the *sortes apostolorum*, which the Church looked upon with suspicion ever since the times of Saint Augustine, but which it did not succeed in eliminating, so that in the Middle Ages it was still widespread.
 - 12 2C 48 (FAED II, 280). Thomas of Celano also mentions Bernard in *The Treatise on the Miracles*, 3C 34 (FAED II, 416). While returning from Spain after he had fallen seriously ill during the journey, Francis confides to Bernard that he would willingly eat poultry, and this was providentially brought to him by a knight.
 - 13 VL V, 83-118 (FAED I, 462-463); BPr 1 (FAED III, 33).
 - 14 L3C, *Letter of Greccio* (FAED II, 67).
 - 15 Regarding John of Perugia and the attribution of the AP to him, cf. L. DI FONZO, *L'Anonimo Perugino tra le fonti francescane del secolo XIII. Rapporti letterari e testo critico*, in *Miscellanea Francescana* 72 (1972) 202-208, 396-409; L. PELLEGRINI, *Introduction to the De inceptione Ordinis or Anonymus Perusinus*, in *Fontes* 1305-1310; F. URIBE, *Introduzione alle fonti biografiche di san Francesco e santa Chiara d'Assisi* (secc. XIII-XIV), Assisi 2002, 175-176; F. ACCROCCA, *Un'opera preziosa e a lungo dimenticata: De Inceptione vel Fundamento Ordinis*, in *Un Santo di Carta. Le Fonti Biografiche di San Francesco d'Assisi*, Edizioni Biblioteca Francescana, Milano 2013, 95-131.
 - 16 AP 10 (FAED II, 37-38). Regarding brother Pietro, scholars are not in agreement as to his identification with brother Pietro Cattani, who was vicar of Saint Francis and died at the Portiuncula on 10 March 1221. For some it was the same person. Cfr. F. ACCROCCA, *Francesco e Innocenzo III. Il loro incontro nelle fonti francescane*, in *Miscellanea Francescana* 109 (2009) 13; R. MANSELLI, *San Francesco d'Assisi*, Cinisello Balsamo 2002, 151. For others they were two distinct persons. Cfr. L. DI FONZO, *Per la cronologia di san Francesco. Gli anni 1182-1212*, in *Miscellanea Francescana* 82 (1982) 86. Regarding the place where the fraternitas began, the sources are divided. L3C 32 (FAED II, 87) and AP 14 (FAED II, 39) indicate the Portiuncula, whereas AC 50 and 92 (FAED II, 149-150 and 195) and 2MP 36 (FAED III, 284-285) indicate the hut of Rivortorto.
 - 17 AP 31 (FAED II, 48).
 - 18 L3C 27-29 (FAED II, 85-86). The *Legenda trium sociorum* tries to justify the action of the triple opening of the Gospel by saying that the three brothers, "because they were simple, did not know how to find the passage in the Gospel about renunciation," and that Francis wanted to have a triple confirmation since "he was a true worshipper of the Trinity." In the *Legenda Maior* III,3 (FAED II, 544), Bonaventure also places as a justification the fact that Francis was a "worshipper of the Trinity."
 - 19 For the mission in Florence, cf. L3C 38 (FAED II, 90-91); for the journey to Rome, cf. L3C 46 (FAED II, 95).
 - 20 AC 12 (FAED II, 126-128).
 - 21 2MP 85 (FAED III, 333). For the blessing of Bernardo and the prophecy regarding his future, cf. 2MP 107 (FAED III, 355-356).
 - 22 SALIMBENE, *Chronicle*, 16, in *Fonti Francescane* 2594.
 - 23 DANTE ALIGHIERI, *Canto XI del Paradiso*, 76-81 (FAED III, 884).
 - 24 ABF 1 (FAED III, 436).
 - 25 ABF 1 (FAED III, 436-438).
 - 26 ABF 2-5 (FAED III, 439-447).
 - 27 ABF 29 (FAED III, 499).

- 28 ABF 32 (FAED III, 503-504).
- 29 ANGELO CLARENO, *Liber Chronicarum*, Prol. 152-176; 1,580-593; 2,126-141; 4,135-142. Regarding the hidden place on Mount Sefro, on the Appennines between Nocera Umbra and Camerino in the Marche, where Bernardo lived isolated for two years, assisted only by a wood-cutter, cf. G. PAGNANI, *Il rifugio di Fra Bernardo d'Assisi primo compagno di s. Francesco "in latere montis Sefri" nelle Marche*, in *Beato Rizzerio ed il Francescanesimo nel Camerinese. Atti del Convegno di studi*, Muccia, 4 September 1982, Muccia 1984, 71-85.
- 30 Cfr. L. LEMMENS, *Fragmenta minora*, Rome 1903, 3.
- 31 NICHOLAS OF GLASSBERGER, *Chronica*, in *Analecta Franciscana*, vol. II, Quaracchi 1887, 5-6.
- 32 MARIANO DA FIRENZE, *Compendium chronicarum fratrum Minorum*, in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 1 (1908) 101.
- 33 MARCO DA LISBONA, *Cronache degli Ordini instituiti dal P.S. Francesco* (traduzione italiana di O. Diola), Venezia 1625, I, Parte Ia, 14-15, 261; II, Parte Ia, 69-76.
- 34 ARTHUR OF MOUSTIER, *Martyrologium Franciscanum*, a cura di I. BESCHIN and I. PALAZZOLO, Rome 1938, 256-257.
- 35 ANGELO DA STRONCONE, *Umbria serafica*, in *Miscellanea Franciscana* 2 (1887) 91.
- 36 G. GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca bio-bibliografica della Terra Santa*, Quaracchi 1906-1918, I, 102; II, 86 and 220.
- 37 *Vita fratris Bernardi de Quintavalle, qui primus post beatum Franciscum Ordinem intravit*, in *Chronica XXIV Generalium*, in *Analecta Franciscana* III, Quaracchi 1897, 35-44. On this *Chronicle*, cf. M.T. DOLSO, *La Chronica XXIV generalium. Il difficile percorso dell'unità nella storia francescana*, Padova 2003. For an English translation of this section, cfr. ARNALD OF SARRANT, *Chronicle of the Twenty-Four Generals of the Order of Friars Minor*, English translation by N. MUSCAT, TAU Franciscan Communications, Malta 2010, Vol. I, 47-60.
- 38 BARTHOLOMEUS DE PISA, *De conformitate vitae beati Francisci ad vitam Domini Iesu*, in *Analecta Franciscana*, IV, Quaracchi 1906, 178-187. For an Italian translation of this section, cfr. *La Famiglia Feconda di Francesco d'Assisi nel "De Conformitate Vitae" di Bartolomeo da Pisa, Liber I, Fructus VIII*, traduzione italiana di N. MUSCAT, TAU Franciscan Communications, Malta 2015, 53-66.
- 39 G. ODDI, *La Franceschina*, I (a cura di N. Cavanna), S. Maria degli Angeli 1929, 96-105.
- 40 L. WADDING, *Annales Minorum*, III, Quaracchi 1931, 60-64.
- 41 L. IACOBILLI, *Vite dei Santi e Beati dell'Umbria*, II, Foligno 1656, 21-23.
- 42 The name "de Quintavalle" is found for the first time in the life of blessed Giles written by brother Leo (cf. *Vita beati fratris Egidii*, in R.B. BROOKE, *Scripta Leonis, Rufini et Angeli Sociorum S. Francisci. The Writings of Leo, Rufino and Angelo Companions of St. Francis*, Oxford 1970, 318). It is then found in the *Chronicle* of Salimbene (cf. *Salimbene* 16, in *Fonti Francescane* 2594), in the *Book of Praises of St. Francis* by Bernard of Besse (FAED III, 33; cf. *Chronica XXIV generalium*, 667), in the *Vita fratris Bernardi*, 35, the *De conformitate*, 178. For this reason some have believed that "de Quintavalle" indicates the place of birth, but Fortini, who presents the family tree of Bernardo on the basis of documents from archives, clarifies the point and states that Quintavalle refers to the name of Bernardo's father, which was added to his name according to the custom of the mediaeval noble families; according to these documents, Bernardo was one of three sons (the other two were called Giovanni and Marzio) of Quintavalle, who was the son of Berardello (cf. A. FORTINI, *Nova Vita di San Francesco*, Assisi 1959, I, part Ia, 337; II, 275-276). It is therefore more correct to call him Bernardo di Quintavalle (Bernardo of Quintavalle). On the other hand, all sources agree in stating that Bernardo was a citizen of Assisi: cf. 1C 24 (FAED I, 203); 2C 15 (FAED II, 253-254); AP 10 (FAED II, 38); ABF 1 (FAED III, 436); *Vita fratris Bernardi*, 35; *De conformitate*, 179. The house of Bernardo di Quintavalle was found in what is nowadays Palazzo Sbaraglini, in no. 10, Via Bernardo da Quintavalle, leading from Piazza del Vescovado to Piazza Garibaldi. On the façade there is a small commemorative plaque recalling the famous meeting between Francis and Bernardo. The house, which is private property, contains a small chapel, reputed to mark the bedroom which Francis shared with Bernardo on the night when Bernardo decided to follow him along the road of Gospel perfection.
- 43 Cf. ABF 1 (FAED III, 436); *Vita fratris Bernardi*, 35; *De conformitate*, 179.
- 44 1C 24 (FAED I, 204). As we have already stated, *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul* inserts in the narration the triple consultation of the Gospel, done by Francis and Bernardo in church the following morning: cf. 2C 15 (FAED II, 253-254); the same thing is documented by Bonaventure, who clarifies that the episode occurred in the church of San Nicolò: cf. LMj III,3 (FAED II, 544).
- 45 Cf. MARANESI, *L'eredità di frate Francesco*, 203.
- 46 AP 10-14 (FAED II, 37-39). With some variants, L3C 27-30 (FAED II, 85-87), ABF 1 (FAED III, 436-438), *Vita fratris Bernardi* 35-36, and *De conformitate* 179-180, all follow the *Anonymous of Perugia*. Compared with the biographies of Thomas of Celano and the *Legenda maior*, who seem to see Francis as the only protagonist, these sources manifest a greater interest for the first companions and for the dimension of community: it was thanks to the doubts and questions of Bernardo and Pietro that the brothers tried to consult the Gospel and find answers in it, and it was together that the three found the way that they were to follow: cf. DOLSO, "Et sint minores", 167-168. It is logical to ask whether the discovery of the *forma vitae* was the result of Francis who listened by himself to the Gospel in the Portiuncula (1C 22: FAED I, 201-202), or whether it was the result of the triple opening of the Gospel in the church of Assisi on the part of Francis, Bernardo and Pietro: regarding this issue, see the detailed analysis of G. MICCOLI, *La "scoperta" del vangelo come "forma vitae" nelle biografie francescane: le aporie di una memoria storica in difficoltà*, in ID., *Francesco d'Assisi. Realtà e memoria di una esperienza cristiana*, Torino 1991, 148-189; cf. MENESTÒ, *Leone e i compagni di Assisi*, 34-39; A. VAUCHEZ, *Francesco d'Assisi*, Torino 2010, 43-44.
- 47 Regarding the dates of the arrival of the first three companions, cf. DI FONZO, *Per la cronologia di S. Francesco*, 72-86.
- 48 On the mission of Francis and Giles in the Marches of Ancona, the sources are in agreement; there is divergence regarding the mission of Bernardo and Pietro: AP 15 (FAED II, 40) states that the two "remained" at the Portiuncula, whereas L3C 33 (FAED II, 87) affirms that "they went into another area."
- 49 Cf. 1C 29-30 (FAED I, 207). Celano motivates this early entry from the mission by the fact that Francis desired

- to see his brothers once again, and prayed to the Lord to make them return to him as early as possible.
- 50 Cf. AP 20-24 (FAED II, 43-45); L3C 38-41 (FAED II, 90-93). In these two sources Bernardo is explicitly mentioned, but not Giles; however, from what we find in 1C 30 (FAED I, 207-209), we can deduce that the second brother who made the experience of the mission in Florence was precisely Giles. On this mission, cf. *Vita fratris Bernardi*, 37-38 and *De conformitate*, 180-181; this last source, 518, when speaking about Florence, says: "This place was first founded by Bernardo of Quintavalle, who was the first brother who Francis sent to Florence." On the chronology and identification of the mission of which speak Celano, the *Anonymous of Perugia* and the *Legend of three companions*, cf. DI FONZO, *Per la cronologia di S. Francesco*, 89-94.
 - 51 AP 31 (FAED II, 48-49); cf. Also L3C 46 (FAED II, 95). The other sources are silent regarding the choice of Bernardo as leader of the group. On this encounter with the Pope, which was fundamental for the future of the *fraternitas*, cf. ACCROCCA, *Francesco e Innocenzo III*, 7-60. Regarding the time of the journey to Rome and the return to Umbria, with a sojourn *ad tempus* in Rivortorto, cf. DI FONZO, *Per la cronologia di S. Francesco*, 95-100.
 - 52 Cf. ABF 4 (FAED III, 444-446); *Vita fratris Bernardi*, 36-37; *De conformitate*, 181-182. The doctor of law who offered hospitality to Bernardo could have been the famous jurist Niccolò di Guglielmo de' Pepoli, or Accursio; cf. FORTINI, *Nova Vita*, I, part IIa, 114; MANSELLI, *Bernardo da Quintavalle*, 288.
 - 53 ProcCan XII,5 (CAED 184).
 - 54 ABF 3 (FAED III, 440-444); *Vita fratris Bernardi*, 38-39 (where the sick people who Bernardo serves are many); *De conformitate*, 182 (here the episode is much shorter in form). The pilgrimage that Francis made to Santiago with some brothers probably corresponds to his missionary journey to Morocco - which he had to interrupt precisely in Spain because of a very serious illness - of which Thomas of Celano speaks: cf. 1C 56 (FAED I, 230); 3C 34 (FAED II, 416).
 - 55 "In Hispaniam destinati sunt cum fratre Bernardo de Quintavalle, Viri sancti primogenito, alii duo ejusdem nominis, frater Bernardus de Humanalis, et frater Bernardus de Moraria, frater Zacharias Romanus, frater Clemens Tuscus, frater Benincasa de Tuderto, et frater Gualterius, viri omnes sanctissimi": WADDING, *Annales Minorum*, I, 274. According to some historians Bernardo was provincial Minister of Spain in the years 1217-1219: cf. ODOARDI, *Bernardo da Quintavalle*, 63.
 - 56 FORTINI, *Nova Vita*, 153-154. In the footnote he quotes P. SABATIER, *Apostolato francescano* IV (1915) 127-129; cf. also CELIGUETA, *I primi compagni di san Francesco*, 42.
 - 57 Cf. Fior 2 (FAED III, 567-569); *Vita fratris Bernardi*, 40-41; *De conformitate*, 183.
 - 58 Cf. 2MP 107 (FAED III, 355-356); cf. also 2C 48 (FAED II, 280); AC 108 (FAED II, 214-216); *Vita fratris Bernardi*, 40; *De conformitate*, 184. In *Vita fratris Bernardi*, 45, we find this confession that Bernardo made at the end of his life: "Ego nunquam fui frater Minor nisi in tentationibus meis; in illis enim semper reperi Dominum adiutorem."
 - 59 Cf. AC 12 (FAED II, 126-128); 2MP 107 (FAED III, 355-356); *Vita fratris Bernardi*. To the blessing and on the words that Francis dictated to the brother, I will dedicate the fourth part of this paper.
 - 60 Cf. ABF 32 (FAED III, 503-504); *Vita fratris Bernardi*, 43-44.
 - 61 Cf. *Vita fratris Bernardi*, 44; *De conformitate*, 184.
 - 62 Cf. Salimbene 16 (*Fonti Francescane* 2594).
 - 63 Cf. E. GRAU, *Die ersten Brüdern des hl. Franziskus*, in *Franziskanische Studien* 40 (1958) 137. In his *Chronicle* (*Fonti Francescane* 2594), Salimbene states that he lived with Bernardo for an entire winter in the friary of Siena. Since Salimbene lived in that friary during the two-year period 1241-1243, the death of Bernardo cannot be dated before this time. On the other hand we cannot go beyond August 1246, since the *Letter of Greccio*, written on 11 August of that year, mentions Bernardo and adds that he was of "sanctae memoriae"; cf. L3C, *Letter of Greccio*: FAED II, 67).
 - 64 Cf. ABF 5 (FAED III, 446-447); cf. also 2MP 107 (FAED III, 355-356); *Vita beati Francisci*, 44-45; *De conformitate*, 186.
 - 65 "Assisii, in Umbria, beati Bernardi a Quintavalle, primi socii Sancti Patriarchae Francisci, qui paupertate, humilitate, patientia et obedientia maxime exornatus, gratia quoque ecstatacae contemplationis affluenter ditatus apparuit et vitae sanctitate insignis, spiritum Deo reddidit": DA MOUSTIER, *Martyrologium Franciscanum*, 256-257.

THE BEGINNING OF THE FRANCISCAN PRESENCE IN THE LANDS OF OUTREMER

Noel Muscat ofm

During these last years the Custody of the Holy Land is celebrating various commemorations regarding the origins of the Franciscan presence in the region of *Outremer*. In 2015 we have celebrated the 8th centenary since the arrival of brother Giles of Assisi to the Holy Land.¹ Indeed, a unique event, it marks the first time that a Franciscan brother crossed the sea on a pilgrimage to the Holy Places, and actually made it to visit Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulchre, during a period in which the Holy City had fallen into the hands of the Saracens ever since it was retaken by Saladin on 2nd October 1187. In 2017 we celebrated the 8th centenary since the first friars Minor went on the mission to *Outremer*, after the general chapter of Pentecost of 14th May, and settled in Acre, the *de facto* capital of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, from 1191 to 1291. The Franciscan brothers were led by brother Elias of Cortona, first *minister* of the province of *Outremer*, known also as province of Syria, or *Terra Promissionis*.² In 2019 we are celebrating the 8th centenary since the arrival of Saint Francis himself in Acre, on his way to Egypt to join the Fifth Crusade, which was besieging the city of Damietta on the Nile delta. It was during this campaign that Francis crossed over to the enemy camp and personally met the Ayyubid Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil, nephew of Saladin and king of Egypt.³ These events highlight the beginnings of a Franciscan presence in *Outremer*, that would initially be an intermittent presence, but which

would develop into a stable and permanent presence by the first half of the 14th century.

Acre as capital of the Latin Kingdom

After the fall of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1187, the Holy Land was all but lost to Christianity, except for the city of Tyre. The immediate effect of this loss was to prompt Christian Europe to retake Jerusalem. That is why the Third Crusade was organised in 1189-1192. It was led by three kings, namely Frederick I Barbarossa, Holy Roman Emperor (1152-1190); Philippe II of France (1180-1223); and Richard I 'the Lionheart' of England (1189-1199).⁴ On 10th June 1190, while on his way to the Crusade, Frederick I Barbarossa died in the River Saleph in Cilicia. Richard I chose the sea route, capturing Messina in 1190 and then sailing on to Cyprus, which he captured from the Byzantines in May 1191. The island became a strategic post for the armies on their way to the Holy Land, and could provide safe haven for the Crusader armies every time they had to withdraw from the Holy Land to take refuge elsewhere. Philippe II also sailed to the Holy Land, with the help of Genoese ships, and directed his attention to Acre.

The port of Acre on the Palestinian coast was an important place to capture for the Crusaders. It

was already being besieged by Guy of Lusignan, nominally king of Jerusalem. Soon he was joined by the forces of Richard I and Philippe II, as well as by the remains of the army of Frederick I, that of Duke Leopold of Austria, and a French force led by Henry of Champagne. With the ability of Richard I of England, the Crusader armies captured Acre on 12th July 1191. It was to remain a Crusader stronghold and the effective capital of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem for another 100 years, until 18th May 1291.

In the meantime, Richard I had sold Cyprus to the Knights Templar, but these had soon relinquished the island. Guy of Lusignan became king of Cyprus, heralding the period of the Lusignan dynasty on the island until the arrival of the Venetians in 1489. Richard I meanwhile continued his offences, capturing the fortress of Arsuf and moving on to capture Jaffa. From there he was compelled by his army to try to retake Jerusalem with the help of the military Orders of the Knights Templar and the Knights Hospitallers.

Unfortunately, Richard I had to return to Jaffa, which had been retaken by Saladin. No other Crusader army would ever get closer to Jerusalem in the future. In Jaffa he negotiated a settlement with Saladin in order to achieve peace and return to Europe. The Crusaders were allowed to keep Acre and the surrounding countryside, and Christian pilgrims were allowed to visit the Holy City of Jerusalem.

Given that the recapture of Jerusalem was now an impossible venture, the Crusader armies decided that Acre would be the safest place to establish the seat of the Latin Kingdom, with the presence of the king of Jerusalem, the barons, the Latin patriarch, the bishop, the maritime republics of Genoa, Pisa and Venice, the military Orders of the Templars and Hospitallers, and other religious Orders. Thus, Acre became a cosmopolitan city that for another 100 years was to provide an important commercial and military centre of action for Christian Europe in its quest to retake the Holy Land.

The friars Minor in Acre

The general chapter of 1217 had instituted provinces within the Order. The term does not necessarily imply a juridical and geographical entity as we understand it today. The aim was that of sending the brothers on mission in the

lands “beyond the Alps” and “beyond the sea”. One of these ventures was to prove to be the most courageous, namely that of establishing a Franciscan presence in *Outremer*. Although the geographical extension of such a missionary experience was spread far and wide along the entire region of the Middle East, the only practical and safe places where the friars could effectively settle were the city of Acre and the island of Cyprus.

One of the principal chroniclers of the Order, Jordan of Giano, describes this first mission of the brothers in the East, as a direct result of the decisions taken during the general chapter of Pentecost of 14th May 1217. The brothers who were chosen had as their leader a prominent figure, namely brother Elias of Cortona.⁵ Jordan writes: “Brother Elias was appointed minister provincial by Blessed Francis for the territory beyond the sea. At his preaching there, a certain cleric by the name of Caesar was received into the Order.”⁶

Brother Elias remained in Acre for about 3 years, until 1220, when he returned to Italy together with Saint Francis and the brothers who had accompanied him in Egypt. In Acre Elias must have found the ideal environment in which he could establish a friary, since Acre, as we have said, was a cosmopolitan city, and merchants and crusaders from all over Europe used to visit it. The particular interest of the friars Minor to settle in the towns was a sign of their particular vocation, even though in the early years of the history of the Order the Minorite settlements were rather solitary *loca*, or hermitages, which however were to be found within easy walking distance from the towns and cities where the friars would spend the day preaching and begging for alms. In the case of Acre, it is difficult to envisage a Franciscan establishment outside the walls of the city itself, since the territory outside Acre was hostile territory in the hands of the Saracens. The Franciscan friars who arrived in Acre in 1217 established themselves in a new quarter of the town, which was, however, within the outer ring of fortifications. This was the quarter of Montmusard.⁷

The Franciscan presence in Acre must have been linked with a conventual structure within the walls of a thriving city such as Acre. There were other mendicant Orders in Acre, having each a proper *conventus* within the urban setting.⁸ The fact that the friars could scarcely do any evangelising activity safely out of the city walls necessitated a rhythm of life that was typical for

Acre, namely study and preaching within the social framework of this cosmopolitan port. Acre was a conglomeration of quarters belonging to the Knights Templar, the Knights Hospitallers, the Venetians, Genoese and Pisans, as well as to other groups, like the Teutonic Knights, who had moved to the castle of Montfort but might have still held property in Acre. The presence of so many different groups meant that Acre was a hub of commercial and military interests, and the Franciscans might have found ideal ground for their evangelising ministry. The fact that tensions were normally high between the different groups meant that the message of peace could be announced, first and foremost, to Christians. There was also a presence of different monasteries of nuns. During the late 13th century there was certainly a monastery of the Poor Clares.⁹

When Elias and the first brothers settled in the Montmusard quarter of Acre, the city had just welcomed its new bishop the year before, in 1218, in the person of Jacques de Vitry-sur-Siene.¹⁰ This preacher of the Crusade went to Damietta soon after arriving in Acre, and he describes the strategy of the Fifth Crusade that was taking place at the time, stating that the plan of King Jean de Brienne and of the Cardinal Legate Pelagius was that of attacking Damietta in Egypt, and then recovering Jerusalem. We know that this plan never materialised, because the Crusaders only succeeded in capturing Damietta on 5th November 1219, but could not hold it for long, since they lost it again on 29th August 1221. Because of internal disagreements and political urgency, King Jean de Brienne returned by sea to Acre on 29th March 1220.¹¹

These historical details are important to understand the unfolding of events in Acre during those years. The presence of bishop Jacques de Vitry was linked to the Crusade, and the city was, for a period, a centre for the arrival and departure of the Crusading armies. Saint Francis himself, together with brothers Illuminato, Pietro Catanio, Barbaro, Sabbatino, and Leonardo of Assisi,¹² arrived in Acre, at the Pisan port, probably in mid-July, and was welcomed by brother Elias himself. It could also be that he must have returned to Acre on his way back to Italy, after meeting Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil and experiencing the fall of Damietta and the brute violence of war that disgusted his sensitive spirit.

Acre was therefore an ideal place for a

Franciscan settlement, even as early as 1219, when the brothers did not yet have permanent residences or even oratories in the towns and cities.¹³ One could state that the case of Acre was nearly an exception, given the particular nature of this establishment *in partibus infidelium*, that is, in lands that were not under Christian domination. In Acre, Elias and the brothers could very well have been able to live a fairly stable life in a stable environment,¹⁴ although they certainly felt it their duty to be evangelisers and penitential preachers, given that many of them, even Elias himself, were not priests but lay brothers.

The issue of preaching the Gospel among Christians was obvious enough, but one should remember that the reason for sending the brothers “among the Saracens and other non-believers” was explicitly that of announcing Christ also to them, first through the witness of life and then, God willing, through the proclamation of the Word.¹⁵ This must certainly have been the main reason for sending brother Elias and the other brothers to establish the Province of *Outremer* in 1217, with its headquarters in Acre. We do not know whether Elias and the brothers did, in fact, indulge in penitential preaching to the Saracens, who were also present in the city as merchants, together with Christians of other Oriental rites. What we do know, however, is that the friars Minor in these regions did try to preach the Gospel to the Saracens. It is Jacques de Vitry himself who gives this detail in his *Historia Occidentalis*:

“In fact, the Saracens willingly listen to all these friars Minor when they preach about faith in Christ and the Gospel teaching, but only as long as in their preaching they do not speak against Mohammed as a liar and an evil man. When they did speak in such a manner, the Saracens irreverently put them to the lash and savagely expelled them from their city; they would have killed them, if God had not miraculously protected them.”¹⁶

We have no evidence that such a thing happened in Acre during the time when Elias was *minister* of the *Provincia ultramarina*, or the Province of Syria. It is, however, possible that Elias might have taken the initiative to spread the evangelising ministry of the brothers beyond the confines of Acre. What is evident in the accounts by Jacques de Vitry is that the Franciscan way of life was attracting many young clerics to its fold, so much so that the prelate protests that he was being deprived of the best elements of his clergy, who opted to become

friars Minor. In the *Letter written in Damietta* in 1220 he states: “Colin, the Englishman, our clerk, also joined this Order, as well as two more of our company, namely, Master Michael and Lord Matthew, to whom I had committed the care of the Church of the Holy Cross. I am having a difficult time holding on to the cantor and Henry and several others.”¹⁷

It seems that, through the initiative of brother Elias and his companions, the friars Minor of Acre anticipated the sense of antagonism that was to develop later on between the brothers and the secular clergy, regarding the foundation of *studia* in the University towns and the pastoral ministry in the conventual churches. Although Jacques de Vitry speaks highly of the friars, he also remarks that their way of life was rather dangerous for those who were weak, and that they needed more regular discipline.

The presence of the friars Minor in Acre was, in many ways, a foreshadowing of what was going to happen in the Order after the death of Saint Francis. Given that the Order grew and spread far and wide, the Popes gave it privileges in its mission that Francis might have not liked to accept, such as when Gregory IX gave the friars who had established themselves in Jerusalem the right to have clerical rights and to handle money, given that they were living in a hostile environment.¹⁸ Be it as it may, it would have been difficult for Francis of Assisi not to notice this trend in the Franciscan presence in Acre, where he certainly stopped for some time, especially on his way back to Italy, after supposedly visiting the Holy Places.¹⁹ This, however, is another matter which will be dealt with later on, after having described the journey of Francis to Egypt and his encounter with Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil. Although such an encounter is considered as a marginal issue in the history of the Fifth Crusade, for us Franciscans it is a milestone in understanding the true nature of the crusading spirit as envisaged by Francis in an entirely new and evangelical way that does not endorse a syncretistic pacifism devoid of the announcing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It was this new approach to missionary evangelisation that has guaranteed the presence of the friars Minor in the “lands of the infidels” to this very day.

NOTES

1 *Vita beati Aegidii Assisiatis*, in L. LEMMENS, *Documenta antiqua franciscana*, I: *Scripta fratris Leonis socii S.P. Francisci*, Quaracchi 1901, 37-63; *Vita beati fratris*

Aegidii, in R.B. Brooke, *Scripta Leonis, Rufini et Angeli Sociorum S. Francisci. The Writings of Leo, Rufino and Angelo Companions of St. Francis*, Oxford 1970, 304-349. *Vita I*, 324 is more essential (“ivit etiam ultra mare et visitavit terram sanctam”). *Vita III*, 77 states that Giles accomplished this pilgrimage “cum devotione maxima”, and *Vita II*, 222 “cum devotione magna et reverentia.” It is probable that Brother Giles was the first Franciscan to visit the Holy Land: G. GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca bibliografica di Terra Santa*, I, Quaracchi 1906, 105. Regarding the date of the pilgrimage, Golubovich chooses 1215, whereas others indicate 1213-1214. Cfr. B. COMMUDI, *Il Beato Egidio d'Assisi nel 750° della morte*, in *Miscellanea Franciscana* 111 (2011) 418-455.

2 For the occasion of the 8th centenary of the arrival of brother Elias and the first Franciscans in Acre, the Custody of the Holy Land organised a congress in 1217. Two papers were presented, namely, F. SEDDA, *Frate Elia e il Capitolo del 1217: una provincia d'Oltremare?*, and G. LIGATO, *Acri al tempo di frate Elia da Cortona*. These papers are in the course of being published.

3 The publications on Francis' visit to the Sultan are endless, and it is to be expected that they will become more numerous during 2019. Here we mention only two, namely, *San Francesco e il Sultano*. Atti della Giornata di Studio (Biblioteca Franciscana “Stanza delle Laudi” Firenze, 25 settembre 2010), in *Studi Francescani* 108 (2011) n.3-4; C. FRUGONI, *Francesco e le Terre dei non Cristiani*, Edizioni Biblioteca Franciscana, Milano 2012.

4 J. RESTON, *Warriors of God. Richard the Lionheart and Saladin in the Third Crusade*, Anchor Books 2001; P.W. EDBURY, *The Conquest of Jerusalem and the Third Crusade*, Routledge 2017; H.J. NICHOLSON, *The Chronicle of the Third Crusade. The Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi*, Routledge 2017;

5 The bibliography on brother Elias is abundant. I. AFFÒ, *Vita di frate Elia ministro generale de' francescani*, Parma 1783; E. LEMP, *Frère Elie de Cortona*, Paris 1901 (Collection d'études et de documents, III); A. POMPEI, *Frate Elia d'Assisi nel giudizio dei contemporanei e dei posteri*, in *Miscellanea Franciscana* 54 (1954) 539-635; R. B. BROOKE, *Early Franciscan Government. Elias to Bonaventure*, Cambridge 1959, 83-122, 137-177; L. DI FONZO, *Elie d'Assise*, in *Dictionnaire d'histoire e de géographiques ecclésiastiques*, XV, Paris 1963, 167-183; G. ODORARDI, *Elia di Assisi*, in *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, III (1976) 1094-1110; C. SCHMITT, *I vicari dell'Ordine francescano da Pietro Cattani a frate Elia*, in *Francesco d'Assisi e francescanesimo dal 1216 al 1226*. Atti del IV Convegno della Società internazionale di Studi Francescani (Assisi, 15-17 ottobre 1976), Assisi 1977, 235-263; G. BARONE, *Frate Elia: suggestioni da una rilettura*, in *I compagni di Francesco e la prima generazione minoritica*. Atti del XIX Convegno della Società Internazionale di Studi Francescani e del Centro interuniversitario di Studi Francescani (Assisi, 17-19 ottobre 1991), Spoleto 1992, 61-80; S. VECCHIO, *Elia d'Assisi (Elia da Cortona nel secolo Buonbarone)*, in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, XLII, Roma 1993, 450-458; G. BARONE, *Brother Elias Revisited*, in *Greyfriars Review* 13 (1999) 1-18; G. BARONE, *Da Frate Elia agli Spirituali*, Milano 1999 (Fonti e ricerche, 12), 29-72; F. SEDDA, *La “malavventura” di frate Elia. Un percorso attraverso le fonti biografiche*, in *Il Santo*, XLI (2001), 215-300; J.A. GIERMEK, *Letter of the Minister General OFMConv on the 750th Anniversary of the Death of Brother Elias “of Cortona”*, General Curia OFMConv, Rome 2003; G. BARONE, *Elia di Assisi (da*

- Cortona), in *Enciclopedia federiciana*, I, Roma 2005; P. MESSA, *Frate Elia da Assisi a Cortona. Storia di un passaggio*, Cortona 2005 (Accademia etrusca – Cortona. Cortona francescana, II); G. G. MERLO, *In the Name of Saint Francis. History of the Friars Minor and Franciscanism until the early sixteenth century*, The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure, NY 2009, 167-181; A. VAUCHEZ, *François d'Assise. Entre histoire et mémoire*, Paris 2009, 139, 157, 194-195, 218, 221, 232-239, 260-261, 324-328; *Elia di Cortona tra realtà e mito*. Atti dell'Incontro di studio (Cortona, 12-13 luglio 2013), Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, Spoleto 2014: G. BARONE, *Elia nella storiografia da Sabatier a Manselli*, 1-16; J. DALARUN, *Élie vicaire*. Le complexe de Marthe, 17-60; F. ACCROCCA, *Frate Elia ministro generale*, 61-90; M. P. ALBERZONI, *Frate Elia tra Chiara d'Assisi, Gregorio IX e Federico II*, 91-122; F. SEDDA, *La deriva storiografica di frate Elia nelle fonti francescane trecentesche*, 123-144; S. NOBILI, *Elia come antimodello nella Cronica di Salimbene de Adam*, 145-160; P. CAPITANUCCI, *Francescani e alchimia fra mito e realtà: la leggenda di Elia alchimista*, 161-180; M. PELLEGRINI, *La Chiesa che perdonò Elia. Clero secolare, società, monaci e frati a Cortona nella prima metà del XIII secolo*, 181-212; F. CERVINI, *Elia e l'arte del costruire. Paradigma di un architetto mai esistito, ma non privo di gusto*, 213-232.
- 6 JORDAN OF GIANO, *Chronicle*, 9, in *XIIIth Century Chronicles. Jordan of Giano. Thomas of Eccleston. Salimbene degli Adami*, Translated from the Latin by P. HERMANN, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago 1961, 24-25. Latin text in *Analecta Franciscana* I, 1-19: "Fratr autem Helias minister provincialis est institutus ultre mare a beato Francisco. Ad cuius praedicationem quidem clericus, nomine Caesarius, ad Ordinem est receptus." Brother Caesar of Speyer was later to lead the mission of the friars to Germany in 1221.
 - 7 J. FOLDA, *Crusader Art in the Holy Land. From the Third Crusade to the Fall of Acre 1187-1291*, Cambridge University Press 2005, 125: "Montmusard was a new part of Acre located adjacent to the northern twelfth-century wall. Its new wall ran from a point just east of the *castellum* at the gate of St. Anthony to a point on the coast about 800 metres north of the wall, forming a triangular suburb [...] As for the date that the new walls of Montmusard were built, it is clear that the walls of Acre would have had to be repaired after the great earthquake of 1202 when the fortifications at Acre suffered serious damage."
 - 8 FOLDA, *Crusader Art in the Holy Land*, 400: "Because of the presence of the numerous religious houses in Acre, there were Christian schools in Acre. Theology was taught here since 1218. Besides the likelihood of a school connected with the Cathedral of the Holy Cross, the Franciscans and the Dominicans must have had *studia* in Acre. William of Rubruck had been assigned to the Franciscan convent (established c. 1219) as *lector* in 1255, and the Dominicans with their emphasis on study, preaching, and missionary work surely had a similar *studium* in their establishment (founded c. 1229). Certainly both the Franciscans and the Dominicans were actively involved in the study of oriental languages, including Arabic and Armenian, for their missionary activities. These three polaces would have been centres of study in Acre, each with some kind of library. Other major orders were present in the city as well, such as the Carmelites, the Benedictines, and the Cistercians, but we know very little about their intellectual activities there."
 - 9 FOLDA, *Crusader Art in the Holy Land*, 183. Besides the Poor Clares, there were Augustinian nuns, Cistercian nuns of the Magdalene, nuns of the Knights of St. John of the Hospital of Acre and Jerusalem, nuns of Lazare, nuns of St. Anne, nuns of St. Brigitte, and those of Notre Dame of Tyre. The Poor Clares were all massacred when Acre was taken by al-Ashraf on 18th May 1291. GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca*, 350-353.
 - 10 Jacques de Vitry-sur-Sienne was born in France and studied in the University of Paris. In 1210 he became canon regular in Oignies in the diocese of Liège, where he was spiritual director of the Beguin Marie d'Oignies. He was a preacher of the Albigensian Crusade in 1211-1213. In 1216 he was chosen as Bishop of Acre, and travelled to Italy. He describes the Cathar heresy in Milan and the death of Innocent III in Perugia. He was consecrated bishop by Pope Honorius III and departed from Genoa to go to his See in Acre and thence proceed to join the Fifth Crusade in Damietta, where he stayed from 1218 to 1219. It was in Damietta that he personally encountered Saint Francis. In his *Letters*, written in Genoa (1216) and Damietta (1220) he describes the way of life of the friars Minor. In 1225 he returned to Europe and in 1229 Pope Gregory IX made him Cardinal Bishop of Frascati. He died in Rome around 1241 and was buried in Oignies. The *Letters* of Jacques de Vitry were published in a critical edition: *Lettres de Jacques de Vitry (1160/1170-12140)*, éd. Critique par R.B.C. HUYGENS, Leiden, 1960.
 - 11 FOLDA, *Crusader Art in the Holy Land*, 115-117.
 - 12 L. WADDING, *Annales Minorum seu Trium Ordinum a S. Francisco Institutorum*, Tomus I, ad an. 1219, LV: "Dum haec ita paterentur Viri sancti, Franciscus non feriebatur, nec otio, aut sui corporis commoditatibus indulsit, sed ut praedixit Martyribus, iter aggressus est Syriam cersus, commisso in Occidente Ordinis regimina fratri Eliae Tuscie Ministro. Duodecim sibi assumpsit comites, e quibus hi signantur ex nomine frater Petrus Cataneus, frater Barbarus, frater Sabbatinus concives, et ex discipulis primis, frater Leonardus de Assisio, et frater Illuminatus Reatinus." A detailed account of Francis' visit to Acre and Damietta is given by A. FORTINI, *Nova Vita di S. Francesco*, Vol I, Parte II, 43-109.
 - 13 It was only on 3 December 1224 that the Order was allowed to have its own Oratories for the celebration of Mass and the Divine Office. HONORIUS III, *Quia populares tumultus*, in *Bullarium Franciscanum*, ed. J.H. SBARALEA, Romae 1759, Tomus I, 20: "Confiderantes vobis negandum non esse, unde nemini derogatur; dum vera exposcit religio, ut quae sunt etiam de gratia speciali, vobis concedere debeamus; Devotioni vestrae, cum professi paupertatem sitis, pariter et amplexi, non temporale commodum, sed spirituale quaerentes; auctoritate praesentium vestris inclinati precibus indulgemus, ut in locis, et Oratoriis vestris cum Viatico Altari possitis Missarum solemnias, et alia divina Officia celebrare, omni Parochiali jur Parochialibus Ecclesiis reservato."
 - 14 G. LIGATO, *Acrida al tempo di frate Elia da Cortona*, pro. Ms. 15: "In ogni caso il pragmatico Elia avrebbe a nostro avviso ridimensionato l'atteggiamento anti-stabilità del francescanesimo originario, primo fattore di contesa con il monachesimo che infatti criticò presto la penetrazione francescana che influiva sia sulla vita cenobitica strettamente intesa sia sulle attività pastorali; Elia probabilmente contribuì a ciò introducendo nella Provincia ultramarina i primi oratoria, una sperimentazione inevitabile in un ambiente urbano e dinamico ma anche ardita se si considera l'originaria diffidenza francescana verso qualsiasi stabilità,

diffidenza che negli anni successivi la Curia romana avrebbe superato anche a costo di ignorare le ultime volontà di Francesco.”

- 15 ST. FRANCIS, *Regula non bullata (Earlier Rule)* 16,5-7 (FAED I, 74): “As for the brothers who go, they can live spiritually among the Saracens and nonbelievers in two ways. One way is not to engage in arguments or disputes but to be subject to every human creature for God’s sake (1Pt 2:13) and to acknowledge that they are Christians. The other way is to announce the Word of God, when they see it pleases the Lord, in order that [unbelievers] may believe in almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Creator of all, the Son, the Redeemer and Saviour, and be baptised and become Christians because *no one can enter the kingdom of God without being reborn of water and the Holy Spirit.*”
- 16 JACQUES DE VITRY, *De Ordine et praedicatione Fratrum Minorum (ex Historia Occidentalis, cap. 32)*, in GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca*, 10: “Saraceni autem omnes praedictos fratres Minores tam diu de Christi fide et evangelica doctrina praedicantes libenter audiunt, quousque Mahometo, tanquam mendaci et perfido praedicatione sua manifeste contradicunt. Ex tunc autem eos impie verberantes, et, nisi Deus mirabiliter protegeret, pene trucidantes, de civitatibus suis expellunt.” English text in FAED I, 584-585.

17 FAED I, 581.

- 18 GREGORY IX, *Si Ordinis Fratrum Minorum* (1 February 1230), in *Bullarium Franciscanum*, ed. SBARALEA, I, 58-59; GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca*, 160: “Volumus tamen quod non percipiant decimas, primitias et oblationes, nec habeant ecclesiasticam sepulturam, nisi pro Fratribus Ordinis praedicti.”
- 19 ANGELO CLARENO, *The Book of Chronicles or of The Tribulations of the Order of Friars Minor*, Prologue, 395 (FAED III, 198): “The third time, however, by Christ’s design, he was let to the Sultan of Babylon after suffering many insults, chains, beatings, and hardships. Standing in the presence of the Sultan, he was entirely aglow with the fire of the Holy Spirit. He preached to him Christ Jesus and the faith of the Gospel with such force, such lively and moving words, that the Sultan and the bystanders were amazed. By the power of the words which Christ spoke through him the Sultan, moved to gentleness, willingly listened to his words against the decree of his own wicked law, and insistently invited him to arrange to stay in his land. He ordered that Francis and all his brothers were to be able to have access to the Sepulchre freely, without paying tribute.” *First Tribulation*, 23 (FAED III, 400): “After visiting the Lord’s Sepulchre, he hastened back to the land of the Christians.”

ANTONIO SCALMATO DA CALTAGIRONE AND THE WELL OF THE FRIARY OF SANTA MARIJA TA' GESÙ IN RABAT

The friary of Santa Marija ta' Ġesù in Rabat of Notabile (Mdina) was founded at the end of the 15th century and is the first friary of the Friars Minor of the Regular Observance in Malta.¹ The ground floor of the friary is still original in the typical Gothic style in which it was built, together with the conventual church, which was rebuilt in 1752-1757 after the damages that the ancient church had suffered in the earthquake of Catania of 1693. The small cloister has a well at the centre, with a pedestal and statue of a Sicilian friar who was guardian in the Rabat friary. His name is Antonio Scalmato da Caltagirone, and he was the friar who dug the well in this cloister.

Antonio Scalmato was born in the Sicilian town of Caltagirone, some 70 kilometres south-west of Catania, in 1476.² The name of the town in Sicilian, *Caltagiruni*, derives from the Arabic name *Qal'at-al-jarar*, which means “castle of pottery”, since the city has been famous for pottery works since Prehistoric times. The Arabs built the castle in 1030 and the town flourished under the Norman and Hohenstaufen domination. When Antonio Scalmato was born Caltagirone was still a mediaeval town. It was to be destroyed during the earthquake of 1693 and, like many other towns in south-east Sicily, was rebuilt in a Baroque style.

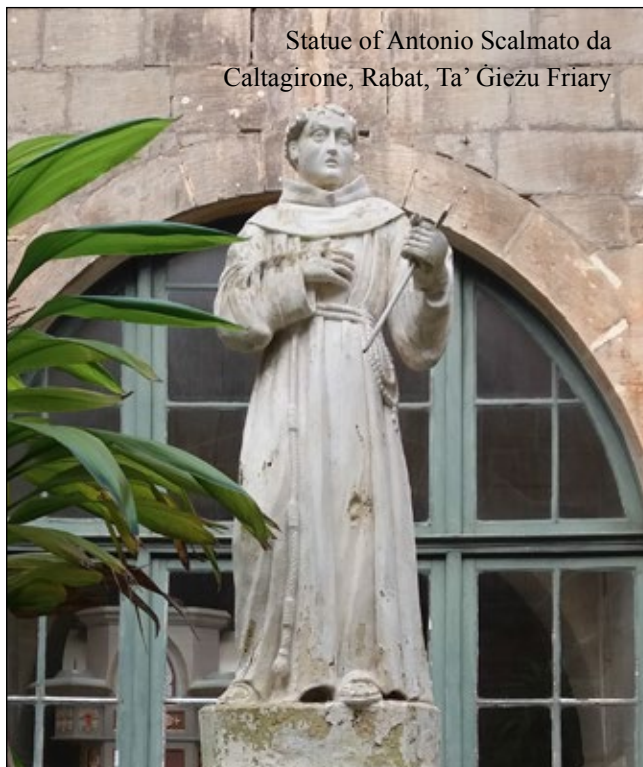
The parents of Antonio were Matteo and Maria Scalmato. They died when Antonio was still young. He eventually decided to join the Order of Friars Minor of the Regular Observance. He was welcomed for the novitiate in the friary of Santa Maria di Ġesù in Caltagirone. This was one of the friaries founded in 1432 by the Blessed Matteo Giumarra di Agrigento, a disciple of Saint Bernardine of Siena, and the organiser of the Observant reform in Sicily.³ He was ordained priest and worked very hard in favour of the poor, the sick, and prisoners. He was also famous for his penance and mortification, and

was considered a holy friar even when he was alive.

He became guardian of the friary of Caltagirone. The church of Santa Maria di Ġesù of the town, which was damaged in the earthquake of 1693, is famous for works of art, and notably for the beautiful marble statue of the Madonna and Child by Antonio (Antonello) Gagini (1478-1536), dated 1538.⁴ This same sculptor is the author of another Madonna and Child marble statue (1504) that is venerated in our Franciscan church in Rabat.

According to an inventory conserved in the Provincial OFM Archives in Valletta, Malta, Antonio Scalmato was sent as guardian of the friary of Santa Marija ta' Ġesù in Rabat of Notabile, Malta, in 1533.⁵ During the tenure of his guardianship in Rabat, Antonio Scalmato succeeded in providing the friary with water. It is reputed that he miraculously found a spring of water and dug a well in the friary cloister. The well is still existent and in the past provided much-needed drinking water for the friars. It could be that this Franciscan friar had extraordinary ability to pinpoint spots where underground springs could be found. The garden of the Rabat friary does have a shaft leading down to a natural spring, that used to be abundant in the past, before the underground water was tapped from other sources and the vein of water decreased considerably. That is why the friars of Rabat erected a monument in honour of Brother Antonio Scalmato, which still stands close to the well in the centre of the cloister.⁶

Antonio returned to Caltagirone after ending his mandate as guardian in Rabat. He lived a holy life in the friary of Caltagirone until his death on 20 August 1552, when he was 73 years old. His fame of sanctity led crowds to his funeral and he was proclaimed a “blessed” by popular acclamation, and is considered to be a “beato” of the Order, even



Statue of Antonio Scalmato da
Caltagirone, Rabat, Ta' Ġiezu Friary

though he is officially only a Venerable. His body was buried in the church of Santa Maria di Gesù in a white marble urn.

The Senate of Caltagirone, at the sight of the great concourse of people and the miracles that occurred after the death of Antonio Scalmato, decided to assign 1000 *scudi* to begin the process of canonisation. The first process was instituted in 1553 by the archdiocese of Siracusa. A second process was made by order of the Congregation of Rites in 1624, and a third process in 1627. Other processes were done in 1727 and 1738 by the diocesan authority of Siracusa. The funds destined for the beatification served also for the upkeep of the Monte di Pietà of Caltagirone and of the Albergo dei Poveri.

There have been four exhumations of the body of Antonio Scalmato. The first one was done in 1730 by the Provincial Costantino da Malta, the second one in 1776 by Fr. Francesco Ignazio da Modica, the third one in 1835 by the Minister General Giovanni da Capistrano and the fourth in 1852 by the Minister General Venanzio da Celano.

On 3 October 1952, on the occasion of the fourth centenary of the death of Antonio Scalmato, a fifth exhumation of his mortal remains was made in the presence of the bishop of Caltagirone, Pietro Capizzi. According to the medical experts the remains of the Servant of God show that his body did not undergo any process of decomposition, and that it was conserved perfectly in a mummified state.

NOTES

1. A detailed history of the foundation of the friary of Ta' Ġiezu in Rabat is given by G. AQUILINA, *Il-Frangiskani Maltin (Ta' Ġiezu) 1482c - 1965c (sal-Konċilju Vatikan II)*, Klabb Kotba Maltin, Malta 2011, 271-305. See also, G. AQUILINA – S. FIORINI, *The Origin of Franciscanism in Late Medieval Malta*, 1995; G. AQUILINA – S. FIORINI, *New Documents relating to the Origins of Religious Orders in Malta*, in *Proceedings of History Week 1994*, The Maltese Historical Society 1996, 1-23.
2. Ludovico M. MARINI, *La Provincia SS. Nome di Gesù. Frati Minori di Sicilia*, Edizioni Kefagrafica, Palermo, n.d., 133-134; S. LEONARDI, *Cenni Biografici sul Venerabile Servo di Dio P. Antonio Scalmato, dell'Ordine dei Minori Osservanti*, Caltagirone 1873; G. AQUILINA, *Is-Serv t'Alla P. Antonio Scalmato OFM*, in *Anġlu tal-Paċi* 48 (1964) 23-24.
3. A. MURSIA, *The Movement of the Franciscan Observance in Sicily from the arrival on the Island of Brother Matteo di Agrigento to the Pontificate of Sixtus IV*, in *Spirit+Life* 123 (January-March 2018), 10-15. Translation of the original paper in *Miscellanea Francescana* 115 (2015), 318-330.
4. “Annessa al convento dei Frati Minori Osservanti, la chiesa di Santa Maria di Gesù venne edificata agli inizi del XVI secolo, come attesta la data riportata sullo splendido portale ogivale che si trova alla sinistra dell'attuale ingresso, e fu parzialmente danneggiata dal terremoto del 1693. La ricostruzione permise la realizzazione di un nuovo prospetto e soprattutto di un nuovo ed elegante campanile la cui sommità, a cuspid piramidale, è rivestita di mattonelle in maiolica policroma. All'interno dominano gli affreschi delle pareti realizzati da Bernardino Bongiovanni nel Settecento che raffigurano alcuni santi francescani, il soffitto ligneo a cassettoni e diversi altari laterali tra cui quello in cui è posta la Madonna della Catena opera di Antonello Gagini realizzata nel 1538. Si tratta senz'altro di un'opera di straordinaria bellezza in marmo d'alabastro: raffigura la Vergine Maria con in braccio Gesù Bambino che tiene in mano una colombina; secondo alcuni cronisti, Caravaggio in occasione di un suo passaggio a Caltagirone, di fronte alla bellezza di questa scultura esclamò: Chi la vuol più bella vada in Paradiso!. All'interno della chiesa sono custodite anche le spoglie mortali di frati morti in odore di santità, tra cui fra Giacomo Parisi da Caltagirone morto nel 1579, fra Antonino Etiope morto nel 1580 e padre Antonino Scalmato anch'egli nato a Caltagirone nel 1479 e morto nel 1552 il cui corpo a distanza di oltre quattro secoli è ancora incorrotto. Annesso alla chiesa, poi, è possibile ammirare lo splendido chiostro, elemento architettonico che rende evidente la vita cenobita dei frati, arricchito di affreschi raffiguranti l'albero genealogico dei santi francescani ed una veduta della città santa Gerusalemme” in: www.diocesidicaltagirone.it (accessed 25/11/2018).
5. AQUILINA, *Il-Frangiskani Maltin*, 290. In this inventory of 1533 Antonio Scalmato speaks about the chapel of St. Joseph in the Franciscan church, which then became a *jus-patronatus* and seat of the Archconfraternity of St. Joseph. He mentions an altar frontal. Later on a legacy of Masses is mentioned on 29 November 1568, binding the friars to officiate this chapel.
6. AQUILINA, *Il-Frangiskani Maltin*, 304-305: “Wara dan il-bir hemm statwa tal-‘Beatu’ P. Antonio Scalmato, li kien Gwardjan tal-kunvent fl-1530 u li jinghad li dan haffru hu. Din l-istatwa tal-gebel qabel kienet fit-taraġ ewlieni tal-kunvent fil-post fejn illum dan jagħqad ma’ dak li jiehu għas-sagristija. Kienet infetħet kawża ta’ Beatifikazzjoni u Kanonizzazzjoni ta’ P. Antonio, imma li ma tkompletix.”

SAINT FRANCIS AND THE CRUSADES

Alfonso Marini
*Storia contestata: Francesco d'Assisi e l'Islam,
 in Franciscana. Bollettino della Società Internazionale di studi francescani
 XIV (2012), 4-54*

A summary of pages 35-47. The notes are not included, but only brief references in the text.

What was the attitude of Francis towards the Crusades and the crusader ventures? One of the continuations of the *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum* of William of Tyre, namely the anonymous *Histoire de Eracles empereur et la conquête de la terre d'outremer*, is dated 1229-31. The Anonymous, who knew Francis and reminds that he had been canonised, does not mention his visit to the Sultan, but gives information regarding the attitude of the Saint towards the Crusades:

“That man, who began the Order of friars Minor - a brother called Brother Francis - who was later made a saint and officially raised to that dignity, so that we call him Saint Francis, came to the army at Damietta. He accomplished many good things and remained until the capture of the distressed. For that reason, he left there and stayed for a space of time in Syria, and from there he returned to his country (FAED I, 609).

The Anonymous also stops to describe what was the sin in the Crusader camp after the capture of Damietta:

“But after it (the city of Damietta) had been taken, it seemed that they (the Crusaders) wanted to say: ‘We do not need God’s help any longer,’ since they pushed God far away from them, and then they did not want to serve him or to do good; from that moment, both in the army as well as in the city there were thefts, robberies, homicides, and lustful actions, even with the Saracen women of the city.” (This text is not included in G. GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca bio-biografica della Terra Santa e dell'Oriente Francese*, Tomus I, 14).

At the end arrived the quarrel between king Jean (de Brienne) and the (Papal) Legate Pelagius, since it was because of their sin that the Christians lost the city that they had conquered.

Within the mediaeval mentality, based on the biblical example which attributes evil to the refusal of God’s help and to autosufficient pride, the Anonymous harshly condemns the vices and bad

behaviour of the Christian fighters, and agrees with Francis’ decision to go away from the camp.

In 1247, Thomas of Celano, acting on the mandate of the Minister general of the friars Minor, composed another hagiography of Saint Francis (*Memoriale in desiderio animae*), integrating and sometimes modifying what he had stated in the first biography. Among the scarce biographical notes regarding the first part of Francis’ journey in the East he does not propose any; instead, he narrates a new episode, which does not concern the meeting with the Sultan or with the Muslims, but Francis’ attitude towards the Crusader army. This episode is inserted in the second part of the *Memoriale*, divided into themes, in that section entitled *The Spirit of Prophecy which Blessed Francis possessed*. In chapter IV (coinciding with paragraph 30 of the *Remembrance of the desire of a soul*, in FAED II, 265-266), Celano narrates *How Francis foretold the massacre of Christians at Damietta*. Francis invited the Crusaders not to wage battle on that day; he was not listened to, and the Christian army suffered a bloody defeat (probably that of 29th August 1219).

This episode can be interpreted to the letter according to the intentions of the hagiographer, namely as an example of the supernatural prophetic ability of Francis. Some read in it an attitude of the Saint who was favourable to the Crusade, since Thomas writes that he tried to dissuade the Christians from fighting precisely because he foresaw that they would suffer a defeat, and he wept on the courageous fighters who had been killed, especially the Spaniards since “he could see their boldness in battle had left only a few of them alive.” Here, once again, we need to analyse critically the source; because of his formation and position as an official hagiographer, Thomas could not present an anti-Crusader image of Saint Francis. That is why he narrates the intervention of the Saint contrary to the battle as his will to avoid a defeat on the part he was supporting, namely the Christian army. It is therefore possible, if not probable, that

the hagiographer is adjusting, in a more or less conscious manner, the episode and in it one should rather see a preaching against war, even if it was a holy war like that of the Crusades. Although it is not possible to do so in this case, we can indeed place Thomas in confrontation with the *Histoire de Eracles empereur*, which shows Francis indignant regarding the *sin* of the Crusaders to the point that he leaves Damietta: the two episodes seem to imply that Francis was against armed conflict. In the same episode the fear of Francis to invite the Crusaders to avoid battle is clearly evident, in the words he says to his companion:

“He said to his companion: ‘If the battle happens on this day the Lord has shown me that it will not go well for the Christians. But if I say this, they will take me for a fool, and if I keep silent my conscience won’t leave me alone. What do you think I should do?’ His companion replied: ‘Father, don’t give the least thought to how people judge you. This wouldn’t be the first time people took you for a fool. Unburden your conscience, and fear God rather than men.’”

Francis was afraid to be considered a fool because he narrated a vision, or because he tried to dissuade the warriors from engaging in battle? Even though in the conclusion the comment of Celano appears rather strong, if it is referred only to the refusal to believe in a prophecy. And then, why was God’s will contrary to wage battle *precisely on that day*? Was it because of questions of military tactics in which God would be an expert? The moralistic explanation of Thomas, which is based upon the traditional justification of war on the part of the Crusades ever since the time of Bernard of Clairvaux, convices little if it is applied to this limited episode, given that the defeat of the Crusaders was not a definite one, and that the Christians would conquer Damietta on 5th November of the same year:

“Let the princes of the whole world take note of this, and let them know: it is not easy to fight against God, that is, against the will of the Lord. Stubborn insolence usually ends in disaster. It relies on its own strength, thus forfeiting the help of heaven. If victory is to be expected from on high, then battles must be entrusted to the divine Spirit.”

The fact is that Francis went to the Sultan precisely after this defeat, which for him did not have simply a military significance, nor was it only an episode.

Maybe even Saint Bonaventure considered this episode ambiguous, since he omitted it in chapter IX of the *Legenda maior sancti Francisci*, which he wrote in 1263 and destined it to substitute

all the preceding biographies of Francis. The omission could also have been the result of the will to avoid interpretations of the episode which would be contrary to the Crusade. The three hypotheses of reading of three sources which we have examined (*Histoire de Eracles empereur*, *Memoriale* of Thomas of Celano, *Legenda maior* of Saint Bonaventure) together reach a good degree of plausibility, more than that of Francis who was devoutly scandalised by the Crusaders who blasphemed and had intercourse with prostitutes, and who being supernaturally capable of reading the future, was preoccupied by a Christian defeat.

Gwénolé Jausset makes this suggestive reading: in Damietta Francis makes an *ulterior conversion*; maybe when he arrived in Egypt he did not nurture a clearly anti-crusader position, but the experience brought him to refuse war totally, even that waged for religious motives.

What other elements do we have to maintain the interpretation that Francis was not favourable to the Crusade? If there are no other elements, in fact, our interpretation would remain weak, even though the same could be said for its opposite, which according to the sources we have examined does not have any other elements except for the fact, presented only by one source, that Francis wept on the dead Crusaders.

Fortunately there are other sources that we can study. First of all we have the writings of Saint Francis - which were ignored by Tolan and by the others who preceded him - both for what they expressly affirm, as well as for their silence on certain issues.

If we set aside other texts of a generic character, the first writing we analyse is the *Salutation of the Virtues*, 16-18, which expresses a general attitude of the Saint towards human beings and creatures. Among these, the virtue of obedience is described: “Holy Obedience confounds every corporal and carnal wish, binds its mortified body to obedience of the Spirit and obedience to one’s brother, so that it is subject and submissive to everyone in the world, not only to people but to every beast and wild animal as well, that they may do whatever they want with it insofar as it has been given to them from above by the Lord” (FAED I, 165).

The Praises of God, conserved in an autograph of Francis on the parchment which also contains *A Blessing for Brother Leo*, are a prayer that, in the repetition of 30 praises of God, introduced always by “Tu es” (You are) *holy, strong, great, most high, almighty*, is seen by some as an echoing of the praises (or names) of Allah. Francis would have been influenced by Islamic piety, since the

prayer was composed after his stay in the East, in particular during the lent of Saint Michael of 1224, after the impression of the stigmata. This is just an hypothesis or a suggestion.

The most clear text of Saint Francis that indicates his attitude towards Muslims (Saracens) was written immediately after 1219-1220, and could also reflect the Egyptian experience. It is chapter 16,5-10 of the *Regula non bullata* (Earlier Rule) of 1221, entitled *De euntibus inter saracenos et alios infideles* (Those going among the Saracens and other Nonbelievers):

“As for the brothers who go, they can live spiritually among the Saracens and nonbelievers in two ways. One way is not to engage in arguments or disputes but to be subject to *every human creature for God's sake* (1Pt 2:13) and to acknowledge that they are Christians. The other way is to announce the Word of God, when they see it pleases the Lord, in order that [unbelievers] may believe in almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Creator of all, the Son, the Redeemer and Saviour, and be baptised and become Christians because *no one can enter the kingdom of God without being reborn of water and the Holy Spirit* (Jn 3:5)” (FAED I, 74).

First of all we note the agreement of the expression *subditi omni humanae creaturae* with analogous expressions in the *Salutation of the Virtues* and the *Letter to the Faithful* II,47, both of which quote the same text. From this we can conclude that the general attitude of Francis that we have recalled above is applied also to Muslims. But what is more evident in this text is the refusal of all kinds of disagreements. According to Francis, the first witness should be that of a witness of life: *they acknowledge that they are Christians*. It is only when the opportunity presents itself, or better still, when God deems it useful, that the brothers can pass over to direct preaching of the Gospel and of God-Trinity (a practice that brings with it the risk of martyrdom, as is evident from the rest of chapter 16, which illustrates this theme with citations from the Gospel).

In chapter 16 of the *Earlier Rule*, therefore, it seems evident that there is a transposition of the Egyptian experience, maybe also in the sense of an *ulterior conversion* of Francis, as suggested by Gwénolé Jeusset.

We now have to consider the “silences” of Francis. In his writings he never speaks about “weapons”, nor about battles or about “enemies”. In the *Earlier Rule* 22,1-4 there is one passage which speaks about the conversion from enemy to friend in the interpretation of the evangelical text: Francis seems to eliminate the very word enemy, where with

a nearly rabbinic way of interpretation, he departs from the words of Jesus in Mt 5:44 (“love your enemies”) and reminds us of the words that Jesus addressed to Judas while he was betraying him in Mt 26:50 (“Do what you come for friend”), and concludes: “Our friends, therefore, are all those who unjustly inflict upon us distress and anguish, shame and injury, sorrow and punishment, martyrdom and death. We must love them greatly for we shall possess eternal life because of what they bring us” (FAED I, 79). The enemies become friends, and this is a great jump, not only on the lexical level.

The most significant silence is that of the attribute *miles Christi*, which was first referred to the martyrs, then to the monks, and then, at the end of the 11th century, to the Crusades and the members of the military Orders (*Pauperes milites Christi* was the official name of the Templars); in classical Latin the term indicated the *soldier* of Christ, and from the 11th century onwards it indicated the *knight*. The attribute is often used for Francis by the Franciscan Sources written after his death, from the *Vita prima* of Thomas of Celano, even in its original spiritual meaning (1C 36: FAED I, 214-215 - “Francis, Christ's bravest soldier, went round the cities and villages proclaiming the kingdom of God and preaching peace”). It is only Bonaventure who calls Francis a *miles Christi* when he goes in front of the Sultan, but always in reference to his search for martyrdom. In the *Legenda Maior* 9,7 (FAED II, 602) he calls Francis “the intrepid knight of Christ.” The fact that the Saint never used this term for himself or for his brothers, even outside the context of war, is significant, especially in the face of a tradition which was so ancient, so as to be utilised in the first biographical work of Thomas of Celano.

Sometimes we find two affirmations of Francis regarding the Paladins and the Knights of the Round Table, which are presented in order to demonstrate that he was not against war and that the ideal of knighthood - understood as that of the knight who takes up the sword to defend Christianity - was a strong ideal in his mental framework. These are two texts coming from the tradition of the “companions” and which are present in the *Assisi Compilation*. First of all we should state that here we are outside the writings of Francis. However, we can trust the witnesses in this case, given that they did not use these words for polemic motives; the difference in the typology of the sources has to be underlined for correctness of methodology and to maintain a minimum of attendability.

The two texts are found in *Assisi Compilation* 103 (FAED II, 209). The text regarding Charles and

the paladins was Francis' response to the insistence of a novice who wanted to possess a psalter:

"The Emperor Charles (Charlemagne), Roland and Oliver, and all the paladins and valiant knights who were mighty in battle, pursuing unbelievers with great toil and fatigue even to death, had a glorious and memorable victory for themselves, and, finally, died in battle fighting as holy martyrs for the faith in Christ. And there are many who want to receive honour and praise by only relating what they did."

The second part of the text refers to *Admonition* 6,3: "And because of this he wrote the meaning of these words in his *Admonitions*, saying: 'The saints have done these deeds, and we want to receive honour and glory by recounting and preaching about them,' as if to say, 'Knowledge puffs up, but charity builds.'"

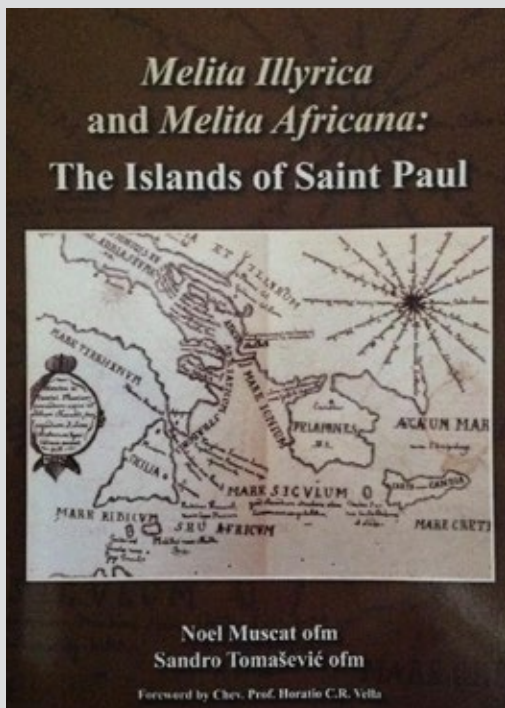
Undoubtedly here he is speaking about the heroes who fought for the faith against the infidels, and who were considered to be martyrs if they died in battle against them. However, I would not see in these words the conscious expression of a warlike ideology that justified the Crusades. It rather concerns a recalling of the ancient heroes, placed

on an ideal if not mythical level, within the culture of courtesy where Francis was educated before his conversion, in the period when he also went to fight on a horse, as in the case of Collestrada. On the other hand, even holding on to the fact that the Poverello did not approve of the Crusades during the 13th century, we cannot arrive to support the idea that he had a precise political "pacifist" ideology according to the parameters of our times, in such a way that he would exclude a reference to Charlemagne and the paladins.

The second text does not present any reference to war or martyrdom. The image of the Knights of the Round Table represents the brothers who go to solitary places in order to dedicate their time to prayer and contemplation, and who are known by God and not by the world: they are the true Knights of the Round Table:

"These brothers of mine are my knights of the round table, the brothers who hide in deserted and remote places, to devote themselves more diligently to prayer and meditation, weeping over their sins and those of others, whose holiness is known to God, and is sometimes ignored by the brothers and people" (AC 103: FAED II, 208).

Melita Illyrica and Melita Africana *The Islands of Saint Paul*



The famous story of Paul's shipwreck on *Melite* is the pride of two islands having similar names, namely Mljet in the Adriatic, off the Dalmatian coast of Dubrovnik (*Mélita Illyrica*), and Malta in the centre of the Mediterranean, some 80 km. to the south of Sicily (*Mélita Africana*). Which was the island that welcomed Paul and was evangelised by the Apostle of the Gentiles? Which of the two was the island on which Paul was shipwrecked?

Biblical exegesis has always pointed to Malta as the most probable spot of the shipwreck. But the traditions of Mljet as the island of St. Paul have never ceased to be defended by proud Croatians like the Benedictine monk Ignjat Đurđević, who found staunch opposition from the Maltese Catholic tradition upheld by the Knights of the Order of St. John.

This study is the result of the fraternal initiative of two Franciscan friars, one Croatian, the other one Maltese, who together have visited and studied these islands, and whose close collaboration as a writer and photographer has produced these pages. This is no scholarly work of Biblical exegesis or historical erudition. It is simply the work of two Franciscan brothers who love their respective countries: the lush green forests of the Dalmatian coast of Croatia and the barren sun-drenched rocky cliffs of Malta, set against the deep blue of the Mediterranean sea and sky.

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La struttura base dell'Ordine è il singolo frate

“

Nel consiglio plenario del Messico 2001 ci eravamo definiti come “fraternità contemplativa in missione”, e io metterei sempre “fraternità” all’inizio, perché un frate può pregare anche dieci ore al giorno, ma quando va a pregare con gli altri, se non c’è una relazione di fraternità, quella preghiera non funziona. Per cui dicendo “fraternità contemplativa in missione”, qui ritroviamo il cuore della nostra vita. Rileggo una frase, che potrebbe esservi sfuggita e che a me piace tanto, soprattutto oggi che non si fa altro che parlare di strutture: c’è la preghiera che diventa struttura, ci sono i conventi che sono strutture e non sappiamo come gestirli, ci sono le strutture relazionali, autorità e sudditi... Dunque nel Consiglio Plenario del 2001 in Messico, al numero due troviamo: «La struttura base dell’Ordine è il singolo frate». Attenzione, la struttura base non è il convento, e alla base non ci sono neppure i miracoli che facciamo... la struttura base dell’Ordine è il singolo frate mosso dallo Spirito, come afferma la Regola non bollata, che è la Sorgente del progetto evangelico e spinge il frate a divenire frate in relazione. È qui che tocchiamo il cuore...

”

Giacomo Bini ofm
Ultima conferenza
Frascati, 7/5/2014

Abbreviations

Writings of St. Francis

Adm	Admonitiones.
CantAudPov	Cantico Audite Poverelle.
CantSol	Canticum fratris Solis.
LaudDei	Laudes Dei Altissimi.
BenLeo	Benedictio fratri Leoni data.
EpAnt	Epistola ad sanctum Antonium.
EpCler I	Epistola ad Clericos (Redactio prior).
EpCler II	Epistola ad Clericos (Red. posterior).
EpCust I	Epistola ad Custodes I.
EpCust II	Epistola ad Custodes II.
EpFid I	Epistola ad Fideles I.
EpFid II	Epistola ad Fideles II.
EpLeo	Epistola ad fratrem Leonem.
EpMin	Epistola ad Ministrum.
EpOrd	Epistola toti Ordini missa.
EpRect	Epistola ad populorum rectores.
ExhLD	Exhortatio ad Laudem Dei.
ExpPat	Expositio in Pater noster.
FormViv	Forma vivendi sanctae Clarae data.
Fragm	Fragmenta alterius RegulaeNB.
LaudHor	Laudes ad omnes horas dicendae.
OffPass	Officium Passionis Domini.
OrCruc	Oratio ante crucifixum.
RegB	Regula bullata.
RegNB	Regula non bullata.
RegEr	Regula pro eremitoriis data.
SalBMV	Salutatio beatae Mariae Virginis.
SalVirt	Salutatio virtutum.
Test	Testamentum.
UltVol	Ultima voluntas S. Clarae scripta.

Sources for the Life of St. Francis

1C	Tommaso da Celano, Vita Sancti Francisci.
LCh	Celano, Legenda ad usum chori.
2C	Celano, Memoriale in Desiderio Animae.
3C	Celano, Tractatus de Miraculis S. Francisci.
LJS	Julian of Speyer, Vita Sancti Francisci.
OR	Officium Rhythmicum S. Francisci.
AP	Anonimo Perugino.
L3C	Leggenda dei Tre Compagni.
CA	Compilatio Assisiensis.
LMj	S. Bonaventura, Legenda Maior S. Francisci.
LMn	S. Bonaventura, Legenda minor S. Francisci.
SP	Speculum Perfectionis.
SC	Sacrum commercium S. Francisci.
ABF	Actus Beati Francisci et Sociorum Eius.
Fior	Fioretti di San Francesco.

Sources for the Life of St. Clare

BICl	Blessing of St. Clare.
1-4LAg	Letters to St. Agnes of Prague..
LCl	Legend of St. Clare.
PC	Acts of the Process of Canonization.
PrPov	Privilege of Poverty.
RegCl	Rule of St. Clare.
TestCl	Testament of St. Clare.



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Cover picture:

Cosmic Cross and Franciscan Coat of Arms on the door of St. John's Crusader Church, Acre