

The Latin Sermons in Honor of Saint Clare*

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"I sermoni latini in onore di santa Chiara"

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"The sermons on Saint Clare represent a vein that has been little explored thus far and from the beginning has been extremely slim in terms of satisfactory results. Yet there could emerge from these texts some aspects of Saint Clare's life and, even more, of her spirituality as a function of a religious call and admonition to holiness of life." These words of Ezio Franceschini date all the way back to 1953 and were written on the occasion of the celebrations for the seventh centenary of the birth of Saint Clare.¹

Forty years have passed, but not very much has been done in this area; the only thing published has been two homilies by Cardinal Matthew of Aquasparta (1238/40-1302).²

*This paper represents the first stage of a project to collect, catalogue and publish the Latin sermons on Clare of Assisi.

¹E. Franceschini, "Biografie di santa Chiara," *Chiara d'Assisi. Studi e cronaca del VII Centenario, 1253-1953*, Comitato Centrale per il VII Centenario della morte di s. Chiara (Assisi: 1954), 263-74 (now rpt. in E. Franceschini, *Nel segno di Francesco*, ed. F. Casolini and G. Giamba, Introduction by E. Menestò (Assisi: 1988), 353.

²Matthaei ab Aquasparta, O.F.M., *Sermones de S. Francisco, de S. Antonio et de S. Clara*. Ed. G. Gal, O.F.M., Bibliotheca Franciscana Ascetica Medii Aevi, 10 (Florence: 1962), 5-222, esp. for the two sermons *De Sancta Clara*: 1. "O quam

Roberto Rusconi, in an article presented in 1983 at the Symposium in honor of Zelina Zafarana, tracked down the names of 169 preachers who were Friars Minor, for a total of about 14,000 Latin sermons.³ Nicole Bériou identified about 500 on Saint Francis, preserved in the back rooms of libraries all over Europe, almost all unedited.⁴ Father Bougerol devoted a detailed study to the Franciscan sermonary, cataloguing the *incipit* of 540 homilies.⁵

Looking at these numbers, we see an obvious numerical disproportion and have to admit that Franciscan preachers, attracted primarily by Saint Francis, devoted very few homilies to Saint Clare. In the present state of research, with invaluable help from Schneyer's catalogues of medieval preaching,⁶ I have found about sixty of them catalogued (13th-14th

pulchra est casta generatio cum claritate!"; 2. "Sicut meridiana lux Clara est," (pp. 148-76). For a translation of these see: O. Van Asseldonk, "Omaggio alle sorelle Clarisse. Due discorsi di Matteo d'Acquasparta (trans. by E. Mariani), *Vitam minorum* 2 (1980): 135-52. On the features of the Franciscan cardinal's scholastic oratory, see the interesting article by F. Simoncioli, "Rilievi sui sermoni inediti di Matteo d'Acquasparta dedicati a S. Francesco, a S. Antonio, a S. Chiara," *Studi Francescani* 56: 3-4 (1959): 148-72, where he examines the sermons just transcribed and awaiting publication.

³R. Rusconi, "La predicazione minoritica in Europa nei secoli XIII-XV," *Francesco, il francescanesimo e la cultura della nuova Europa*, ed. I. Baldelli and A.M. Romanini (Rome: 1986), 141-65 offers a rich and detailed bibliography on Franciscan preaching; on this subject see also Z. Zafarana, "La predicazione francescana," *Francescanesimo e vita religiosa dei laici nel '200*, Atti dell'VIII Convegno Internazionale, Assisi 16-18 ottobre 1980 (Assisi: 1981), 203-50; now rpt. in eadem, *Da Gregorio VII a Bernardino da Siena. Saggi di storia medievale*, with works in memory of Zelina Zafarana, ed. O. Capitani, C. Leonardi, E. Menestò and R. Rusconi (Perugia -Florence: 1987), 205-50; C. Delcorno, "Origini della predicazione francescana," *Francesco d'Assisi e francescanesimo dal 1216 al 1226*, Atti del IV Convegno internazionale, Assisi, 15-17 ottobre 1976 (Assisi: 1977), 125-60; idem, "Il racconto agiografico nella predicazione dei secoli XIII-XV," *Agiografia dell'Occidente cristiano, secoli XIII-XV*, Atti dei Convegni Lincei, 48 (Rome: 1980), 79-114 and G. G. Merlo, "La storiografia francescana dal dopoguerra ad oggi," *Studi storici* 32 (1991): 287-307.

⁴N. Bériou, "Saint François, premier prophète de son ordre, dans les sermons du XIII^e siècle," *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome. Moyen Age* 2 (1990): 535-56.

⁵J.-G. Bougerol, "Sermons médiévaux en l'honneur de Saint François," *AFH* 75 (1982): 382-415; idem, "Initia latinorum sermonum ad laudem Sancti Francisci," *Antonianum* 57 (1982): 706-94; idem, "Saint François dans les premiers sermons universitaires," *Francesco d'Assisi nella storia, secoli XIII-XV*, Atti del primo Convegno di Studi per l'VIII Centenario della nascita di s. Francesco, 29 settembre - 2 ottobre 1981, Rome, ed. S. Gieben (Rome: 1983), 173-99.

⁶J. B. Schneyer, *Repertorium der lateinischen Sermones des Mittelalters für die Zeit von 1150-1350*, vols. I-X (Münster - Westphalia: 1969-1989); idem,

cent.). But well aware of the kind of hidden and unexplored treasures that lie buried in libraries, I am convinced that further investigation will result in our finding many other homilies devoted to her over the course of centuries.

Who are the authors and the preachers? Most of the sermons contained in the group *Collectiones fratrum*, a manual of homilies composed by friars for the laity, are anonymous.⁷ The rest are by famous preachers, mostly Franciscans, who lived between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries: Berthold of Regensburg,⁸ Cardinal Odo of Châteauroux,⁹ Saint Bonaventure,¹⁰ Robert of Sorbonne,¹¹ the Cistercian John of Toledo,¹² Conrad of Saxony,¹³ Archbishop Federico Visconti of Pisa,¹⁴ Luke of Padua,¹⁵

"Lateinische Sermones-Initien des Hochmittelalters für die Heiligenfeste des Franziskanerordens," *AFH* 61 (1968): 3-78. For a comprehensive study of the collection of sermons from a later period (1350-1500), see by the same author: "Winke für die Sichtung und Zuordnung spätmittelalterlicher lateinischer Predigtreden," *Scriptorium* 32 (1978): 231-48; and idem, "Die überraschende Fülle der lateinischen Sermonesliteratur im frühen Franziskanerorden," *Franziskanische Studien* 58 (1976): 122-41.

⁷D. L. D'Avray, "*Collectiones fratrum* and *Collationes fratrum*," *AFH* 70 (1977): 152-56. For a clear division of these collections of sermons into four groups see J. B. Schneyer, "Lateinische Sermones-Initien," 48-54; and idem, "Die Erforschung der scholastischen Sermones und ihre Bedeutung für die Homiletik," *Scolastik* 39 (1964): 8, 70.

⁸For a preliminary, non-exhaustive cataloguing of the sermons in honor of Saint Clare, I will mention in chronological order the names of their authors (for the placement of those that are anonymous I take the liberty to refer to a study of mine soon to be published), and I will indicate the recurrence of the sermons in Schneyer's catalogues:

Bertholdus de Ratisbona (+1272), *In festo Sanctae Clarae*: 1-2 *Venit Sponsus* (Mt 25:10): Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/1, 485, nos. 169-70.

⁹Odo de Castroridulfi (+1273): *In festo Sanctae Clarae*: 1. *Funes ceciderunt mihi in preclaris* (Ps 15:6); 2. *Qui habitare fecit sterilem in domo* (Ps 112:9): Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/4, 472, nos. 966-67.

¹⁰S. Bonaventura (+1274): 1. *Ducam eam in solitudinem* (Hos 2:14): Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/1, 639, no. 706.

¹¹Robertus de Sorbonio (+1274), *In festo Sanctae Clarae*: 1. *Claritas Dei illuminabit eam* (Rv 21:23); 2. *In medio fratrum rectorum eorum* (Sir 10:24); 3. *Creavit Deus hominem* (Gn 1:27): Schneyer, "Lateinische Sermones-Initien," 44.

¹²Iohannes de Toledo (+1275): 1-2. *In festo Sanctae Clarae*: *Mulier fugit in solitudinem* (Rv 12:6); 3. *Relinquit civitates et habitate in petra* (Jer 48:28); 4. *Scit omnis populus, qui habitat intra portas* (Ru 3:11): Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/3, 323, nos. 387-90.

¹³Conradus Holtznicher de Saxonia, O.F.M. (+1279): 1. *Soror mea es* (Gn 24:60); 2. *O quam pulchra est casta generatio* (Wis 4:1); 3. *Macula non est in te* (Ct 4:7): Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/1, 768, nos. 316-18.

¹⁴Fredericus Pisanus de Vicecomitibus (+1277); 1. *Qui elucidant me* (Sir

Gilbert of Tournai,¹⁶ Peter of Limoges,¹⁷ Peter Auriol of Verbera,¹⁸ Engelbert of Cologne,¹⁹ James of Lausanne,²⁰ Francis of Maironnes,²¹ Bertrand of Tours,²² Teuto of Austria called "Graeculus,"²³ the Augustinian Heinrich of Friedmar,²⁴ Siger of Courtray,²⁵ William of Ockham,²⁶ Landolfo Caracciolo,²⁷ James of Villy.²⁸ To this company of friars devoted to preaching we can also add the king of Naples, Robert of Anjou.²⁹

No matter where they come from, in every part of Europe preachers are writing and preaching a homily on Clare, the saint whose cult spread far and wide just a few years after her death. This is attested by the manuscripts containing the sermons, which are scattered everywhere: Assisi,

24:31); Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/2, 91, no. 88.

¹⁵Lucas de Padua, O.F.M. (+1287): 1 (fragment): ...beata Clara cum multis divitiis ingressa est Ierusalem celestem: Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/4, 80, no. 103a.

¹⁶Guibertus de Tornaco, O.F.M. (+1288): 1. *Recordatus sum tui miserans* (Jer 2:2): Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/2, 292, no. 136; J.-G. Bougerol, *Les manuscrits franciscains de la Bibliothèque de Troyes* (Grottaferrata: 1982), 56 and 84.

¹⁷Petrus de Limoges (+1306): 1. *Claritas Dei illuminabit eam* (Rv 21:23): Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/4, 674, no. 52.

¹⁸Petrus Aureoli O.F.M. (+1322), 1. *In festo Sanctae Clarae: soror nostra parvula est* (Ct 8:8): Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/4, 590, no. 106.

¹⁹Engelbertus de Colonia, O.F.M. (+mid 13th cent.): 1. *Sicut lux meridiana* (Is 18:4): Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/2, 37, no. 57.

²⁰Iacobus de Losanna (+1322): 1. *Soror nostra parvula est* (Ct 8:8): Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/3, 155, no. 1367.

²¹Franciscus de Mayronis, O.F.M. (+1328): 1. *Alia est claritas solis* (1 Cor 15:41): Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/2, 78, no. 170.

²²Bertrandus de Turre, O.F.M. (+1332): 1. *Sicut lux meridiana* (Is 18:4): Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/1, 589, no. 1223.

²³Teuto de Austria, O.F.M. (Graeculus beg. 14th cent): 1. *Praeclarior erat universae terrae Israel* (Jdt 16:25); 2. *Introduxit me in cellam vinariam* (Ct 2:4): Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/2, 232-33, nos. 342-43.

²⁴Henricus de Friedmar, O.E.S.A. (+1340): 1. *Soror mea parvula est* (Sg 8:8): Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/2, 656, no. 247.

²⁵Singerus Cordigerus (+1341): 1. *In festo Sanctae Clarae: Sicut meridiana lux Clara est* (Is 18:4): Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/5, 436, no. 41.

²⁶Guillaume d'Ockham, O.F.M. (+1347): 1. *Soror nostra es, crescas in mille milia* (Gn 24:60): Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/2, 528, no. 33.

²⁷Landolphus Caracioli (+1351): 1. *Vidi solem cum fulgeret et lunam incedentem clare* (Jb 31:26): Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/4, 8, no. 103.

²⁸Iacobus de Villaco (+1359): 1. *Adiuro vos filiae Ierusalem* (Sg 2:7): Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/3, 176, no. 134.

²⁹Robertus Angevinus de Naple (+1343): 1. *Claritas Dei circumfulsit illos* (Lk 12:9): Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/5, 215, no. 232.

Rome, Pavia, Milan, Padua, Venice, Turin, Montecassino, and Naples in Italy; Paris, Toledo, Pamplona, Troyes,³⁰ Lipsia, Basilea, Valencia, and Prague in other countries.

After this brief and essential introduction, I would like to enter into the heart of the question and sketch the figure of Clare as depicted in some of the sermons dedicated to her, almost always on the occasion of her feast day. An anonymous preacher who has left evidence of his preaching in Assisi, fully respecting the medieval stylistic rule that starts with a verse from the Bible,^{30a} devotes a sermon to her, choosing a very common text found often in sermons in her honor: *As the noon light is clear* (Is. 18:4).³¹

Struck by the holy virgin's radiant splendor, for she was *bright in name and in fact*, he celebrates her by recognizing and praising four states of brightness in her: *Not without reason is she called Clare, for she was bright with the merit of holiness, the privilege of piety, the teaching of truth, and the footprint of poverty.*³² Holiness, piety, devotion to truth, and absolute poverty are the virtues for which she had been wonderfully described by Thomas of Celano in his *Legend*, which made her *the silver-winged dove*³³ and perhaps the best-

³⁰See J.-G. Bougerol, *Les manuscrits franciscains de la Bibliothèque de Troyes*, Spicilegium Bonaventurianum, 23 (Grottaferrata: 1982), 5-395.

^{30a}For the techniques of medieval homiletics, see Th. M. Charland, *Artes praedicandi. Contribution à l'histoire de la rhétorique au Moyen Âge*, Publications de l'Institut d'études médiévales d'Ottawa, 7 (Paris-Ottawa: 1936) and the rich bibliography on the subject provided by C. Delcorno, "Giordano da Pisa e la tecnica del sermone medievale," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, 151 (1974): 321-56.

³¹Assisi, Bibl. Com., ms. 505 (14th cent.), ff. 28v-29v; Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/8, 49, no. 14 (see the translation of this sermon in the Appendix). See Matthaei ab Acquasparta, *Sermones, Sicut meridiana lux Clara est* (Is 18:4), 166-76 where Clare's brilliant life shines with sevenfold brightness: I. The brightness of clear and serene knowledge; II. The brightness of love purified; III. The brightness of a disciplined manner of living; IV. The brightness of virtuous activity; V. The brightness of good repute; VI. The brightness of a sincere and ordered intention; VII. The brightness of glory achieved.

³²Sermon in Appendix, 1. [Virtually all the Latin sermons on Clare (in Latin, *Clara*) abound in scripture texts containing this word and its cognates: *clarus*, *praeclarus*, *clareo*, *clarifico*, and so forth. The Latin terms refer not only to light and brightness, but also to such things as glory and renown. An English translation can scarcely do justice to the myriad meanings, and so readers should keep in mind that when these and similar expressions occur in the translation of the sermon texts cited below, they invariably translate Latin terms that are cognates of the word *clara*. - Translator].

³³*Legenda Sanctae Clarae virginis, Tratta dal Ms. 338 della Bibl. Comunale di Assisi*, ed. F. Pennacchi (Assisi: 1910), 10, 15: "In the hollow of this wall, *the silver-winged dove, building a nest* (Sg 2:14), gave birth to a gathering of virgins of Christ, founded a holy monastery, and began the Order of the Poor Ladies" [CA:ED, 262].

known and venerated woman saint of the Middle Ages. The sermon goes over her earthly life as a young girl: *Seeing her, the virgins and young maidens ran, so that, having received the brilliant rays of life, they might shine before the world like stars.*³⁴ Her piety is illustrated by the miracles she was able to work *through the communicative power of God* on behalf of those who lacked sufficient bread to eat, those languishing with grave ulcers, or the many people who came to her to find peace of heart. The brightness of divine wisdom, which is knowledge of truth, inspired her to institute *a rule to be observed by the holy religion* and, by word and example, to inspire the souls of her sisters to attain perfection by contemplating the light of God and rejecting the apparent and deceptive comfort of earthly light. Clare constantly showed the brightness of her name: *Not without reason is this virgin called Clare. She entered into such a great covenant with Lady Poverty and so bound herself to love that she desired to have nothing except God.*³⁵ Her choice of poverty, fully respecting and observing most completely what her father Francis had left her *as a hereditary right*,³⁶ made her a heavenly creature: *She came down from heaven not only insofar as she was the mother foretold, but also insofar as she was consecrated to Christ through the fire of love and founded in poverty.*³⁷

Another anonymous sermon in a manuscript from Pavia,³⁸ written for the feast of Saint Clare, also takes as its starting point the same verse from Isaiah (18:4): *As the noon light is clear and as a cloud of dew on the day of harvest. From all eternity God had arranged to give the world a light to dispel the darkness that enveloped it, and he had revealed this to Clare's mother as she knelt in prayer: She was like a light about to enlighten the world, and so not without reason is she called Clare. Therefore the proposed text applies perfectly to her feast.*³⁹

³⁴See the Sermon in the Appendix: [2].

³⁵Ibidem: [5].

³⁶Throughout her whole life Clare fought to defend the spiritual inheritance she received from Francis. See L. Hardick, "Erläuterungen," *Leben und Schriften der hl. Klara von Assisi* (Werl in W.: 1960) (Italian trans. *La spiritualità di S. Chiara* [Milan: 1975], 66). For Clare's awareness of being "identified" with Francis, see M. Bartoli, "Chiara testimone di Francesco," *Quaderni catanesi* 1 (1979): 467-98.

³⁷Sermon in Appendix: [5].

³⁸Pavia, Bibl. Univ. Fondo Aldini 63, ff. 108r-109r, *In Sancta Clara sermo*: Schneyer, "Lateinische Sermones-Initien," 58.

³⁹LgCl 2: "Taught by this oracle, when the child was born and then reborn in sacred Baptism, [her mother] ordered that she be called Clare, hoping that the brightness of the promised light would in some way be fulfilled according to the divine pleasure" [CA:ED, 254].

Clare, *brighter than light, higher than light, stronger than light*, is here described by two adjectives: *graced* and *compassionate*. She is graced, full of grace through the holiness and brightness of her life, not the light of vanity and futile appearance, for *she despised this light as false and deceptive*, but of that grace which makes one glorious by reason of spiritual blessings and wise through truth. Clare's splendor is even brighter because it is not contaminated by sensuality, it is *without the burning of any kind of sensuality*, and she is resplendent with virginal chastity, which will lead her to rejoice in the glory of God: *From graced splendor to glorious splendor*.

The second part of the verse taken as the sermon text, *as a cloud of dew on the day of harvest*, presents Clare in her role as a sincerely devoted and generous mother who is *compassionate*, who with profound and sincere concern helps her followers overcome physical adversities. Like a cloud that tempers the sun's heat and protects against its burning rays, she showers and floods people with the spiritual dew of heavenly graces. *Your dew is the dew of the light*, says the preacher, continuing with words from Isaiah (26:19) and identifying the giants, hurled down to destruction from the towers, with the Saracen enemy whom the abbess of San Damiano drove from her monastery and the city of Assisi solely by the power of her prayers. The sermon also recalls the miracle that so captured people's hearts and minds: Clare, with monstrance held high, puts to flight the enemy who had dared to violate the walls of the convent of San Damiano.⁴⁰

In his conclusion the preacher discloses the meaning of his homily. The prayers of Clare, *a holy woman*,⁴¹ have the miraculous power to save those who trust in her and to raise them to the glory of heaven: *Therefore, just as on the day of harvest fruits are gathered and placed in the storehouse, so also*

⁴⁰The episode of the assault by the Saracens on the little convent of San Damiano is famous. The evidence left in the sermons shows a clear convergence between the hagiography and the sermons; see LgCl 21, 30-31: "Once when the fury of the enemy pressed upon Assisi, a city dear to the Lord, and the army was already near its gates, the Saracens, the worst of people, who thirsted for the blood of Christians...rushed upon San Damiano, entered the confines of the place and even the enclosure of the virgins.... She [Clare], with an undaunted heart, ordered that she be brought, sick as she was, to the door and placed there before the enemy, while the silver pyx enclosed in ivory in which the Body of the Holy of Holies was most devotedly reserved, preceded her.... Without delay, the subdued boldness of those dogs began immediately to be alarmed. They were driven away by the power of the one who was praying, departing in haste over those walls which they had scaled" [CA:ED, 276-77].

⁴¹An anonymous preacher begins his sermon this way: "Pray for us, for you are a holy woman!" (Jdt 8:29): Schneyer, "Lateinische Sermones-Initien," 56.

the faithful, through the merits and prayers of blessed Clare, will be placed in the heavenly storehouse, provided they have been truly penitent.

In another anonymous sermon⁴² Clare appears to us as the morning star in the midst of a cloud (Sir 50:6), a star that is white because of her most pure virginity, brilliant because of her most religious virtue. As morning star, she was never slow or sluggish, but, quick and energetic, she began to shed her light as soon as it was morning, when, still a child in her father's house, she breathed the merits of holiness through works of mercy and the power of her prayers. My chastisement has been in the mornings says the psalm (Ps 72:14), and from the morning of her childhood Clare was accustomed to chastise her body with sackcloth beneath her fine clothes. Her morning light spread its radiance in the midst of a cloud, in the circle of her sisters and daughters, in whose midst she was as solicitous as a mother who gives comfort to all, following the example of Christ in the midst of his disciples (Mt 18:20) and like the tree of life in the midst of Paradise (Gn 2:9). The abbess of San Damiano, foundress of the Order of Poor Clares, is in the fullness of her glory, surrounded by the sisters who in loving humility are praying for the conversion of sinners: Like birds they flew away to the heavenly heights of loving prayer through contemplation and love.

One is the brightness of the moon, another the brightness of the stars. In another anonymous sermon,⁴³ Saint Clare and her Order are praised with this verse from the First Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians (15:41). The plan is clearly outlined from the beginning: *One...another*. Although there was perfect unity between Clare and her sisters and daughters, the author wishes to cast into particular relief the differences between them. Clare, beautiful as the moon because adorned with virginity dedicated to Christ, is the *woman clothed with the sun*. She is resplendent with the light of the sun, the blessed father Francis, to whom she was subject in humble obedience, being conformed to him *with all her heart*. Clare's sisters, living by reflected light, *remaining in their order and courses* (Jg 5:20), have voluntarily chosen perpetual enclosure with definitive separation from their families. In order to flee more easily the occasions of sin in solitude and devote themselves entirely to contemplation and prayer, *no one may leave except with permission of the Holy See in specified cases*. Each one can rightly say: *Behold I have gone far away from the world, fleeing the occasions of sin* (Ps 54:8).

⁴²Pavia, Bibl. Univ., Aldini 63, ff. 42r-43r (omitted by Schneyer's catalogues).

⁴³Pavia, Bibl. Univ., Aldini 63, ff. 45b-46v, *Sermo in sancta Clara*: Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/9, 294, no. 78.

The preachers who give the homilies for the feast of Saint Clare draw freely from her *Legend*, from what they have heard or seen about her, and they take from her life things that are more spectacular and easier for their lay audience to grasp. They recite hymns to her purity, to her brightness: *There is no spot in you* (Sg 4:7);⁴⁴ *The glory of God has enlightened her* (Rv 21:23), *O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory* (Wis 4:1);⁴⁵ to her spiritual radiance: *She was most radiant in all the land of Israel* (Jdt 16:25);⁴⁶ to her withdrawal to solitude in order to flee the company of sinners: *The woman fled into the wilderness* (Rv 12:6);⁴⁷ *I will lead her into the wilderness* (Hos 2:14);⁴⁸ *She made herself a private chamber* (Jdt 8:5);⁴⁹ to her wisdom: *A wise woman shines brightly and never fades away* (Wis 6:13);⁵⁰ to her strength: *Victory shall be delivered into the hand of a woman* (Jgs 4:9);⁵¹ to her preciousness: *As a vessel of gold, adorned with every precious stone* (Sir 50:10).⁵² Just to superimpose the texts chosen by the preachers, whether simple or sophisticated, could constitute a new sermon!

The archbishop of Pisa, Federico Visconti (1254-1277),⁵³ personally heard of the wonders of Sister Clare, perhaps from Francis himself, who

⁴⁴See supra, note 13 (Conrad of Saxony, 3).

⁴⁵See supra, note 11 (Robert of Sorbonne, 1); note 17 (Peter of Limoges, 1); note 2 (Matthew of Aquasparta, 1); note 13 (Conrad of Saxony, 2): Schneyer, "Lateinische Sermones-Initien, *Anonyme Predigten*," 77.

⁴⁶See supra, note 23 (Graeculus, 1).

⁴⁷See supra, note 12 (John of Toledo, 1-2).

⁴⁸See supra, note 10 (Saint Bonaventure, 1).

⁴⁹See Schneyer, "Lateinische Sermones-Initien, *Collectiones fratrum*," 51.

⁵⁰See Schneyer, "Lateinische Sermones-Initien, *Anonyme Predigten*," 76.

⁵¹See Schneyer, *Repertorium*, 43/8, 814, no. 33.

⁵²See *Sermones Fratrum Minorum*: Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/7, 490, no. 101.

⁵³See C. Piano, "I sermoni di Federico Visconti, arcivescovo di Pisa (+1277)," *Rivista di storia della Chiesa in Italia* 6 (1952): 231-48; J. B. Schneyer, "Das Predigtwirken des Erzbischofs Friedrich Visconti von Pisa (1254-77) auf Grund der Rubriken des Cod. Florenz Laur. Pluto. 33 sin. 1," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 32 (1965): 307-32; A. Murray, "Archbishop and Mendicants in Thirteenth-Century Pisa," *Stellung und Wirksamkeit der Bettelorden in der städtischen Gesellschaft* ed. K. Elm, *Berliner Historische Studien*, 3. Ordensstudien, 2 (Berlin: 1981), 19-75 (see the review of this ample and well-documented study by M. Ronzani in *Bollettino storico pisano* 54 (1985): 269-71; E. Cristiani - G. Roncioni, "Due lettere inedite di Federico Visconti arcivescovo di Pisa datate da Anagni il 17 luglio 1255," *Bollettino storico pisano* 33-35 (1964-66): 187-94. The complete edition of the *corpus* of the sermons of Federico Visconti, edited by N. Beriou, P. Bourgain, E. Cristiani, I. Le Masne de Chermont, M. Soriani Innocenti and A. Vauchez will soon be published by the École française de Rome.

preached with such fire in the squares of Pisa.⁵⁴ Although shut up in voluntary "imprisonment" for forty years, Clare left such an image of herself that the archbishop of Pisa, in the presence of the cardinals gathered for her canonization two years after her death, preached a short sermon full of enthusiastic praise for the woman from Assisi and the clarity of her life and intentions.⁵⁵ *Therefore Clare is blessed...triply bright: in her conscience with respect to God, in her fame with respect to her neighbor, and in the working of miracles with respect to the saints.* It is the brightness of a pure conscience that leads to God, the brightness of fame in the world, and the brightness of the performance of miracles. *And so, most Holy Father,* concludes the archbishop, turning to Pope Alexander IV, *I earnestly beseech you to enroll her in the catalogue of the saints, so that by her merits and prayers we may deserve to obtain eternal life.* All the preachers have boundless faith in the prayers of the virgin Clare, on whom they rely to obtain eternal life.

Around a century after Saint Clare's death, the king of Sicily, Robert of Anjou (1278-1343), a patron and man of letters,⁵⁶ also experienced the appeal of the saint from Assisi. In the vast collection of his sermons,⁵⁷

⁵⁴For the sermons on Saint Francis, see M. Bihl, "E sermonibus Friderici de Vicecomitibus archiepiscopi Pisani, de S. Francesco," *AFH* 1 (1908): 652-53; and I. Le Masne de Chermont, *Le recueil des sermons de Frédéric Visconti, archevêque de Pise de 1254 à 1277*. Édition du sanctoral, thèse dactyl. de l'École des chartes (Paris: 1985), 277-97. The texts of the sermons on Saint Francis are the following: 1. (Ms. 78vb-90rb) *Watch the way, fortify your loins, strengthen your power exceedingly* (Na 2:1); 2. (Ms. 80va-82va) *The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking good pearls* (Mt 13:45); 3. (Ms. 82va-83vb) *I have chosen you in the furnace of poverty* (Is. 48:10); 4. (Ms. 83vb-85va) *Blessed are they that saw you and were honored with your friendship* (Sir 48:11): Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/2, 87, nos. 56-59.

⁵⁵Florence, Bibl. Laur., Cod. Plut. 33 sin. 1, 123ra; for the edition, see Z. Lazzeri, "Consilium Friderici vicecomitis Archiepiscopi Pisani ut ad canonizationem sancte Clare deveniatur," *AFH* 11 (1918): 276-79; M. Soriani Innocenti, "L'immagine di Santa Chiara d'Assisi nel De conformitate di Bartolomeo Pisano," *Bollettino storico pisano* 59 (1990): 107-08; *Consilium quod dominus Fridericus Vicecomes dedit domino Alexandro Pape IV coram cardinalibus et multis aliis prelatibus in canonizatione sancte Clare*.

⁵⁶See W. Goetz, *König Robert von Neapel (1309-1343). Seine Persönlichkeit und sein Verhältnis zum Humanismus* (Tübingen: 1910); R. Caggese, *Roberto d'Angiò e i suoi tempi*, 2 vols. (Florence: 1922-1931).

⁵⁷On the function of the king's preaching and his corpus of 268 sermons, still unedited, see: D. Pryds, "Rex praedicans: Robert of Anjou and the Politics of Preaching," *De l'homélie au sermon: histoire de la prédication médiévale*, Actes du Colloque international de Louvain-la-Neuve (9-11 juillet 1992), Publications de l'Institut d'Études Médiévales, Textes, Études et Congrès, 14 (Louvain-la-Neuve: 1993), 239-62. Soon to be published under the editorship of M. Soriani Innocenti are the *Sermones ad promovendum doctoratum* delivered by the king. But see also the

delivered not only on political occasions but also on religious feasts⁵⁸ (let us not forget that Dante, ignoring his royalty, dubbed him a king more fit for sermoning⁵⁹), there appears a eulogy in praise of blessed Clare⁶⁰ and another addressed to the Poor Clares of Naples for the feast of Saint Nicholas.⁶¹

The brightness of God shone around them (Lk 2:9) is the text chosen by the king for his sermon, which does not have the unaffected immediacy of the other anonymous thirteenth-century sermons. It shows a very sophisticated plan, reflecting the rules of rhetoric, theology, and medieval scholastic philosophy. The learned preacher illustrates the saint's gifts by appealing extensively to the medieval authorities he knew: Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, the sermons of Saint Augustine, the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* of Pseudo-Dionysius, the biblical *Glosses*.

In these words in praise of blessed Clare four things are chiefly described and it is to be believed that we see them in the brightness of the universe, explains the king and man of letters. Clare is an effusive principle that produces brightness, an eternal inflow of goodness. She is a ray that diffuses light, brightness of an influx from on high. She is a flood of brightness that emits vivid rays. She is a receptive subject of color, which is not exhausted in her but spreads over everything around her, over the mass of the faithful and especially over the religious of the Franciscan Order. Clare is light for the whole community, light for all the Church.

paper given at the same Louvain-la-Neuve symposium by M. Soriani Innocenti, "La prédication à Pise: le cas du frère dominicain Simone de Cascina (1345-1420 env.), *ibidem*, 271-72, n. 28.

⁵⁸Among the many hagiographic sermons, six are devoted to Saint Francis: 1. *On St. Francis: One of the seraphim flew to me* (Is 6:6): Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/5, 201, no. 65; 2. *On St. Francis: Whosoever shall follow this rule, peace on them* (Gal 6:16): Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/5, 216, no. 241; 3. *I beseech you to walk worthily* (Eph 4:1): Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/5, 216, no. 242; 4. *On the feast of blessed Francis: Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven* (2 Kg 2:11): Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/5, 197, no. 19; 5. *In praise of blessed Francis: Children, hear the judgment of your father* (Sir 3:2): Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/5, 218, no. 266; 6. *On blessed Francis: And he planted a vineyard, and drinking of the wine was made drunk, and was uncovered in his tent* (Gn 9:20): Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/5, 199, no. 47.

⁵⁹*Paradiso* VIII, 147: "...and make a king of one more fit for sermoning."

⁶⁰Venice, Bibl. Marciana, Lat. III, 76, ff. 94r-94v, *De Sancta Clara*: Schneyer, *Repertorium* 43/5, 215-216, no. 232.

⁶¹*Sermo regis referendus sanctimonialibus s. Clarae. Sermo de s. Nicolao: Your name is as oil poured out; therefore young maidens have loved you* (Ct. 1:2): Schneyer, *Repertorium*, 43/5, 204, no. 100.

The text is subdivided into separate parts according to the rules of the *distinctio*.⁶² Clare, virtual origin of the divine gift, spiritual clarity of the heavenly light, shone around them. All around her she spread, to the regular body of her mystical heart, the divine brightness infused in her as Francis's holy offspring. God is light and in him there is no darkness (1 Jn 1:5). He is the light that enlightens everyone, to whom Clare can speak in the words of the prophet: *The Lord is my light* (Ps 26:1). Clare has received a *superabundant* share in this light, she spreads it all around her, enabling the sisters of her Order to share in this superabundance. Therefore Robert of Anjou can exclaim with Saint Augustine: "Who does not see that valiant woman, now eminent, now distinguished, now glorious, now adorned, now like a light, now—as I will soon explain—spread over all the earth?"⁶³ Her light shone brightly even in the most remote prison, extending the rays of noonday brightness until evening, in order to renew strength in times of temptation, to bring unexpected strength to those afraid of being abandoned: *Brightness, like that of the noonday, shall arise to you at evening* (Jb 11:17).

Despite the schematic rigor of his philosophical language, the preacher becomes excited when describing the virtues of Clare, in whom God has left truthful testimony of light and grace. Even from this sermon the saint emerges with the usual ornaments: the brightness of her life and intentions, which enlightens her followers, and the clear luminosity, a characteristic of one who is completely sinless, free from any stain.

A century later, on Sunday August 12, the feast of Saint Clare, the apocalyptic preacher Saint Bernardine of Siena preached an impassioned homily in Assisi,⁶⁴ offering us a fresh image of the saint.⁶⁵

⁶²For the subdivisions of the medieval sermon see C. Delcorno, "Parti canoniche della predica (thema, prothema, divisio, clausula)," *Giordano da Pisa e l'antica predicazione volgare* (Florence: 1975), 113-80; and, for the "theatricalization" of the art of preaching, see C. Vasoli, "Arte della memoria e della predicazione," *Dal pulpito alla navata. La predicazione medievale nella sua ricezione da parte degli ascoltatori* (secc. XIII-XV), Convegno Internazionale di storia religiosa in memoria di Zelina Zafarana [= Medioevo e Rinascimento, 3 (1989): 301-21].

⁶³Augustine, *Sermones de Vetere Testamento*, 37, 2: Prv 31:10: *Mulierem fortem...*; ed. C. Lambot, CCL, 41 (Turnhout: 1961), 449, 70.

⁶⁴Bologna, Bibl. SS. Annunziata, Fondo S. Cataldo, autografo S. Giovanni da Capestrano, ff. 34r-37r, *Pro sancta Clara*. My thanks to Carlo Delcorno for the information that enabled me to track down in Bologna, at the Franciscan friary of SS. Annunziata, the precious Codex of S. Cataldo di Modena, containing the cycle of 73 sermons given by Saint Bernardine in Assisi and Perugia (July-November 1425), in the *reportatio* written in his own hand by John of Capestrano. On the collection see D. Pacetti, "La predicazione di S. Bernardino da Siena a Perugia e ad Assisi nel 1425," *CF* 9 (1939): 494-520 and 10 (1940): 5-28; for Saint Clare in particular see

I will love you, O Lord, my strength (Ps 17:1) is the psalm verse on which the preacher builds his sermon. He begins passionately: Even though today is the feast of Saint Clare, I am going to preach on Saint Turbida ["holy disturbance"] who is described in Matthew (5:10): Blessed are they who suffer persecutions for justice's sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. He continues with words from Saint Paul: Patience is necessary for you (Heb 10:36). You know, dearly beloved, that our whole life and this city denote holy disturbance. O families of Assisi, what are you all shouting about? Because those who have patiently borne persecutions and disturbances shall possess the kingdom of heaven, I am going to preach about patience. Strive to imitate, therefore, and do penance.

Thus the topic of the sermon is patience, endurance of the sufferings or disturbances God sends us. Saint Clare is there on the sidelines, as it were. She does not catch our eye with the abstract brightness of the moon or stars but is offered as a concrete example of endurance of suffering, of resistance to temptation, of flight from sin, of the love we can have for God even amid life's disturbances: *Some resist temptation to a degree, but succumb; others resist more, but also succumb; others, however, resist in such a way that they do not succumb even now; others, like blessed Clare, would rather choose to die than sin.*

Bernardine, who wants to be heeded as a *preacher of truth*, sees in Saint Clare not the things stressed in the hagiography, not the purity of virginity beautiful as the moon, not the theatrical aspects of the miracles. He sees instead the essence of an earthly life lived in the glow of love, in the contemplation of God by seeking divine love, which puts an end to physical desires and the sufferings of humanity. Impatiently addressing the mass of his hearers—*pay attention to me, all of you, for I see some who are not listening to me*—he shows special affection for the place where he is: *I am greatly indebted to this city of Assisi, even more than to the city where I was born, just as the soul is greater in dignity than the body, for from this city I was spiritually begotten as a religious.* He does not hide a sincere fondness for this saint from Assisi, in

ibidem, 13-14. On John of Capestrano as copyist and *reportator*, see G. Cantini, "Una ignorata redazione latina di sermoni bernardiniani," *Bullettino di studi bernardiniani* 2 (1936): 284-300. For the character of Bernardine's preaching, see the interesting study by C. Delcorno, "L'Ars praedicandi di Bernardino da Siena," *Lettere italiane* 32 (1980): 441-75.

⁶⁵The "holy citizen" has become "holy disturbance" in Bernardine's colorful sermon, as if better to portray the sad conditions at the time in the city of Assisi, a victim of wars and internal conflicts; see D. Pacetti, "La predicazione di S. Bernardino da Siena," 6.

whom he sees love exalted in all its expressions: *Love of God for the soul, love of the soul for God, mutual love between God and the soul.*

It only seems that the *exempla* with which Bernardine develops his homily have no contact with life of the saintly recluse. An attentive listener will easily be able to discover that Clare is the light that can never be darkened by the wickedness of sin; she is the counter-example of all the "disturbances" exemplified. She is the light opposed to hatred, the prayer that follows penance, the peace after war, the forbearing love that forgives the robberies and homicides, the divine grace that never fails: *All the above-mentioned things can well be applied to blessed Clare, as seen in her Legend.*

No new aspects of Clare's life emerge from the sermons considered. Each re-emphasizes the main features, developing the legendary material—sometimes more, sometimes less—and extolling the pure and brilliant image that the Bull of Canonization, *Clara claris praeclara meritis*,⁶⁶ had helped to spread.

Even today, many centuries after her earthly life, the spirituality of this saint from Assisi offers itself again as something living for us gathered here to remember her and wishing to restore her as a symbol of gentleness, serenity, and peace.

⁶⁶The Bull of Canonization was promulgated in the cathedral in Anagni by Pope Alexander IV between August and October 1255. In it, "The narrative thread is constantly interwoven with the luminous and sapiential motif of the brightness of the chaste soul that reflects the eternal light, with a play of similar sounds to which the prophetic name Clare wonderfully lends itself" (*Fonti Francescane*, [Padua: 1980], 2456).

APPENDIX

For the Feast of Saint Clare

(Assisi, Bibl. Com., ms. 505, ff. 28v-29v)

STRUCTURE OF THE SERMON

Theme:

As the noon light is clear.

(Isaiah 18:4)

Divisions:

Because of the brilliance of her works
in a wondrous manner of living:

As the noon light

Because of the excellence of her name
in a title worthy of honor:

She is clear.

Subdivisions:

She was bright.

With the merit of holiness.

With the privilege of piety.

With the teaching of truth.

With the footprint of poverty

Conclusion:

Therefore she possessed the glory of God.

(28v) THEME: *As the noon light is clear* (Is 18:4)

1. As for the meaning of the chosen text, it applies to the most blessed virgin Clare who, bright in name and in fact, surpassed the noon light by the brightness of her holiness. This is how [the text] is interpreted by you:

First, because of the brilliance of her works in her wondrous manner of life, when it says: *As the noon light*. For just as nothing is brighter than the noon light, so nothing is more perfect than evangelical perfection, which Job (11:17) says is *like the brightness of the noonday*. "What is the innocence of the saints to us if it does not proclaim the glory of the Judge who follows?" as Gregory says. "In admiring them we behold that which we shall esteem of the majesty of the true light."⁶⁷

Second, because of the excellence of her name in honorable appellation, when it adds, *is clear*, where it supplies the understanding of her honorable name. So, not without reason is she called Clare, for she was bright with the merit of holiness, the privilege of piety, the teaching of truth and the footprint of poverty.

2. First, she was bright with the merit of holiness.

For soon after, at the beginning of her conversion, she poured forth in abundance the rays of her brightness. Seeing her, the virgins and young maidens ran, so that, having received the brilliant rays of life, they might shine before the world like stars and cling to her with eternal purpose. This is that army at which Wisdom (4:1) marvels: *O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory!*; which, *just as one is the brightness of the sun, another the brightness of the moon, and another the brightness of the stars* (1 Cor 15:41), so one is the chastity of virgins, another that of the married, and another that of widows.

That very brightness was shown by a vision when her mother, named Ortolana, being about to deliver, heard with her bodily ears *a voice* from the cross *saying to her* (Acts 9:4): "There is nothing for you to be afraid of in the sigh of giving birth, for when you have given birth to a light, by which the world will be more clearly enlightened, you will be safe."⁶⁸ And that is why she named the child that was born Clare.

⁶⁷Saint Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, X, ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL, 143a (Turnhout: 1979), 18, 34, 562.

⁶⁸LgCl 2: "While the pregnant woman, already near delivery, was attentively praying to the Crucified before the cross in a church to bring her safely through the danger of childbirth, *she heard a voice saying to her* (Acts 9:4): 'Do not be afraid, woman, for you will give birth in safety to a light which will give light more

3. Second, with the privilege (29r) of piety.

The signs of the virtues are part of this in the working of miracles. For by the communicative power of God she appeared wondrous to the world when she multiplied provisions into food, healed the ulcers of those who were languishing, to their joy, and, strengthening the hearts of those who were fearful, obtained a saving remedy.

And so, just as Christ satisfied five thousand people with five loaves, she did likewise, giving fifty pieces from the remaining part of the loaf of bread, so that there would be a generous portion for each one.⁶⁹ Similarly, when the oil in the jar ran out,⁷⁰ so that what is said of Judith at the end (16:25) can be said of her: *She was made great in Bethulia, and she was most renowned in all the land of Israel*, because, when the sign flashed brightly, when the miracle was clear to the whole world, it showed the faithful the name of her power. For this reason Colossians (1:11) applies to her: *Strengthened in every virtue, according to the power of his glory....*

4. Third, with the teaching of truth.

For, divine wisdom aglow in her soul, she instituted a rule to be observed by the holy religion in which, *shining like the morning star* (Sir 50:6), by word and example she inspired souls to the pinnacle of perfection. As John said (17:22): *The glory you have given me, breathing into my soul, I have given to them*, making it known by example. This is the brightness of wisdom, which displays *knowledge of the truth* (Heb 10:26), which *shuts the eyes* (Is 33:15) of the body but enlightens the eye of the soul, so that when light is received in contemplation, comfort is refused to the light of the body.

This was evident in this most glorious virgin. To the devil, who was trying to convince her that she would go blind if she did not stop crying, she

clearly than light itself" [CA:ED, 254].

⁶⁹LgCl 15: "The miracle of the multiplication of the bread.... From this remaining part [of the loaf of bread] she told [the refectorian] to cut fifty pieces according to the number of ladies and to place them on the table of poverty.... Through a divine gift, that little piece [of bread] increased in the hands of the one breaking it and a generous portion existed for each one in the convent" [CA:ED, 270].

⁷⁰LgCl 16: "Another miracle of the oil given by God. One day the oil had been so completely drained by the servants of Christ that there was not even anything of seasoning for the sick. The Lady Clare took one of the jars and this teacher of humility washed it with her own hands.... For by the bountiful God alone that jar was replenished with oil, since the prayer of the holy Clare had anticipated the concern of the brother for the welfare of the poor daughters" [CA:ED, 271].

replied: "Whoever sees God will not be blind."⁷¹ And so Wisdom (8:10) could say: Through wisdom I will have *glory among the multitudes and honor in the presence of the ancients*.

We must love wisdom, if we desire to shine with the truth. Just as glass becomes bright through the coming of light, so through the coming of wisdom the soul's eye is enlightened. For, as it is said in Wisdom (6:13): *Wisdom is radiant and unfading*.

5. Fourth, with the footprint of poverty.

Although evangelical poverty makes the one who professes it vile in the sight of others, in the sight of God it makes him glorious in a reputation for virtue. And so not without reason is this virgin called Clare. She entered into such a great covenant with Lady Poverty and so bound herself to love that she desired to have nothing except God, and she allowed the sisters to accept or keep for later use nothing except the food needed for the day and clothing, observing perfectly and to the letter what her father Francis left her as a hereditary right. This is that city which John in the Apocalypse (21:10-11) testifies he saw: *And he showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven, having the glory of God*.

She came down out of heaven not only insofar as she was the mother foretold, but also insofar as she was consecrated to Christ through the fire of love and founded (29v) in poverty.

6. Therefore she possessed the glory of God when she resolved to imitate, through her example of poverty, him who, having become a poor Jew, hung naked on the cross. Many, alas, are changing this glory into darkness; Mattathias, which means "gift of God,"⁷² bewails this in 1 Maccabees (2:12): *Behold our sanctuary and our glory is laid waste*.

⁷¹LgCl 19: "Very frequently while she was prostrate on her face in prayer, she flooded the ground with tears and caressed it with kisses.... Once in the depth of night, while she was sleeping, an angel of darkness stood by her in the form of a black child and warned her saying: 'You should not cry so much because you will become blind.' But when she replied immediately: 'Whoever sees God will not be blind,' he departed confused" [CA:ED, 274].

⁷²See Jerome, *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum*, Lk: "Mattathias gift of God", ed. P. De Lagarde, CCL, 72 (Turnhout: 1959), 141.