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FRANCESCO DA MONTE NUOVO, *Sermoni per tutta la Quadragesima* (Sermons for Lent)

In Italian and Latin, illustrated manuscript on paper  
Southern Switzerland (Lugano?), dated 1607

ii (contemporary paper) + 416 + ii (contemporary paper) folios on paper, at least two watermarks (unidentified), one including a 6-point star, modern foliation in pencil, 1-412 (including 13 bis, 102 bis, 271 bis, 394 bis), complete (collation i<sup>8</sup> ii<sup>12</sup> iii<sup>8</sup> iv-xxii<sup>10</sup> xxiii<sup>8</sup> xxiv-xxvii<sup>10</sup> xxviii<sup>8</sup> xxix-xxxii<sup>10</sup> xxxiii<sup>8</sup> xxxiv<sup>12</sup> xxxv<sup>8</sup> xxxvi<sup>12</sup> xxxvii<sup>8</sup> xxxviii<sup>10</sup> xxxix<sup>8</sup> xl<sup>12</sup> xli<sup>8</sup> xlii<sup>16</sup>), no ruling visible (written space within the border 108 x 70 mm.), written in black and red inks in a small cursive hand in single column on c. 29-30 lines almost entirely by a single scribe (two contemporary hands added text on blank spaces ff. 16v-17v and 195), preliminary pages, headings and initials in humanistic bookhand, running titles at the top of each page flanked by heads or theatre masks(?) within borders painted in red, blue, green, brown and yellow that frame the entire page, 4 HALF-PAGE and 110 SMALL PEN AND INK DRAWINGS depicting landscapes, cityscapes, saints, biblical and other scenes, 67 FULL-PAGE PEN AND INK DRAWINGS depicting biblical and allegorical scenes, minor signs of use, in overall excellent condition. Bound in the eighteenth century in black morocco, both covers gold tooled with a frame of flowers, foliage and fillets, spine with five bands gold tooled with fillets, modern black cardboard slipcase, leather slightly worn on the spine, in overall excellent condition.  
Dimensions 144 x 91 mm.

This is an extraordinary manuscript that combines hundreds of pen and ink drawings with sermons in Italian. Sermon manuscripts are rarely illustrated; this profusely illustrated volume perhaps deserves to be seen not as a "sermon manuscript," per se, but instead as a book for personal devotion. It offers a wonderful new source for Capuchin history; every aspect of the volume presents still-unsolved puzzles, including the identities of the author and the artist(s), the purpose of the volume, and the relationship of these sermons to other Capuchin sermons and devotional works.

## PROVENANCE

1. The manuscript was made for use of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin in 1607: the coat of arms of the Order and the date are included on the original titlepage (f. 1). The decorated border on several pages incorporates a cord motif in reference to the Capuchin order.
2. A contemporary(?) inscription in brown ink below the titlepage "Capuccinorum Lugani" indicates that the manuscript was owned by the convent of Capuchins in Lugano (Old Swiss Confederation, canton of Ticino, surrounded by borders with Italy), and the manuscript may have been made for one of the friars there. The large miniature in the beginning of the manuscript, on f. 4, shows a city by a lake, possibly Lugano itself, and there are numerous illustrations of fishing and sailing on a lake, probably lake Lugano.

3. Two contemporary scribes added text on blank spaces ff. 16v-17v, incipit, "Audientia mia cara nun e pia..." and f. 195, "Che a Dio piace l'eta del fanciullo ..."

## TEXT

f. 1, [Titlepage], "Sermoni per tutta la Quad(ragesima) del P. F. Francesco da Monte Nuovo Capuccino / 1607"; [f. 1v, blank];

ff. 2-3, [Prayer of St. Anthony of Padua to be said before preaching], *Oratio. B. Antonii de Padua quando ibat ad predicandum extracta a libro antiquissimo sermonum M. Nicolai de Binonio ordinis minorum et episcopi Asisiensis ...*, incipit, "Lux mundi Deus immense, Pater eternitas, ..."; [ff. 2v and 3v blank];

The "Nicolai de Binonio," mentioned here may possibly be identified with the Franciscan Nicolaus de Bitonto (var. Niccolò d Bitonto/Bittonio, or Nicola Ferragatti, d. c. 1413), born in Bettona (Perugia), custodian of the convent at Assisi, provincial minister of Umbria, and bishop of Foligno. He was the author of a number of treatises, including possibly Lenten sermons (van der Heijden and Roest, "Franciscan Authors," and Sensi, Online Resources).

ff. 4-7, [List of contents (folio references were not added)], *Tavola. Di tutti i sermoni & punti principali che si contengono in questo Volume, ...*; [ff. 7v-8v, decorative border, otherwise blank];

ff. 9-394 bis v, [Sermons for the period of Lent, from Ash Wednesday, *Feria quarta cinerum*, to the third day after Easter, *Feria 3. Dominica Resurrectionis*], incipit, *Feria Quarta Cinnerum. De Jejunio. / Sermo*, incipit, "Nolite thesaurizare vobis thesauros in terra: ubi erugo & tinea demolitur. Mat. C. VI. Nel principio digueseo mio raggisnamento ... e nell'altro la gloria de Beati in secula seculorum. Amen."; [ff. 395-396v, decorative border, otherwise blank; f. 397, blank];

ff. 397v-407v, [Proems for the period of Lent], *Proemii per la quadragesima*, incipit, "Come dolente Nocebiero [an old word for a navigator of a sailing boat] memore ò nel euras porto, ò nelle Areriose ... Ma prima sentire come apparisee hoggi et iremo"; [f. 408, decorative border, otherwise blank; ff. 408v-412v, blank].

Francesco da Monte Nuovo, *Sermoni per tutta la Quadragesima*; although the author of this extensive cycle of sermons, Francesco da Monte Nuovo, is named on the title page of our manuscript, his identify remains uncertain. He is not listed in van der Heijden and Roest, "Franciscan Authors" (Online Resources), but he may be identifiable as Francesco Maria da Montenovo (Montenovo in Forlì-Cesena?), recorded in a small number of sources (Avarucci, 2017, p. 133; Vecchietti, 1796, p. 89). According to Vecchietti, a manuscript written by him, entitled "Notizie di Rocca Contrada," was found in the library of the Capuchins of Montenovo, and his sermons and some of his letters were published in volume 5 of *Lettere di diversi uomini illustri* written by Father Valentino Pacifico of Monte Carotto Minore Osservante (Vecchietti, 1796, p. 89). However, the 1752 publication, *Le Scienze, Ed Arti Nobili Ravvivate In Arcevia*, notes that the "ristretto di memorie di Roccacontrada" by Father Francesco Maria da Monte Nuovo Cappuccino was written around 1680 (pp. 131-132). If this date is correct, it is doubtful the author is the same as the one who wrote the sermons copied in our manuscript in 1607. Further research is needed (it has not been possible to locate the publication by Father Valentino Pacifico or to identify the Capuchin convent in Montenovo).

The running titles on each page give the day for which the sermon is intended, as well as the topic, for example, "Feria Quarta Cinnerum. De Jejunio" (Ash Wednesday, On Fasting, f. 10). The biblical quotes that precede the sermons are in Latin. One, two, three or four sermons are assigned to the days during the Lenten period. The proems (proemio, proemii) at the end of the volume are introductory texts for the sermons (ff. 397v-407v).

## ILLUSTRATION

The sermons are illustrated with a remarkable collection pen and ink illustrations, some of which are enigmatic. Each sermon is preceded by two, or sometimes one, full-page pen and ink drawings, many of which illustrate the biblical quote that introduces the sermon. When there are two drawings, they are placed facing each other like a diptych, with subjects that usually relate to one another. Although the verso of the leaves with drawings is blank, these leaves are integral to the quires, suggesting that they were planned from the outset. Different artists were possibly responsible for drawings in the series. One artist favors compositions with imposing figures in sparse settings, another prefers detailed narratives with smaller figures in complex landscapes. The smaller images placed on pages including text may have been drawn by another artist, and all pages are framed by a decorated border in a coherent style.

The subjects of the 67 full-page illustrations and four half-page illustrations are given below, followed references to the biblical citation at the beginning of each sermon:

- f. 2, Half-page view of a tempietto in a city (prayer of St Anthony);
- f. 4, Half-page view of a city, Lugano?, from across a lake (table of contents);
- f. 9, St. Francis appearing to a young man (f. 10, Mt. 6:19);
- ff. 19v-20, Fishing; on the facing page a landscape the centurion and his obedient troops leaving a fortified city (f. 21, Mt. 8:5);
- ff. 27v-28, Haymaking, woman churning butter, youth with basket and jug thrusting his right hand out of the picture (Mt. 5:30? "if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off"); on the facing page, Christ instructing the apostles (f. 29, Mt. 5:43);
- ff. 37v-38, Nude men reaping, an allusion to "Man shall not live by bread alone" (Mt. 4:4); on the facing page, Jesus in the wilderness tempted by the devil who commands him to turn stones into bread (Mt. 4:1-4) (f. 39, Mt. 4:2);
- ff. 47v-48, Commentary on the righteous (woman holding the palm of martyrdom) and on the facing page the damned (nude figures attempting to escape the flood) (f. 49, Mt. 25:31, parables of the talents and the sheep separated from the goats);
- f. 58, Mass at the temple, accompanied by scenes of prayer, healing and cleansing (f. 59, Mt. 21:13 "my house will be called a house of prayer");
- ff. 67v-68, Slaughtering animals for the wedding feast and heralding the guests with pipes (Mt. 22:1-14); on the facing page, shepherds in mountain fields, servants sent to harvest grapes (Mt.

21:33-41) (f. 69, Mt. 23:12 "whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted");

ff. 77v-78, St. Helena with the Cross; on the facing page, Jesus is amongst a throng healing the maimed, the lame and the blind (f. 79, Mt. 15:30-31);

ff. 87v-88, Hunters with their dogs; on the facing page, a landscape with a sailboat on a lake (f. 89, John 5:1, healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda);

ff. 97v-98, Seascape with a large ship with sails, three smaller boats; a nude male figure appearing from the water catches hold of one of them and points the sky; on the facing page, he Transfiguration of Jesus (f. 99, Mt. 17:1);

ff. 106v-107, Naked man with elaborate horns and a tail, a cuckold or "cornuto", and the woman taken in adultery standing behind a tree (Jn. 7:53-8:11); on the facing page, four perplexed men (f. 108, Jn. 8:25, "Who are you?" Jesus said to them "Even what I have told you from the beginning");

ff. 116v-117, Court musicians making music in a rowing boat; on the facing page, aged priest kneeling, reading from a book held by an acolyte, four noblemen kneeling in the background (f. 118, Mt. 23:2, woe to the scribes and the Pharisees);

ff. 126v-127, Mardi Gras? (couple seated at table entertained by men wearing masks); on the facing page, the mother of the sons of Zebedee, James the greater and John, asks that her sons sit on left and right of Jesus (f. 128, Mt. 20:18);

ff. 136v-137, Adam and Eve being judged in Paradise by a cherub holding a scale and sword and another holding a club (f. 138, Luke 16.1, parable of the dishonest steward, and Luke 16:19, parable of Lazarus and Dives);

ff. 146v-147, A man with a dog looking at a kneeling stag, symbol of piety and devotion; on the facing page, Virgin Mary appearing in a cloud and presenting the Christ Child to St. François; another friar sleeps nearby, resting his hand on a skull (f. 148; Mt. 21:33, parable of the vineyard; mis-labelled Mt. 12);

ff. 156v-157, A monk and nun addressing two fishermen; on the facing page, a woman praying, sitting on the ground next to a basket with three loaves; two women stand further on, one crying, and a dwarf stands behind the basket. Commentary on the Lord's prayer and the man requesting three loaves from a friend at midnight (f. 158, Lk. 11:3-11; mis-labelled Luke 21);

ff. 166v-167, Romulus and Remus; on the facing page, nude man and woman drinking wine in a landscape (f. 168, Luke 4:23);

ff. 176v-177, A nude soldier in a landscape who has sinned against his brother, and on the facing page, his brother with three female witnesses led by two angels (f. 178, Mt. 18:15-20; text mis-labelled Mk. 8);

ff. 186v-187, Saturn (holding a scythe and eating an infant), Mt. 15:19, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man"; on the facing page, a nobleman studying a book (f. 188, Mt. 15:2);

ff. 196v-197, God with Adam and Eve in Paradise pointing at the forbidden apple tree; on the facing page, a close-up portrait of two young women with jewels and bare breasts (f. 198, Luke 4:38, in the commentary the fever of Simon's mother-in-law is likened to libidinous sin);

ff. 206v-207, A young woman takes a weary or injured woman on her horse, helping her to cross a stream. On the facing page, the Samaritan offers Jesus water from Jacob's well (f. 208, Jn 4:5-15);

f. 217, A female saint, holding a rosary and book, offers bread to a lame man;

ff. 224v-225, A female figure (drawing left unfinished); on the facing page, a man praying in a landscape with a large peacock, symbol of the resurrection of Christ, alluded to by Jesus after he cleansed the temple and said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" (f. 226; Jn 2:13-19);

f. 235, Adoration of the Magi (f. 236, Jn 7:14);

f. 245, Christ healing the man who was blind from birth (f. 246, Jn 9:1);

f. 254v-255, A female saint holding martyr's palm and arrows; on the facing page, a landscape with enigmatic scene of a hog burning (?) (f. 256, Luke 7:11, resurrection of the son of the widow at Naim);

f. 264v, Christ addressing Lazarus after he is raised from the dead (f. 265, Jn 11.1);

f. 272, Putto pulling a man in a chariot, another putto with a palm and one with a bow and quiver symbolizing Jn 8:47, "He who is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God." (f. 273, Jn 8.46; mis-labelled Jn 9);

ff. 281v-282, Jesus by a well, illustrating Jn 7:37 "if any one thirst, let him come to me and drink"; on the facing page, Mary holding the infant Jesus, illustrating Jn 7:33, "I shall be with you a little longer, and then I go to him who sent me." (f. 283, Jn 7:32-37);

ff. 291v-292, A female martyr with palm and sword; on the facing page, Flight into Egypt, a parallel reference to Jn 7:1: "After this Jesus went about in Galilee; he would not go about in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill him." (f. 293, Jn 7:1);

ff. 301v-302, Presentation in the Temple; on the facing page, a recumbent Jesus, with a radiant halo, "is the door" and a man stands on him; Jesus lays down his life to protect his sheep as the thief enters in order to kill and destroy (f. 303, Jn 10:1-11);

f. 311, Mary Magdalen, half nude, holding a rosary and book in a landscape by the Crucifix (f. 312, Lk 7:37);

ff. 320v-321, Men in a boat, the one behind the barrels appears to be dying; on the facing page, the three Marys and an angel mourn the dead Christ, illustrating "it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish." (f. 322, Jn 11:50; mis-labelled Jn 2);

f. 330v, Fishmongers cutting up fish; facing page blank (f. 332, Mt. 21:5);

ff. 340v-341, People promenading in a townscape; on the facing page, friars taking Eucharist, one lying on the floor close to death, illustrating Lk 22:15, the institution of the Eucharist (f. 342, Luke 22:15; mis-labelled Luke 2);

f. 355, Half-page picture of Joseph sitting on a chair near a building with a sun-dial (f. 356, Mt. 1:18);

f. 363, Half-page picture of The Entombment of Christ (non-biblical phrase: *Christus factus est pro nobis obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem Crucis*);

f. 369, Christ overcoming death and evil represented by a skull and serpent (f. 370, Marc 16:6);

ff. 378v-379, A sleeping nude woman and a shadowy male figure; on the facing page, *Noli me tangere* (f. 380, Luc 24:13, recounts the road to Emmaus);

ff. 388v-389, Two peacocks; on the facing page, a woman with a cock and hen in a basket (f. 390, Luke X: 1-12, mission of the seventy);

f. 397v, Fishing.

In addition, the sermons are introduced with 110 small pen and ink drawings, probably by another artist, mainly depicting rural landscapes, but also including subjects such as the possible cityscape of Lugano (f. 2), man escaping flood waters by climbing a tree (f. 21, copied after f. 48), a female saint with a lantern (f. 29), a Capuchin praying before a crucifix (f. 30), a female saint holding a crown (f. 39), woman threatening a dragon (f. 40), martyrdom of a virgin saint (f. 128), Lazarus and Dives? (f. 138) man lying on a pallet and bereaved figure (f. 236), seated saint (f. 304), Saint Agatha carrying her breasts, (f. 305), St. Joseph (f. 355) and the Burial of Christ (f. 363).

The proems (*proemio, proemii*) at the end of the volume are each headed by a small (20 x 20 mm.) pen and ink drawing of a landscape (ff. 397v-407v).

The Order of Friars Minor Capuchin is a reformed order of Franciscan friars, founded in 1525, by Matteo da Bascio, an Observant Franciscan friar in the region of Marche in Italy. The purpose of the reform was to return to a stricter observance of the rule with a more primitive way of life of solitude and penance, established by Francis of Assisi in 1209. Preaching was fundamental to the Capuchin mission, and they were known for the "new style" of their zealous,

evangelical sermons. Very few written sermons have survived from the first fifty years of the Order's history; there are more Capuchin sermons from the second half of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century preserved in print and manuscript, but these still represent only a small percentage of their preaching mission (Cargnoni, 1988, and Online Resources, discussing important Capuchin preachers, and analyzing how their sermons evolved over the years; see also Roest, 2019).

The sermon cycle in our manuscript by Francesco da Monte Nuovo is not cited in Cargnoni's detailed overview of the first century of Capuchin preaching, at least under this name. Sermon manuscripts are not usually illustrated. The manuscript described here is so profusely illustrated that it deserves to be studied almost as a different genre, perhaps intended more for personal, devotional reading, than as a record of actual spoken sermons, or a collection of material intended for use in oral preaching.

A contemporary manuscript about a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, illustrated with numerous pen and ink drawings by the painter Francesco Cavazzoni of Bologna in 1616-1617, further demonstrates the circulation of richly illustrated devotional texts in the seventeenth century (Chantilly, Bibliothèque du château, MS 704; see Online Resources for a fully digitized copy, and D'Urso and Mulas, 2014, no. 31).

## LITERATURE

Avarucci, G., ed. *Registrum Scripturarum della Procura generale dell'ordine cappuccino: 1688-1698*, (Monumenta historica Ordinis Minorum Capuccinorum, 39), Rome, 2017.

Cargnoni, Costanzo, O.F.M.Cap. *I Frati Cappuccini: Documenti e testimonianze del primo secolo*, Perugia, 1988, vol III/1, pp.1751-2104 (English translation, see below, Online Resources).

D'Urso, T. and P. L. Mulas. *La passion du prince pour les belles occupations de l'esprit: enluminures italiennes dans la collection du duc d'Aumale*, Chantilly, 2014.

Ingegneri, Gabriele, ed. *La predicazione cappuccina nel Seicento : atti del Convegno internazionale di studi dei bibliotecari cappuccini italiani: Assisi, 26-28 settembre 1996*, Assisi, 1997.

*Le Scienze, Ed Arti Nobili Ravvivate In Arcevia*, Jesi, 1752.

Pozzi, G. and L. Pedroia. *Ad uso di ... applicato alla libreria de' Cappuccini di Lugano*, Rome, 1996.

Roest, Bert. "The Voice of a Popular German Capuchin Preacher: The Weeg-Weiser gen Himmel (1668-1679) of Geminianus von Mainz," *Franciscan Studies*, vol. 77, 2019, p. 171-230.

Vecchiotti, F. *Biblioteca Picena, o sia notizie istoriche delle opere e degli scrittori piceni*, vol. 5, Osimo, 1796.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

Biblioteca Salita dei Frati, Lugano (the convent library of the Capuchins in Lugano, established in the sixteenth century)

<http://www.bibliotecafratilugano.ch/>

Maarten van der Heijden and Bert Roest, "Franciscan Authors, 13th-18th Century: A Catalogue in Progress"

<http://users.bart.nl/~roestb/franciscan/>

Sensi, Mario, "Nicola Ferragatti," *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 46 (1996)

[https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/nicola-ferragatti\\_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/nicola-ferragatti_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/)

Costanzo Cargnoni, OFM Cap, "A Critical Introduction to Early Capuchin Preaching," translated by Patrick Colbourne OFM Cap (See Cargnoni, 1988, above)

<https://www.capdox.capuchin.org.au/reform-resources-16th-century/writers/critical-introduction-to-early-capuchin-preaching/>

Chantilly, Bibliothèque du château, MS 704:

<https://bvmm.irht.cnrs.fr/mirador/index.php?manifest=https://bvmm.irht.cnrs.fr/iiif/403/manifest>

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