

## Two Biographical Notes on Bernardino of Colpetrazzo

### The first biographical note

Zaccaria Boverio Da Saluzzo, *Annali de' Frati Minori Cappuccini*, Composti dal M.R.P. Zaccaria Boverio, Diffinitore Generale dell'istesso Ordine. E tradotti nell'italiano da Fra Benedetto Sambenedetti, Predicatore Cappuccino. 2 voll in 4 tomi, In Venetia. Appresso i Giunti. 1643, 1645.

Tomo secondo, parte seconda. Anno 1594, n.6 – 451, p. 126-135

Translator's note. Fra Benedetto's text does not aim at an accurate translation of Zaccaria's Latin. It is more an interpretative paraphrase. He adds some things. Others he changes or omits. The reader may be advised to check the original version, namely, *Annalium seu Sacrarum Historiarum Ordinis Minorum S. Francisci Qui Capucini nuncupantur*. Auctore R.P. Zacharia Boverio Salutiensi eiusdem Ordinis Theologo. Lugduni Sumpt. Hæred. Gab. Boissat et Laurentii Anisson. 1639. This sketch of Colpetrazzo is found in Tomus Secundus p. 530-539

### The second biographical note (p.16) of

Lattanzio of Terni (Lactantius ab Interamna) [1547-1619] "Adnotazione di alcune cose de la vita di molti frati della provincia di S. Francesco de' cappuccini," edited by Francesco da Vicenza in *Collectanea Franciscana* 10(1940) p.510-533; 11(1941) p.70-86. Lattanzio's note on Bernardino of Colpetrazzo is in 10(1940) 519-520. Lattanzio's biographical sketches are slightly abridged in "Adnotazione di alcune cose de la vita di molti frati della provincia di S. Francesco de' cappuccini" in Costanzo Cagnoni (ed.), *I Frati Cappuccini*, t.II, p.1521- n.3268-3318.

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<sup>1</sup> The paragraph numbers below are those of Sambenedetti. It varies very slightly from that of Boverius. In the footnotes below Italian citations are from Sambenedetti's translation. The Latin texts are those of Boverius.

## The Life of Brother Bernardino of Colpetrazzo, Preacher

6. Brother Bernardino of Colpetrazzo Castle of Todi, Priest and Preacher is one of the most illustrious Fathers who, outstanding in every virtue, flowered in zeal for religious observance in the Province of Umbria. He was born to a Father and Mother of average fortune. From the beginning of his birth it was obvious from a heavenly prodigy how he would be a friend of the Cross and that the Lord was calling him to that state of Religion where He gathers those who want to be crucified to the World under the marks of the stigmata impressed on the hands, feet and side of our Blessed Father [Francis]. For he emerged from his mother's womb covered with a kind of stole in a Cross shape. While he was still a child he listened to a priest saying that those who want to pursue salvation more easily should enter the Religion of the Friars Minor. That saying was so deeply impressed upon his heart that from then on he resolved to dedicate himself to divine service in the Order of the Observance.

7. He was no more than twelve years old when he presented himself to the Minister of the Observant Fathers. Because he was too young, the Minister deferred his reception until Bernardino was sixteen years old. After he gave him the habit he admitted him to profession. However he spent only a little time there [in the Observance] because, guided by a spirit of greater strictness and pure observance, he passed to our Reform, which at that time was governed by Brother Louis of Fossombrone under apostolic authority.

8. No sooner had he given himself as a total offering to the Lord with the solemn vows of obedience, poverty and chastity, that he obtained from His Divine Majesty all those outstanding gifts<sup>1</sup>. These are not usually conferred except on those who have been experienced in virtue for a long time and have reached the summit of an outstanding holiness. However in the progress of a religious, virtuous and perfect life the following sequence must be observed. With the mortification of the flesh, especially the senses, death is brought to every vice and wicked inclination. Then the soul may bud forth the beautiful fronds of virtue. This devout religious wanted so much to sow the seeds of evangelical perfection in the field of his heart. He not only began to mortify but also to bring death to the spore of the body with various austerities of life and to bury it under the earth of quite a rigid penitence. Within the space of six straight years (which hardly seems credible) he never tasted anything other than bread and water.

9. Everyone knows just how unbearable the cold can be in Province of Umbria and in those mountainous alpine places. However neither the harshness of travel nor the rigours of winter could ever intimidate the generous soul of Brother Bernardino. He did not trust in overcoming the rigours of the cold and the harshness of travel even though he removed from his feet the protection of sandals. He trod barefoot through the snow and ice and covered himself with nothing more than a tattered and patched habit. With austerities like these, plus a frightful hairshirt and many other disciplines that drew blood, he cut away the depraved inclinations of the enemy and dominated the tyranny of self-indulgence<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, in the flower of his youth, in order to feel a small part of the pains of the Passion of Christ and to extinguish the flames of lust, he often wrapped his naked self with thorns and dry brushwood. He doused the fire of sensuality with the water of blood.

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<sup>1</sup> The outstanding gifts are those described below.

<sup>2</sup> *del senso*

10. In this way the true Disciple of the Cross crucifies the flesh with all its vices. With the plough of mortification breaks up the hard sods of the body so that they do not produce the thorns and nettles of vice. He was preparing his soul for the seeds and cultivation of the virtues. When these found in him such fertile soil, they grew so happily that the garden of the Seraphic Religion which, so bountiful with the flowers of perfection, breathed an ever greater fragrance from one day to the next. Innocence of life and a true, pure, dove-like simplicity blossomed in him. There was no pretence or duplicity in him whatsoever. Such was the candour of his mind that he didn't know how to suspect evil in others. Therefore he developed in integrity of life and a great desire to advance even further in virtue. As he always aspired to ever more heroic undertakings and greater perfection, he thought of nothing other than goodness, the salvation of souls and the increase in glory of the divine name. Therefore continence and seemly manners breathed forth their perfumes and conferred on him such lordship over selfish pleasures<sup>1</sup> that he always kept them subject to the dominion of his reason. He emitted the sweet bouquet of the love of poverty and total paucity and he abhorred all superfluity<sup>2</sup>. He was of the opinion that superfluity was not compatible with virtue. Because of this he used to say that the habit is well suited to the body. It serves to cover its nakedness and protect it from the cold. It also serves for decoration. However if it is too long and drags along the ground it becomes unsuitable. It wraps around the feet and impedes walking. So it is with the possession of those things whose use exceeds natural need. It tangles the soul in imperfections and impedes the way of the virtues. It deserves just reprimands in those who have promised most high poverty to God by a vow and have distanced themselves from the possession of every earthly thing. Therefore he blossomed in pleasantness and humility of mind with which he had to abase himself in his own eyes and check every moment of anger that might arise to disturb the peace of his heart. A marvellous patience and an invincible strength finally sprang forth in him. These fortified his soul and made it firm against the assaults of misfortune. Even if he was struck by many severe calamities he was never defeated or knocked down. He also knew that we are powerless not to feel the blows of the struggles that afflict the soul. However it is the work of the virtues to endure these things with equanimity and resignation to the divine will. As Saint Pope Gregory also tells us, 'true virtue does not forgo the sensitivity of the heart, just as it is not an effect of good health not to feel the strength of the pain that afflicts us. Rather, it forgoes the foolhardiness of pleasure.'<sup>3</sup>

11. Once he was reprimanded and seriously punished by his Superiors for a fault of which he was innocent. He not only made no complaint to anyone, but he even blamed himself and excused the Superiors. The Cardinal of Urbino, the Protector of the Order, was staying in the Marches when this reached his ears. He had him called. He wanted to hear from him if it were true that our Superiors had unjustly given him such grave penances. He wanted to ascertain what he had heard. Brother Bernardino answered him, "Most Illustrious Lord, if my Superiors have given me some penance, my faults deserve that penance and even greater penances." The Cardinal was so edified by this reply that without continuing any

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<sup>1</sup> *i piaceri del senso*

<sup>2</sup> That is, having more than what was required to meet basic needs for the day.

<sup>3</sup> *Moralia*, Book 2, Chapter 2. Here *stupidezza di senso*

further, nor without making any objection, he let him return to his Province. The Cardinal's impression of Bernardino's virtue grew.

12. By using great trials, the Lord is often accustomed to train those souls whom He intends to make outstanding with the virtue of patience. Therefore, when Brother Bernardino was in the Family in the old friary of Saint Anna at Spoleto he was gravely afflicted. Pained by some tribulations that he was suffering at the time, he was venting his pain in the woods and sighing because of the vehement anguish that wrung his heart. It was as if he also wanted to show the distress of his soul to the Lord. Suddenly a venerable old man with a very kindly face appeared. He said these words to him, "Know, son, that patience and humility conquer everything." Then he disappeared. Because of the vision he felt so encouraged to suffer adversities with patience. From that time onwards there was nothing so hard and tormenting that he could not endure without joy and joviality of heart. When he was Guardian at the Friary of the Carcerelle he suffered some grave persecutions at the time from certain Religious of another Order. He bore them with such strength that when the Thaddeus, the Guardian of Perugia, was praying before the main Altar, an Angel with a very beautiful aspect appeared to him with a tripod in his hands. When he had put this on the Altar the Angel said to him, "Friend, do you see this tripod? Know that such is the strength of the Guardian of the Carcerelle who makes himself immovable before all the calamities that surround him." Similarly the same vision was shown to Brother Justin of Panicale, the Guardian of Bettona, as is said in Book One<sup>1</sup> in the year 1547.<sup>2</sup>

*On Brother Bernardino's prayer and  
the case that happened to him with a Cleric deceived by the Devil.*

13. These and many other flowers of evangelical virtue that marvelously embellished the soul of this Servant of God increased daily. They became even more beautiful with the irrigation of constant prayer, showered with that stream of tears that he shed especially while meditating on the Saviour's Passion. He felt such delight in prayer that he used to spend five or six continuous hours at it. He always grieved when he did not have time to give to it. Therefore to steal a little time he avoided conversing with the Friars and fasted every day. He judged that the food of meditation was much tastier to the palate of the soul than any other food was to the body. He used to say that he would never have satisfied God, the Religion or himself if he did not add at least four other hours of mental prayer to the two imposed by our Constitutions. Since he was so assiduous in prayer and contemplation it is little wonder that God favoured him with many revelations and ecstasies and often with the levitation of his whole body off the ground.

14. At the beginning of his conversion when he had not yet obtained from God the gift of mental prayer, he used to apply himself tirelessly to vocal prayer. Whenever a Friar asked him about this he answered, "My brother, no one can live religious life without prayer, which is the spiritual food of the soul. Let me sustain myself with at least some crumbs of vocal prayer until it pleases the Lord to grant me full loaves of mental prayer." When he instructed the Novices and exhorted them to the study of prayer he used to say to them, "My sons, I have known many Friars who have fallen from the bosom of the Religion. When I searched out the reason for their fall I found that it was always preceded by their

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<sup>1</sup> Volume One of these Annals.

<sup>2</sup> *Flores Seraphicae* extends the last part of this story.

neglect for prayer. It is the main nerve of the soul. It is just like the body. Sometimes when the nerves are cut the body may become uncoordinated. For the nerves used to connect one part of the body with another and one part was invigorated by the other, and this one or that one or both moved together. The same thing happens to the soul. As nerves to the body, so is prayer to the soul. As long as prayer is alive in the soul it moves the body of the virtues vigorously. However if soul lacks in prayer it immediately falls into sins, just as if those nerves had been cut which sustain and unite the religious virtues. Give me a Friar," he added, "who is not perfect or is even full of faults. If he prays to God with all his heart he will quickly arrive to the peak of perfection, thanks to the fact that all the virtues are acquired and maintained with affective prayer. On the other hand, even if a Friar is virtuous and perfect, if he stops praying to the Lord he will fall quickly from that eminence into every kind of imperfection."

15. He devoted himself with such diligence and solicitude to the instruction of the young that with prayer he reached a goal which he could not have reached just by human prudence alone. The Lord granted him this grace that each night, two hours before Matins, he heard a voice wake him. It was believed to be his Guardian Angel. One night when he was woken by the voice he felt weighed down by sleep. Instead of getting up he went back to sleep. However he suddenly heard the same voice object, "Get up straight away Bernardino! Run! The wolf wants to steal a sheep!" He wasn't slow to the second call. Getting up immediately he went to the Church and found that a novice had taken off the habit of the Religion. He wanted to open the door of the Church to leave. With that heavenly eloquence with which God had favoured him, that devout Father then began to point out to him quite vividly the Devil's deceits and the danger to which he was exposing his salvation. Having recognised the diabolical fraud, the young man was contrite of heart and remorseful over his mistake. He changed his resolve and persevered until the end in the Religion. In the same way he confirmed others in the same vocation who, either because of tedium or because of diabolical temptation, wavered and were about to return to the World.

16. One episode regarding a young man should not be passed over in silence. From this case it is obvious how much of the light of heavenly wisdom Bernardino had received from the Lord in order to know the deceits of the enemy and to discern between good and wicked spirits. There was a Cleric who had shown himself to be quite inclined to devotion. He was no sooner out from the bosom of the Novitiate, than everyday, as it seemed to him, God favoured him with some vision of the Blessed Virgin or the Angels and Saints in Paradise, or of Christ himself. The Devil was appearing to him in this form in order to deceive him more easily. He instructed him to be humble, patient, obedient, poor, a friend of prayer and to embrace all the virtues that are the adornment of the religious man, particularly the Friar Minor. Above all he recommended to him that with each and every vision or revelation that he communicated to him, to tell his Superior about it immediately and to follow his advice. In this way he could better flee the snares of the infernal enemy.

17. The young man grasped that teaching firmly which, until then, the Devil had dictated to him. Nonetheless it was the true and perfect doctrine of Religious that the Holy Fathers and by Christ himself taught. He seemed to shine so much in every virtue and perfection that all the Friars admired his life and conversation as if he were an Angel. They couldn't recognise the slightest imperfection in him. It was not difficult for them to be persuaded that the revelations he received every day

came from Heaven and from God. Therefore when the Provincial arrived on the occasion of the visitation, they highly praised the Cleric to him for his devotion, fervour and angelic ways, and for the many favours that the very generous hand of the Lord conferred upon him every day. When the Provincial saw that the matter needed more mature consideration he talked about it with the Guardian. With the Guardian he decided to send the young man to Brother Bernardino of Colpetrazzo who, at the time, was Guardian at Acquasparta or Portaria<sup>1</sup>. He was very experienced in these matters and very enlightened in the ways of God. After examining him carefully, he might give his opinion about the so-called visions and whether they could be regarded as heavenly, or whether they were diabolic illusions.

18. When the Cleric arrived at Acquasparta he had no sooner gone to find the Guardian in his cell than he began to tell him about the many revelations and visions that God had communicated to him and which were increasing more and more day after day. Pretending that he did not know otherwise, the Guardian replied, "What visions? What revelations? Off with you, wretch. These are favours that the Lord gives to those who have already spent many, many years in the virtues and who are outstanding in holiness - not Novices who have just stepped into the imitation of the spiritual life." Without allowing him to say anything else he sent him out of the cell. A little later the Demon returned to appear to the Cleric in the form of Christ. He said to him, "Now my son you can be consoled because I have provided you with a Guardian who is a holy man and very experienced in spiritual things. Therefore be careful to obey in everything he commands you. Avoid wicked discourses. Embrace humility which is the royal road to Paradise. Press on in prayer and all those gifts that have been given you until now and that I will give you in the future. No matter how small or great they may be, you will entrust them all to him and follow his advice. In this way you will make yourself safe against the frauds of the astute Devil. By doing this you will please me." When the vision had finished the young man went to share them with the Guardian who said to him, "That's enough son. It's enough that you say no more and go away. I have had a head full." When he was walking in the garden the evil one appeared to him yet again, this time in the form of the Mother of God, but completely sorrowful. She told him to go to the end of the path. There he would see her son the way he was when he went to Calvary to be crucified. He did this and saw the Devil under that wounded and bloodied form with his face bent over towards the ground and the crown of thorns on his head and the cross on his shoulder. His heart softened. Moved by compassion he said, "Give that Cross to me. I want to carry it because my sins have been the cause of all your sufferings." The Devil said, "Son, see what I suffer for your love. Therefore continue to carry the cross of the Religion. Be humble, patient, abstinent, and obedient to your Superior. In this way you will do what pleases me."

Since the Cleric had to tell the Guardian about some vision each day, he [Brother Bernardino] prayed about this especially. He begged the Lord to grant him the light to know whether a trick of the Devil was hiding in these so-called visions. He was inspired to do the following test. When the youth came back again to him he asked him if the Lord, who had appeared to him many times, had always exhorted him to be obey his superior promptly. "Always," answered the Cleric. "Well then," added the Guardian, "take courage and do what I command you. As

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<sup>1</sup> *Porcaria* in both the Latin and Italian versions.

soon as someone appears to you under the semblance of Christ, the Blessed Virgin or some other saint, chase him away from you with these words: 'Depart, cursed demon. I don't ever want to believe you again, nor offer you any reverence or service because you are a very cunning spirit and you want to do nothing else but deceive me.' Do you have the courage to do this, son?" "Yes, Father," answered the Cleric. "Up then," added the Guardian. "Do not worry about this too much because I accept on my own conscience every act of irreverence you may commit in this by obeying your superior. Because of this you will come to see the deceit of the Devil."

Therefore one morning after the common meal when the Cleric had retired to the Choir to say five Our Fathers and five Hail Mary's a *Pietà* scene appeared to him at the door where one enters the main Altar. It was like the scene when the wicked Pilate showed Christ Our Lord to the Jews and said to the '*Ecce homo.*' Having recalled everything the Guardian had ordered him, he quickly raised his voice and said, "Away impure Demon because I will never believe you again because you want to deceive me." He had no sooner proffered these words than the Demon, knocked to the ground by the force of obedience, disappeared, screaming, "Cursed be the one who has taught you this art and has commanded you what to do." The Cleric also cried out in fear and quickly ran to the Guardian and told him everything that had happened. The Guardian then gave him a devout talk in which he discussed the many tricks of the enemy. He also taught him how he should behave in the future so that such illusions would not deceive him again.

19. The soul of that young man was pure and innocent. He never desired again for anything else than the acquisition of the virtues and of perfection. The Lord gave the Devil every freedom nonetheless to be able to deceive him because he was not totally empty of all esteem for his own self or of presumption. However whenever those visions – or rather illusions- began to appear he would belittle himself in the divine presence. After confessing himself unworthy of such graces, the Lord would give him the light to recognise the deceit. However since he was not yet well established and rooted in humility, He allowed him to err. This was so that the mistake might serve him as a stimulus to virtue and so that the heavenly light He had communicated to his servant Brother Bernard would be more obvious - and so too the wiles of the enemy.

*About the preaching, prayer, pleasant nature and  
spirit of Prophecy of the Servant of the Lord*

20. When this Servant of Christ was promoted to the study of preaching, he began to preach the divine word with an apostolic spirit. He did not do so with the charms of human eloquence or the cunning devices of oration, but with that heavenly wisdom which penetrates to the marrow of the soul and cuts the heart to the quick. God administered this to him more in prayer than in the studies of the theological schools. He did not value their arguments very highly to convince the Listeners, to move them to penance or to urge them to virtue. A propos of this a lay friar, Brother Giles of Amelia, refers to a time when Brother Bernardino was passing through Viterbo. His fame was known there and the Lords strongly insisted that he preach. He was happy to do this and spent the entire night preparing a sermon. In his opinion it was a very good one. However when he was in the pulpit in the morning he was so dumbstruck he could not begin. He remembered at that moment that something similar had happened to Father Saint

Francis. He put his prepared sermon aside. Starting his discourse somewhere else he said nothing except what the Spirit of Lord told him. In this way he gave such a marvellous sermon that he moved the whole city to tears and devotion. When he came down from the pulpit everyone ran behind him. Because of the devotion they had conceived for him, anyone who could touch him or get near him considered himself blessed indeed.

21. He was not a very lettered man. However he had excellent natural judgement. He was an effective and gracious raconteur<sup>1</sup> and had no equal in comforting anyone who was afflicted e distressed. He was affable with the Friars and with seculars. When they came to our Friaries he received them and he wished the other Friars to welcome them with every possible kindness and religious charity. When giving his reason for this he said, “We don’t have to show ourselves courteous and kind to seculars to gain their devotion just so that they may be more liberal towards us with their alms and donations and burden us with the weight of either of these things. This would be a perversion of charity. Contrary to the counsel of the Apostle, we would not be seekers of souls, but seekers of their goods. However if this reason arises as a subtle, spiritual prompting, it should have some persuasion within our hearts because while they provide for us in what we need they help us to observe the Rule. Without their kindness it would be difficult for us to keep it because we would find ourselves obliged to have recourse to money even for little things. However there is a principle reason we should encourage them to have recourse to us in their spiritual needs and to tell us confidently about the struggles and distresses that oppress them daily due to the circumstances of human fortune. It is so that they may receive appropriate relief and leave the heavy weight of their sadness with us. Likewise, with great confidence, we can admonish, correct, and withdraw them from their sins according to their need.”

22. He was very zealous about regular observance<sup>2</sup> and quite the enemy of even the slightest excess in the matter of buildings. Because of this he procured the resentment of many people. [I said ‘procured’ because ‘procured’ can be considered as that loss of goodwill caused by zeal for Seraphic poverty.]<sup>3</sup> When he took up the Provincialate he visited Umbria barefoot and without sandals. With his very exemplary life he better established and increased the discipline in that Province<sup>4</sup>, [which was always a very fertile Mother of perfect Religious.]

23. The Devil could not bear such virtue in this Servant of Christ: his heavenly conversation, and in particular his continuous study of prayer. Because of this, he (the Devil) began to fight him fiercely. He would make such a din when Bernardino was alone at prayer in the Church or when he withdrew to his cell to rest. He continued to molest him for a period of five months. During this time he never allowed him to take a rest. He would have easily sent him mad if the most kind Lord had not given him special help from Heaven. These attempts of the Devil were aimed mainly at making him leave his prayer. In this way, if he took the

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<sup>1</sup> *dicitore*

<sup>2</sup> Compare *Fù zelatissimo dell’osservanza religiosa* and *Acerrimus is quoque fuit regularis observantis propugnator.*

<sup>3</sup> This comment belongs to Sambenedetti.

<sup>4</sup> “With his very exemplary life he established it firmly and virtue and regular observance grew in that Province” in the original.



sword from Bernardino's hand, he could knock him down more easily and be victorious over him.

24. However, because the Devil cannot go beyond the limits of that faculty granted him by God in regard to His servants, after these and other different kinds of attempts which he endured with the greatest patience, Bernardino finally emerged free thanks to divine Clemency. As he aspired with ever greater affection for the divine embrace of prayer, the Lord opened for him the trove of divine treasures. The Lord granted him such light that like a spirit of Paradise he penetrated the secrets of hearts and saw and predicted future things. And the Lord gave him such grace that he performed different miracles as can be seen from the following cases.

25. When he was Novice Master in the Friary of the Carcere, he was leaving the Church one night to go and pray in the grotto below the mountain. He walked a short way and saw a large cavalry galloping with a great din towards the Friary. Within his spirit he knew it was a diabolical army and he quickly withdrew to the choir to pray to the Lord and asked that he might confuse and dispel the large number of attackers. At the precise moment of this prayer he heard a great blow at the door of the Church and on the doors of the cells of all the Novices. From this he understood that the divine Majesty had beguiled their forces. So rather than do the damage they had plotted, they were making the noise instead.

26. A Gentleman of Città di Castello, Lord Giovanni Albezini, was near death from fulminating apoplexy<sup>1</sup>. The Holy Father was praying for him when the Lord revealed to him that he had condemned the man to hell because of the many sins he had committed. Multiplying his prayers he obtained for him an extension of his life. Therefore, when he recovered and understood his dangerous state from the man of God, who was with him, he changed his ways and lived in a more Christian way.

27. When he was praying on another occasion he had the following vision. He saw a beautiful street, straight and wide. A very famous Preacher was walking along it. However he turned aside and left it for some twisting and deceptive paths. Hence he understood that the Preacher, whom he knew quite well, had left the royal road of humility and set foot on the pot-holed paths of pride and ambition and that these would finally bring him out of the Religion. Indeed that is what happened.

28. When he was in the Family in the new place at Spoleto, among some young fellows who went there was Brother Bonaventure of Spoleto. Later he was a Preacher and a Father of that Province. However at that time he was a youngster of thirteen or fourteen years. When he saw them Brother Bernardino took them aside and gave them a devout talk, exhorting them to the fear of the Lord and to virtue. Then he turned to Lord Roger Eugenij present there, a man who was very fond of the Religion. Pointing to Brother Bonaventure he said to him, "I have my eye on him before all the others." Continuing, he told him about the promise the Lord made to Father Saint Francis; that he would always provide the very best subjects to the Religion, and if they were not alive he would have them born. Until that moment the young man had no idea of becoming a religious. However from then on he had such a burning desire to enter the Capuchins that his heart

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<sup>1</sup> *goccia*, see GDLI 6,947. Orig.: Ioannes quidam Albezinus, nobilis Tifernas, gravissimè ad mortem ægrotabat: quo tempore Vir Dei pro eo ad Deum orationem fundens.

could not rest until he obtained that grace. From the later success of this Father, who was a man outstanding in prudence and virtue, and who governed the Province of Umbria from a long time, it is obvious just how true the prediction of Brother Bernardino was.

29. A long time before he died he revealed to a great friend of his, Lord Bernard Venantij, a Doctor of medicine, the creation of a third General from that Province. He said to him, “My Lord, until now our Province has had two Generals. One was Father Francis of Iesi. The other was Father Thomas of Città di Castello. Know now that when you see the Prince of Urbino born to Duke Francis Mary of Rovere, a third General will be made from that Province. He will be Father Sylvester of Assisi.” The outcome was exactly in accordance with the Prophecy. In the year 1605, which was the eleventh after his death and the first of the creation of Paul V, the Prince of Urbino was born. During the General Chapter celebrated shortly afterwards in the Friary at Rome, Brother Sylvester was promoted to the Generalate.

30. During the *sedia vacante* following the death of Urban VII, when the Cardinals had assembled in conclave to elect the new Pope, the Duke of Acquasparta wrote to Brother Bernardino from Rome. He asked him to pray to the Lord about the creation of the future Pontiff. In particular he wanted him to pray for Cardinal Sfondrati whom he wanted very much to ascend to the Pontificate. Writing back, Brother Bernardino told him that without doubt the one His Excellency wanted would be Pope. The student Priest writing the letter objected. He did not think it was a good thing to write to him with such certainty. Brother Bernardino said to him, “Son, do not worry. It will turn out this way.” The facts authenticate the truth of the prediction because after a lot of hesitation among the Cardinals<sup>1</sup> in the Conclave, who could not agree about the election, they finally reached consensus with Sfondrati. He was promoted to the Papacy in the year 1590 on the fifth of December and was called Gregory XIV.

31. There was a young girl in Amelia who wanted to become a nun. For that reason she went to the Monastery of Saint Elizabeth. There was a great argument between the Nuns and the Relatives because these wanted her in the monastery of Santo Magno in their own city. When Brother Bernardino heard of the disagreement about this, he told to Brother John Francis of Florence that the girl would not consecrate her virginity to God in either monastery but in another one a long distance away. So it was, because some time afterwards she went to Rome and became a nun there. Alcaeus of Acquasparta had a son gravely ill. The boy had already been entrusted to the doctors when he had recourse to the prayers of the Servant of the Lord. Brother Bernardino comforted him and told him that the boy would not die of that sickness. He told a Lady called Adraiana Fucci from Città di Castello that the Lord wanted her unwell until her death just so that she would resign herself to the divine will and arm herself with patience.

32. Once the Lord Duke of Acquasparta fell gravely ill with a terrible fever in Rome. The doctors had given him up for dead. The Duchess Wife immediately sent a courier to Acquasparta and to Brother Bernardino. By letter she advised him of the danger in which his Lord the Duke found himself and recommended him to Brother Bernardino, more with tears than words. The messenger arrived

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<sup>1</sup> *post varias Cardinalium fluctuationes* (original) and *dopo molti contripassati*; (Sambenedetto)

with the letter on the day of Saint John by<sup>1</sup> the Latin Gate. After having received and read the letter he immediately withdrew to his cell to pray. He stayed there a long time after which he said to the courier, “Let us go to celebrate Holy Mass.” After Mass was celebrated he answered the letter he had received. When he gave the letter to the courier he said to him, “Give this letter to the Lady Duchess and advise her on my behalf to do everything contained in this letter. Know that back in Rome you will find the Duke improved and out of danger.” The letter said that on that day of Saint John by the Latin Gate, the day in which the Duke had begun to improve<sup>2</sup>, she should have a Mass celebrated in honour of the Saint in thanksgiving for the gift received. On the same day she should feed twelve poor people. The Duke was healed and lived for many years afterwards and the Duchess put into effect everything the man of God had advised her.

*About other cases of Prophecy, some miracles he performed, and about his death*

33. When the Holiness of Our Lord Pope Gregory XIV gave the assistance of soldiers to the Catholics of France for the league against the Heretics, among them he sent Don Ottavio Cesi, the brother<sup>3</sup> of the Duke of Acquasparta. There he became mortally ill and passed to the Lord with the very best disposition and with universal mourning by all those who knew the great goodness of this Lord. News of his death had not yet arrived in Italy. However when the Lord Duke was speaking with Brother Bernardino in our Friary at Acquasparta the Servant of Christ asked him if it had been a very long time since he had received a letter from his brother. His Excellency replied that already it had been quite some time. He added, “Why do you ask?” “Because,” answered Brother Bernardino, “it won’t be long before you have news about him.” After the Duke had returned to Rome, the Lord Mario Rospone arrived and brought the news of the death of Don Ottavio<sup>4</sup>. Because of this the Duke took himself back to Acquasparta. As soon as he saw Brother Bernardino he said to him, “O Father, may God have mercy on you. If you knew of the death of my brother, why didn’t you tell me?” The other answered, “I did not tell you about it so as not to worry you. However, now I give you this happy news. When the Lord your Brother was in his last moment he received the grace of real contrition from God. He commended himself in such a way to the merits of the Passion of Our Lord that he is in the place of salvation.” This was such a consolation to the distressed soul of the Duke who had shown such extreme sorrow at his brother’s death. He was very comforted by this and believed the words of the Servant of Christ – even more so when he heard from the Jesuit, Father Pancirolo, who had assisted his brother and heard his last confession. He confirmed for him that his brother had shown great devotion and Godly sentiment in his last passing.

34. In the year 1594 in Acquasparta an epidemic of a terrible and contagious fever broke out. His Excellency was with all his family, along with all the others, when the Lord Frederick, the First-born of Duke, became so ill with the fever and pleurisy<sup>5</sup> that he could not breath without the greatest difficulty. The doctors had almost lost hope for his recovery. His father and mother were so grief stricken over

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<sup>1</sup> *ante portam Latinam*

<sup>2</sup> That is, on the anniversary.

<sup>3</sup> *germanus* in the original.

<sup>4</sup> *germani fratris necem accipit* (orig.)

<sup>5</sup> *pleuritide* (orig.), *punta* (Sambenedetto).

this, as anyone can imagine. During the night, since his condition was so dangerous, they sent three messengers, one after the other, to commend him to the prayers of Brother Bernardino. Seeing himself being disturbed by many messengers he said to the third, "Return to the palace and tell the fever that on the part of God I command it to depart, along with the pleurisy<sup>1</sup>." It was something truly amazing. The command was no sooner summoned and both the fever and the pleurisy departed. The sick fellow fell asleep and slept for five hours straight. When he woke up later he was well. Needless to say, the doctors were rather stunned. They knew that the illness was quite deadly.

35. The Rector of the Church of Casteltodino<sup>2</sup>, by the name of Gulio Prospero, was so overcome by illness that he no longer had the strength to fight it and death was approaching. There had been a long friendship between the Duke and Rector and so Duke felt great grief. He immediately had the carriage arranged, got in and went off to find Brother Bernardino. Knowing already from many proofs how miraculous his intercession was, he commended to him the danger of his friend. Brother Bernardino promised the Duke that he would pray to the Lord and as soon as the Duke left he withdrew to pray for him. When God revealed to him during the prayer that the Rector would be healed, he quickly sent a messenger with the news to the sick man. He was comforted in the Lord who wanted to give him the grace of health. The messenger had not yet arrived at the house of the sick man when the sick man fell into a light sleep. He thought he saw Brother Bernardino with a terrible and frightening face with flames that shot from his eyes, nostrils and mouth. Trembling, he woke up. However in the process of waking he thought he saw the same Bernardino again, this time with a pleasing, jovial and kind face. His face was so kind that when he saw it he felt an unspeakable delight in his heart. With this delight in his soul he had just come to his senses completely when the messenger arrived. When the messenger was led into his room, he assured the sick man, on behalf of Brother Bernardino, that he would be healed.

36. A case worthy of wonder is the following one. The Lord Duke of Acquasparta testified to this himself. The Lady Isabella Luciana Cesi was already ninety years old. She often sent messages to Brother Bernardino to commend herself to his prayers so that he might ask the Lord for the health of her soul. He prayed for this particular intention and the God revealed to him that this Lady would be saved. He immediately sent a messenger to tell her to be glad and give great thanks to the Divine Majesty who, before the ages had chosen her as part of the heritage of the Saints and had destined her to enjoy eternal Beatitude. Later she fell mortally ill and sent to ask the Servant of the Lord to please go and assist her in that passage. He agreed to this and although he was almost spent with age he set out on the journey with Matthia, a certain servant of the Duke. He had not reached half way when he saw the soul of Lady Isabella being carried to heaven by Angels. Therefore he said, "Matthia, there is no need to go any further because the soul of Isabella has loosed the bonds of the body and is already flying to Heaven. We are returning to the Friary." He returned to the Monastery and Matthia, who was young at the time, arrived at Acquasparta and found that Lady Isabella had died. Therefore, recognising the sanctity of the man of God was good enough reason for him to enter our Religion where he lived with the name Angelo, and he had a virtuous death.

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<sup>1</sup> *pleuritide and puntura*

<sup>2</sup> *Castrotudini*

37. Many times he enjoyed the presence and sweet conversation of the most blessed Virgin. Once she appeared to him and after she had had a long and personal discussion with him she put a crown on his head. The crown was woven from heavenly flowers and was a testimony of his perpetual holiness.

38. Here we should talk about some other miracles the Servant of the Lord performed, even if the majority of them have been lost due to the negligence of writers. Brother Jerome of Amelia, a Capuchin Priest, tells about and attests on oath, that when he was a secular he suffered stomach pain. One day he went to our place at Acquasparta or Portaria with a Brother Gianfrancesco of Florence, who was also a secular at the time. When he was leaving Brother Bernardino made the sign of the Cross over the stomach and he was immediately well. He never suffered from that pain again.

39. A woman at San Gimignano was tormented by a very severe headache. As soon as this devout Father made the sign of the Cross over her she was healed of the pain. He healed Vittorio Montano of Portaria in the same way. The doctors had already given up on him as lost. Also Pietro Paolo Pacefordi of Città del Castello had a daughter six years old. She fell ill with lung fever<sup>1</sup> when Father Bernardino wanted to go to the Assisi Indulgence. This stopped him from continuing out on the journey. The way in which he made her well was this: he commanded the fever to leave and it obeyed him.

40. What happened to our Priest, Brother Hilarion of Trevi is a truly memorable case. Since he had already been received into the bosom of the Religion he went the friary at Portaria, or Acquasparta, in order to be clothed in the habit. After he had only been there a day he was attacked by a grave and very subtle temptation to return home. The advice of the (Novice) Master and others<sup>2</sup> was no help to him at all. His resolution to abandon the novitiate persisted. Finally he was brought to the cell of Brother Bernardino who was ill in bed. Even after he had exhorted him fruitlessly to persevere in the vocation of the Lord, Brother Bernardino saw that he wanted to leave. He said to him, “Hilarion it is clear that we cannot not detain you here any longer. Before you leave I want you at least to drink a cup of wine and then go, so that the Lord may bless you.” When the wine was brought, Father Bernardine made the sign of the Cross over it. This had such force that when the young man drank it, it made all temptation leave him. It was as if that cross had been a strong theriac<sup>3</sup> against the poison of the Devil. With many tears the young man then asked for the habit of the Religion.

41. When he was Guardian at Montecasale so much snow fell that winter that for many days no one could leave to go questing. All the vegetables had already been eaten and there was only a small amount of bread there. He encouraged the Friars to have recourse to the pantry of the Lord<sup>4</sup> with prayer and to wait for him to help them. In time the bell was heard. When the Porter went to see who it was he

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<sup>1</sup> *febbre nel punto*; orig. *cùm gravi repentè febre correpta*

<sup>2</sup> Cf Boverius' text: *Hunc cùm neque Magistri verba, neque Bernardini ipsius consilia* with Sambenedetto's translation: *ne punto gli erano di giovamento i consigli del Maestro, e degli altri* (sic).

<sup>3</sup> *teriaca* → *triacca* [Alexipharmaco], i.e. antidote, especially snake antivenin.

<sup>4</sup> *alla dispensa del Signore* or *Quare Bernardinus ad Domini penum confugiens*

found a venerable old man with a beautiful, long beard and dressed in white. The man handed him a cloth containing twenty-five big loaves of white bread, hot as if straight from the oven. As an act of gratitude and charity the Porter wanted to bring him inside, especially since the air was so icy. However the old man would not accept the invitation. Instead he the porter told that he would wait outside until he brought back the cloth. With great joy the Porter took the loaves inside. Since the Porter wanted to return to the door, Brother Bernardino went with him too to thank the Benefactor and to show him courtesy. However they found neither the old man nor the footprints of anyone who had either come or gone. Hence they recognized the miraculous Providence of the Lord and gave heartfelt thanks to Him for it. Another time he was Guardian at Saint Anna's in Spoleto and the Friars could not leave the house because of the heavy snow. Therefore they had no food. However, one morning while they were at prayer, they heard the bell ring. The Porter went to the door. When he opened the door a sack full of beautiful, fresh bread fell on him. He could not find the one who brought it – not even any trace in the snow.

42. Since a Gentleman of Todi the Lord Vincenzo Caroci had no son he went to find Brother Bernardino. After having a familiar conversation with him he told him that he had a great desire to have a son to whom he could bequeath all his goods. The Servant of Christ told him not to worry about a son since the Lord would give him many. And indeed he did get them thanks to the efficacy of Brother Bernardino's prayers.

43. The Divine Majesty had enriched the Servant of Christ with so many heavenly gifts. When he came to the end of old age, not to mention the height of virtue, the Lord made known to him the hour of his death. He fell ill at the Friary at Acquasparta or Portaria. The Guardian wanted to send the Infirmarian to the Doctor to tell him about his illness. However Brother Bernardino told the Guardian not to bother the Doctor because his body no longer had any capacity for recovery and that it was better to have recourse to spiritual Doctors and medicines for the salvation of the soul. Therefore he confessed to the Guardian with great sorrow and sentiments of devotion. Holy Viaticum was brought which he received with an extraordinary expression of humility and love. Brother Nicholas of Massa was assisting him. The following night he saw that Brother Bernardino's strength was failing and told him it would be good for him to receive the holy oil. Brother Bernardino replied that it was not yet time and that he would tell him when the right moment had arrived. He longed for the heavenly homeland with all his heart. Having forgotten all earthly things he sighed only for things divine. When he was aware of the approach of the Beloved he asked for the holy oil. After having received it devoutly, the most ardent flames of divine love that already glowed within him shone through to the outside. His face was shone with a heavenly light and his eyes twinkled like stars. This splendour in his eyes and face lasted until he gave his soul to God. His soul left the prison of the body and returned to the Creator while he uttered the words of Psalm 53: *You have freed me from all anguish and my eye looks down upon my enemies*<sup>1</sup>.

44. After death his face became so beautiful and his flesh so soft and mellow that they looked liked those of someone alive. The beauty of the first and the softness

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<sup>1</sup> See Psalm 54(53):9, here: *Quoniam ex omni tribulatione eripuisti, & super inimicos meos despexit oculus meus.*

of the second made it obvious that the soul was living happily in Paradise. When the report of his passing had spread, a countless multitude of persons came from all around to kiss and revere the holy body with such heartfelt devotion that they cut his entire habit to pieces. Hence it was necessary to clothe the body again. Since the Lord Duke of Acquasparta had been very devoted towards this Father in life, he showed the same devotion in death. After having the body embalmed, he obtained permission from our Superiors to have it entombed in a sarcophagus in his Church of St. Peter at Montescopio, where it reposes still. Because of the embalmmment his chest was opened and the heart and organs removed. His head was severed<sup>1</sup> and the brain removed. Thus a beautiful prediction he had made in life about himself was confirmed. He said that after his death he would be treated like a martyr.

45.He was one of the Authors of Manuscripts of the Order in which Father Montefiore<sup>2</sup> had commissioned him to describe the lives of the illustrious men of the Religion. From him we have taken many things concerning the lives and histories recorded in the first and second volumes of these Annals.

### **A Biographical note by Lattanzio of Terni**

LATTANZIO OF TERNI (Lactantius ab Interamna) [1547-1619] *Adnotazione di alcune cose de la vita di molti frati della provincia di S. Francesco de' cappuccini*, edited by FRANCESCO DA VICENZA in *Collectanea Franciscana* 10(1940) p.510-533; 11(1941) p.70-86. His portrait of Bernardino of Colpetrazzo in in 10(1940) 519-520. See also slightly abridged in *Adnotazione di alcune cose de la vita di molti frati della provincia di S. Francesco de' cappuccini* in *I Frati Cappuccini*, t.II, p.1521- n.3268-3318.

### **Brother Bernardino of Colpetrazzo**

This was a man of great spirit, a zealot for the rule. With great fervour he spoke with the Friars about its observance. One day after vespers, when he was guardian and novice master in the place of the Carcerelle in Assisi, he was in the choir at prayer, as was his custom. He heard a voice call him. "Stand up, Br. Bernardino, because the wolf wants to take one of your lambs." He go up straightaway at the sound of the voice and went to the outer door<sup>3</sup> and found a novice who wanted to leave. With sound advice he had him stay and he persevered devoutly in the Religion. I believe that it was in his time that something happened at the carnevale. On the last day of carnevale they had nothing. A wild sow came to the door with her children. She nudged open the door with her snout and sent in one of her children and then closed the door. When the Friars heard the noise they found the piglet inside the cloister. They moved forward to se who had brought it. They saw no one. They went up higher to the garden that looked out over the road. There they saw the sow running quickly towards the mountain with three little piglets after having left provision for the servants of God. On recreation day

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<sup>1</sup> *segata*

<sup>2</sup> Jerome of Montefiore

<sup>3</sup> ? *porta battitora*, the door where someone knock.

he found himself very troubled, so this servant of God went into the woods of Montemalbe. Taking courage he cried out, “Be strong Brother Bernardino, now is the time.” He repeated it many times with great trust in the Lord. One time he prophesied two things, as a doctor<sup>1</sup> has testified. He said that the Duke of Urbino would have a son<sup>2</sup>. The other thing: when this child was born Fr. Sylvester of Assisi will become General<sup>3</sup>. And it happened so. The Duke of Acquasparta calmed down with the community of Todi, which was in great travail. When this holy came to die many people flocked to his body to cut up his habit out of devotion. Such was the multitude that it was necessary dress the body with another habit and all this to supply the people with relics. The Duke had a coffin made for him and had it deposited with great devotion in a particular place near the chancel. He had the rock excavated<sup>4</sup> to be able to place the coffin there, where it now rests. There are many other things about his life which I do not know about like those mentioned above and which will be found in other places.

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<sup>1</sup> *medico*

<sup>2</sup> The Duke Francis Mary II married Livia, a relative of his in a second marriage in Castel Durante (Urbania) 26 April 1599. Five years after the marriage the duchess Livia gave birth in Pesaro to a son in 1605. On S. Ubaldo’s day, 16 May, he received the baptismal name Frederick Ubaldo.

<sup>3</sup> Fr. Sylvester of Assisi was elected General 27 May 1605 at the Chapter held in Rome at the friary of Saint Euphemia.

<sup>4</sup> *Il Duca gli fece fare una cassa et lo fece depositare in un loco particolare con molta devotione, appresso la cancellata, fatto cavare uno scogli per potervi locare la cassa, dove hora si riposa.*