

“INVITO SPIRITUALE”

by Fra Battista da Faenza

A spiritual summons to devout meditation on the Passion of Jesus

Brother Battista da Faenza, a Capuchin, greetings and peace to his beloved home-country.

4124 I would commit a serious offence against you, even worse than Samson’s mother did,¹ Faenza, my most beloved home-country, if, like a modern Samson, after tasting in the vineyard of my Order the honey of meditation on the Passion of Christ, not from the mouth of a dead lion but, as with religious souls, from the bleeding wound in the side of the mystical lion Christ the Saviour, I did not share it with you and all your children and my fellow citizens, and even with all faithful Christians by saying with the royal prophet: *Taste and see how sweet the Lord is.*² Taste this holy and pious activity with the palate of devotion and through this experience you will see how much it is not only pleasing to God, to the Blessed Virgin and the angels in paradise, but indeed profitable to your souls in this and in the next life.

At the beginning of my conversion, after I had exchanged the soldier’s garb for that of a religious, the sword for the cross, the world’s army for that of Christ, when I recognised that the first lesson that was taught to our seraphic father Saint Francis while he was still a layman by the miraculous Crucifix, was to contemplate His sorrowful passion and His death on the wood of the cross for us,³ I firmly determined within my soul to commit my whole self day and night to the contemplation of the suffering Redeemer.

4125 I commanded my intellect from then on not to speculate about deceitful ways of offending my neighbour, but to mull over and dwell on the insults and sufferings of our Redeemer at the time of His passion and death, so that the heart might be broken by the hammer of contrition and melted completely by the warmth of divine love which (as Bonaventure says) is the precise effect of contemplating the wounds of the Saviour. *Christ’s wounds are to be admired and venerated melting our hearts of stone and iron and inflaming our frozen minds.*⁴

Finally I ordered my will to dwell on the Passion of the Crucified Saviour with devout affection so that it might discover the basis and root of the pure love with which He underwent so much suffering and such a sad martyrdom to heal the wounds of our souls, since, as Saint Damian says, we are more obligated to the love because of which He

¹ This is a reference to Judges 14, 8-9.

² Ps 33, 9 (*Vulg.*).

³ Cf. 2 Cel 10; *Leg. Maior* 1, 5; *Leg. 3 Soc.* 14; *Leg. Perf.* 92.

⁴ Cf S. Bonav. *Stimulus amoris*, pars I, cap. 1 (*Bonaventurae operum* t. VII, Romae 1596, 207br).

suffered death than to death itself: *We are more bound by love, than by death and suffering.*⁵

Finally I fixed in my memory the thought of some mystery of the Saviour's passion night and day, because, the greatest pleasure that He can receive from His servants, indeed from all Christians, is this devout and holy activity, as He revealed to a religious who wanted to know about it when He appeared to him carrying a heavy cross on his shoulder and said: "The greatest pleasure that you could give me is to help me carry this cross which you can do by meditating on the torments and suffering that I underwent on it for the salvation of the world." I placed my hope in the kindness of my Lord that this would compensate to some extent for the infinite displeasure which my many faults and sins had caused Him while I lived a very dissolute life in the world.

4126 Now with the deep affection that I feel and can feel, and with a desire that has come over me to assist in the salvation of others, I beg all Christians who will present themselves before this most devout image of my Redeemer, and especially the citizens of Faenza, to whom I have given scandalous example, to adopt this devout practice of meditating on the passion of Christ our Saviour in their hearts, not only to lessen to some degree the continuous displeasure their faults and sins give Him, but to avoid the worse vice of ingratitude, which, as Saint Bernard says, torments Christ's heart much more than all the other wounds that afflicted His suffering body.

Listen to the words which he has placed on Christ's lips:

*O man, see what I suffered for you.
I, who suffered for you, cry out to you.
Look at the suffering with which I was afflicted,
See the nails with which I was pierced.
While there was so much exterior pain
There was even greater inner grief
Because I sensed your ingratitude.*⁶

Thus he added the benefit that Christ our Saviour was so pleased by our meditation on His passion and death that, in order to arouse and stimulate all the faithful to undertake it He promised them all those favours of divine mercy which with a glance of his divine eyes he could bestow on them. This is what was stated by Lodovico Blois in the life of Blessed Gertrude in these words: *As often as a person looks on the image of the Crucified Christ with a devout disposition he receives the kindest mercy of God.*⁷

⁵ The quote comes rather from Anselm, "in verbis meditationem" chapter 6, as the Imola manuscript has it, than to Damian. However, the quote is only an approximate copy of the original text. Cf. S Anselmi, *Liber meditationem et orationum*, medit. V (PL 158, 736s).

⁶ In the Imola manuscript this hymn is attributed to St Bernard, *Serm. De Passione* but it does not match this. It comes rather from St Bonaventure *In III Sent.*, dist. 16, art 2, q. 3 (*Op. omnia* III, 359b: where the hymn is attributed to the Chancellor of Paris Philip [+ 1237]: cf. U. Chevallier, *Repertorium hymnologicum*, n. 7987).

⁷ The Imola manuscript quotes Lodovico Blois *In vita B. Geltrud.* Lib. 3, cap. 41; in face the quote is from the Cistercian G. Lanspergio; *La vita della Beata Vergine Gertrude, ridotta in V libri*, venetia 1618, 146.

4127 Following this because I knew that while I was in the world I had often caused my Lord to turn His divine eyes away from me, because of the brutality of so many of my offences, and wishing to be worthy of the divine gaze which brings the favours of paradise with it, I made a pact with my eyes that as often as possible I would focus their gaze on the most devout image of my Redeemer, considering that from the sole of the feet to the top of the head there was not a spot that was not wounded or lacerated.⁸ Through a meditation such as this I carved streams of tears and rivers of sighs from the hard marble of my heart.

Since of all the wounds of my Redeemer that bled, the one in His side, ravished my soul more than the others, like a brand new magnet, I built my nest there, like a melancholic dove, praying, meditating, and weeping bitterly, which moved me to think along the lines of what St Bernard said: *Let your reading be here, your meditation, your prayer and contemplation, your life, death and resurrection.*⁹

Thus one day I was given the honour of no longer being gazed upon by the precious eyes of my beloved Redeemer but of hearing the sound of His divine words, when, because of the great violence I felt within me from trying to control the wild beast of anger which habitually boiled up in my heart, a vein burst in my chest causing blood to spill out in abundance from my mouth, which I offered up to Him with the words: “O my good, for love of you I suffered this occurrence and for love of you, my Redeemer, I shed this blood.” He (the divine kind one, the considerate mercy towards this great sinner) detached his right hand from the cross and showing me the wound in his side said: “See, Brother Battista, how many sufferings and injuries I underwent for love of you on this cross.”¹⁰ Gaze on the open breast, the pierced side, the nest of divine charity, the high point of divine love and you will see that the little that you undergo for love of me is nothing in comparison to all of this, a drop of water compared to the ocean, a grain of sand compared to Mount Olympus”.

4128 My soul melted so much at the sound of these most sweet words that I felt that I was standing in an ocean of the delights of paradise and my heart became enflamed with such a desire to suffer out of love for God that paying little attention to the little flow of blood that came from my lips. I wanted to shed all the blood in the veins of my body under the ferocity of the rage of a villainous tyrant undergoing bleeding and death to die for the love of the Crucified. How many times while thinking over the sweetest words of Saint Augustine did he say:¹¹ *I beg of you Lord to take my mind away from all that is*

⁸ This sentiment is like what is written in Is 1, 6.

⁹ The Imola manuscript makes reference to St Bernard, *Flores*, cap. 105.

¹⁰ This fact is related for the first time by Boverius in AC I, 588 and 592, n. 16 (an.1562); Colpetrazzo, who wrote a devote life of Battista da Faenza does not mention this. Boverius refers to ancient collection in the Province of Bologna which report contemporary testimonies.

¹¹ The editor has forgotten that this is a letter that was written by Brother Battista da Faenza in the first person, whereas the Imola manuscript is more correct. A careful comparison of the two texts appears however to show that the manuscript has been inspected and synthesised by the eighteenth century editor.

below the heavens and fill it with the warmth and sweet strength of your love, so that I may die for love of you, who deigned to die on the cross for love of me."¹²

Therefore, come my fellow citizens together with all the sinners in the world to contemplate the Passion of our crucified Saviour, so that you will not be alone in finding the cure for all the wounds of your souls in the remedy that includes everyone, saying with Saint Bernard:¹³ *Has there ever been such an effective remedy for curing the wounds of conscience and cleansing the depths of the mind as earnest meditation on the wounds of Christ?* Furthermore you will please God and give relief to the wounds of the beloved Saviour as He said in these most beautiful words to Blessed Mechthild: "As often as a person covers the memory of my passion with love and mourns over it out of compassion it gives me as much pleasure as if they had gently touched my injuries and wounds many times with fresh roses."¹⁴

On another occasion when that saint asked which were the greatest of all the sufferings which He endured for us sinners, after He had replied that it was when He was stretched out and crucified on the cross, to the extent that the limbs of His body could all be counted, He said: "Whoever thanks me for all this suffering gives me as much great pleasure as if they had anointed all my wounds and injuries with precious perfumed balsam."

What a wonderful thing then it would be if to show how pleased He was with all this adulation He prepared a perpetual resting place in His heart that He would offer to souls who have meditated on His Passion and death with a generous heart. He said this to the same Saint with these most sweet words: "Whoever bears the memory of my cross and passion in his heart will have a dwelling place in my heart when his soul leaves his body."¹⁵

4129 Could you wish for anything more, or find a more devotional practice? Why could I not come back through the streets of Faenza¹⁶ with my customary cross in my hand where I would like to go about shouting the words of Saint Bonaventure:¹⁷

*Let us carry the memory
Of the sufferings and insults
Of Christ, the crown of thorns,
The cross, nails and lance.*

and draw everyone to frequently carrying out the holy practice of meditating on Christ's passion.

¹² Cf. St Augustine [pseudo], *Meditationes*, c. 35, § 5; *PL* 40, 929.

¹³ Cf St Bernard; *Sermo. 62 in cant.* N. 7 (*PL* 183, 1079).

¹⁴ The Imola manuscript quotes "In vita b. Mettildis, apud Tiepol de Passione Domini italico sermone".

¹⁵ The same manuscript once more refers to the life of Blessed Mechthild, lib 2, cap. 17.

¹⁶ Cf *AC I*, 593, n. 18.

¹⁷ Cf. S. Bonav. *Officium de Passione Domini: Hymnus ad Matutinum.* (*Op. Omnia VIII*, 152a).

Remember, dear brothers, that for as long as she lived after the death of her beloved Son the Blessed Virgin bore his Passion engraved on her heart to such an extent that awake or asleep, eating or working, she always remembered this, as the Virgin herself revealed to St Brigid.¹⁸ *For the entire time after the life of my Son His Passion was so fixed in my heart that whether I was eating, or working, it was in my memory as if it has just happened.* Therefore, she could not help but love from the bottom of her heart all those who keep her company in meditating on the Passion of her beloved Son and thus also his sorrowful martyrdom. Therefore she said to the same Saint that she continually looked around the world with her merciful eyes to see if there was anyone who felt compassion for her torment and the sufferings of her Son. *I look on all those who are in the world to see if there is any who feel compassion for me and my Son, and I find very few.*¹⁹ O, therefore, my dearest, try to be among the small number who are dear to the Blessed Virgin if you wish to be numbered among the few who are saved.

4130 Once again recall the loving summons that the Blessed Virgin issued to Mechthild one Friday while she was caught up in ecstasy of mind and saw the Queen of Angels herself who while adoring her Crucified Son acknowledged all his wounds one by one which opened and shed blood in such abundance and cried to his Father for mercy for all sinners. She said to her; “Acknowledge my Son’s wounds together with me so that you may share in his most holy blood.”²⁰

Imagine, my most beloved citizens of Faenza, that on this Friday the Blessed Virgin summoned you to acknowledge the wounds and injuries of her most beloved Son, quoting to each of you the words of the sacred Cantic: *Come: My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall.*²¹ Although every day of the week is suitable for meditating on the Passion of our Saviour, because it was consecrated by Christ’s blood and by his blessed death, Friday nevertheless deserves to be celebrated by the faithful with some display of special affection for the heavenly Father, who like the loving pelican, gave us live by means of his own blood.

How could it be possible for you leave the memory of the blessed Christ die in your hearts on the very day when he died for us on the cross? May God give you the spirit and fervour that made the devout Bonaventure say:

*In the Lord’s Passion,
Through which salvation came to mankind,
There is our refreshment
And our heart’s desire.*²²

4131 Read the Life of Saint Redegunda by Saint Gregory of Tours²³ and you will find a miracle and you will find proof of what I am trying to convince you. The oil in a lamp

¹⁸ Cf. *Revelationum S. tae Brigittae* t. II, Romae 1628, 125a (= Lib. VI, cap. 61).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 204b (= Lib. II, cap 24)

²⁰ Life of Blessed Mechthild, lib. IV, cap. 1 (This is how it is quoted in the Imola manuscript.)

²¹ Cf. Song 2, 14.

²² Cf. note 17.

²³ Cf. S. Gregorius Turonensis, *Miraculorum lib. I*, c. 5 (PL 71, 709).

which was burning before the image of the Crucified Saviour in his monastery boiled so strongly every Friday that it spilt everywhere and when it was given to those who were sick it healed them of many different illnesses. *Where medicine had proved useless and this oil of the sick was distributed it worked a complete cure.* God wishes that all your hearts would be like that miraculous lamp and that tears of devotion would burst out from all points, groans of compassion and sighs of love so that you would say together with Augustine:²⁴ *O how greatly we are indebted to you, good Jesus, for being redeemed at so great a price, gifted with salvation, assisted by such glorious generosity. Therefore we owe you all that we can possibly do, our whole life and all we might know.*

Finally I will say with devout contemplation, that the Angels in heaven rejoice and are particularly happy when they see faithful who are committed to the contemplation of the Saviour. Just as they cry bitterly (so to speak) when they see those occupied with offending the Creator, so they rejoice and are happy when they see people gaze upon and contemplate the image of our Redeemer with devout and sympathetic affection. *As often as someone gazes devoutly on the image of Christ Crucified, the whole heavenly assembly rejoices in wonder.*²⁵

Sometimes then when a tear of devotion falls from their eyes, they gather them in golden vases to bring them to heaven. This is what the Guardian Angel said to Blessed Benvenuta da Cividale as he showed her all the tears that had been shed out of sympathy for the beloved Christ during Holy Week.²⁶

4132 Similarly, read the life of the penitent Magdalene and see how, when she had retired and been cloistered in a cave in order to do penance for her sins, she begged the Saviour many times to show her what exercise she should perform most of the time. Michael the Archangel appeared to her with a cross in his hand and said that since the cross was the true book from which to learn divine love and the wisdom of the saints, which consists in fleeing from what is evil and following what is good, always study the cross. This is like saying with Saint Bernard; *Let the Crucifix be ever in your heart; let it be your food and drink, your consolation, your sweetness and your yearning.*²⁷

Thus with the words of Saint Augustine that not a day should pass without the Christian person not reading some lesson from the book of the Passion of the Redeemer: *the daily reading of a Christian should consist in meditation on the Crucifix,*²⁸ it is clear that this is where sinners learn to fly from sins which crucify Christ once again. Thus, as the Blessed Virgin revealed to Saint Bridget, there was never a sinner, no matter how bad, who when taking up heartfelt meditation on Christ's Passion, did not receive the gift of tears and a taste for penance.

²⁴ Cf. S. August. [pseudo]. *Meditationes*, c. 17, § 1; *PL* 40, 913.

²⁵ Cf. L. Blosio, *Monil. Spir.*, cap. 2, § 4; for an Italian translation see for example L. Blosio, *La collana di gioie. Trattato di diverse virtu detto 'Menile apirituale'*. Translated by P. C. Bompiani, Modena [s. d.], 29.

²⁶ This was not quoted in *Bibil. Sanctorum*.

²⁷ The Imola manuscript refers to A. Rodriguez, *Trattato della Passione, and to san Bernardo, Flores*, cap. 109.

²⁸ According to the Imola manuscript this is a quote from St Bernard, "Serm. 62 in Ct 2, 24", but this does not correspond to the passage.

4133 This is where the just acquire the ability to love God who died on the Cross for love of us. The same Virgin said to Saint Bridget: *So that the heart may grow in the love of God, let it meditate frequently on Christ's Passion.*²⁹ This is where those who are disturbed learn to have patience in their trials and infirmities and following the example of Christ to patiently support everything that goes against them, since Saint Isidore says: *Nothing is so hard that it cannot be tolerated with a balanced mind, if the memory of the Cross is called to mind.*³⁰ This is where those who have been afflicted by the world or persecuted by the Devil learn that you cannot find a better refuge than in the wounds of the Crucified Saviour. Listen to Saint Augustine: *There is a safe and stable refuge for the sinner in the wounds of the Saviour.*³¹

This is where all religious learn to undertake all their works out of love for God and in union with the Passion of Christ. Thus, Saint Mechthild saw that all the works like this that were undertaken by a servant of God were written in a book by the Apostle John in letters of gold.³²

This is where religious learn to suffer wholeheartedly with their beloved Spouse, and to shed not only ordinary tears from their eyes, but if possible, even those of blood, as did our Blessed Umiltà of Faesa, the foundress of the nuns at Vallombrosa, concerning whom we read that when she had no more tears to shed over the Passion of her most sweet Redeemer, liquefied blood issued from her eyes.³³

Finally this is where all the faithful and everyone else learn to acquire a treasure of merits, since, as Saint Albert the Great says,³⁴ a simple, but devout meditation on Christ's Passion is as pleasing to God as fasting on bread and water for an entire year, the daily recitation of the Psalter of David, and flogging oneself to the point of blood. If these works were motivated by the same meditation they would render a person very pleasing to the heart of God.

4134 Therefore if this exercise is so pleasing to God, to the Blessed Virgin, to the angels and saints and so beneficial to the faithful, which one of you, my friends and brothers, would not take it on willingly? Who is there that by stealing a bit of time from worldly business would not give it to reading and meditation on the loving one who was crucified? When God inspires you to come and venerate this kindly image, through which I, though totally unworthy, have received so many favours, beg loving Jesus with warm emotion that invisibly detaching his right hand from the cross, He will pierce your heart with the nail of his divine love, so that as a consequence it may be more completely

²⁹ "Revel. S. Brigittae lib. 4, cap 30." (this is what the Imola manuscript has but it does not correspond to the text.

³⁰ Another quote which is hard to identify. The same manuscript refers to "S. Isid., *De summon bono*," or *Sententiarum lib. III*, but after a lengthy search we failed to identify the passage. More likely it comes from S. Gregorio M., *Moralia*, II, cap37, n. 60 (PL 75, 585s); *Hom. 18, in Evang.*, nn. 2 and 4 (PL 76, 1151s); *Regula pastoralis*, p. 3, cap. 12 (PL 77, 69).

³¹ Cf. S. August. [pseudo], *Manuale*, c. 21, § 1; PL 40, 960.

³² The Imola manuscript gives this quotation: "Tiepol. Ubi supra, Tract. 12 cap. 16."

³³ The Imola manuscript has "In vita b. Humilitatis".

³⁴ S. Albertus M., *Tract. De Missa*.

healed of the wounds of sin the more it is overcome by divine love. Further more, beg Him that with the same finger which He used to show me, a sinner, the wound in His loving side, to paint the sorrowful image of His most holy Passion on your memory in the crimson of His blood.

Finally ask him with Saint Augustine, that when he comes to judge you in the likeness of the crucifix at the end of your life, that before he looks at the brutality of your sins, which would deserve hell a thousand times, he would cast a glance at what had been written in blood and which displays what was inscribed on you by the finger of His own hand, so that He would forgive your faults and sins. *Behold you wrote on me with Your hand and I beg of You to look on the wounds of Your hands, read what has been written, and save me.*³⁵

4135 At this point you might recite the devout prayer which the holy Church says on behalf of a person in the agony of death when entrusting his soul to God: *Lord Jesus Christ by the bitterness which You underwent for me on the cross, especially when You soul left Your body, have mercy on my soul as it leaves this mortal flesh. Amen.*³⁶ With deep emotion consider the phrase *by the bitterness* if you wish to find a brief review of all the most severe suffering and most sorrowful torments that my most merciful Redeemer suffered for us on the cross. because, just as you will not find a drop of water in the sea which is not full of salt and bitter taste, in a similar way you will not find a limb of the body of the suffering Redeemer that is not filled with bitterness and packed with torment and exceptional pain: *From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it.*³⁷ Since the injuries and wounds of that most holy Humanity were countless he appeared to be all wounds, a mass of injuries, even one great injury and wound, which covered Him from head to toe.

The most holy head was not only devoid of a crop of beautiful hair, but lacerated in many places, both because of the violence with which it had been struck with a rod and because of the blows with which it had been beaten.

4136 The divine temple was encircled many times with a sharp crown of thorns, thirty three of which badly pierced that delicate brow, and one, that was more cruel than the others, which inflicted in that most tranquil forehead a deep wound which went through to His bleeding skull causing extreme pain to His Majesty and forcing blood mixed with fluid to issue from it.

Those divine lights, that seemed like two suns, began to be eclipsed at the time of the scourging, while one of the ruffians who was not satisfied with striking Christ's chest with a scourge made of thorns, started to strike His face as well and His divine eyes so ferociously that albuminous discharge came out with blood. On the scaffold of the cross

³⁵ Cf. S. Vinc. Ferrer, *Instr. 17: Innc. Papa, De contemptu mundi*. Refer to what is written in the Imola manuscript.

³⁶ Cf. *Ordo commendationis animae*, in *Il sacerdote provveduto per l'assistenza agli infermi*, Brescia 1838, 148s; *Rito per la raccomandazione dell'anima*, in *Rituale dei sacramenti e dei sacramentali*, Roma 1966, 130s.

³⁷ Cf. Is 1, 6.

he was so covered in congealed blood that if He wished to look at His most sweet mother He would have to raise His eyebrows to brush it away.

The most chaste ears of our Saviour were not only tormented by their injuries, by insults, by abuse and the false accusations of his enemies but also by the thorns in the crown when it was removed and replaced on His head many times, and also by the wood of the cross as He carried it to Mount Calvary.

The most holy mouth that endured the false kiss of the traitor tolerated with extreme patience the stinking spittle of those who held it open violently as they covered it with spittle.

Furthermore His divine lips swelled up because of the blows of cruel servants and because of falling on stones while He carried the heavy cross to Calvary. In the end they burst shedding a great abundance of blood.

4137 Because of the savage stroke of an armed hand one of the divine cheeks was so scarred by the imprint of a finger that it can still be seen in the holy shroud of Turin.³⁸ The blow was so strong that it moved a tooth from its place with great pain to His Majesty and this disturbed the devout St Bridget greatly and she stated that one of the specific reasons for which Christ died on the cross with His mouth open was to spare us such pain and torment.

The most sacred tongue which throughout the entire time of His Passion experienced burning thirst, endured sharp pain and the blood that poured out in large quantities was offered relief by means of bitter honey and the sting of vinegar. This was such a torment that it delivered the final blow to the life of the suffering Saviour. *So when Jesus had received the sour wine, he said: "It is finished!" And bowing His head He gave up His spirit.*³⁹

The most sacred head was not only bound with rough ropes and heavy chains, but was lacerated by these so frequently that His delicate flesh became ulcerated in places in addition to the wounds made by the sharp thorns in the crown which was big enough to cover half the head.

The chest and venerable body of our Redeemer were so beaten and grazed by the scourging that the Blessed Virgin could see His exposed ribs and while looking at the same sight while in ecstasy St Bernard saw three bare lumps, which when He carried the cross rubbed against the hard wood of the cross and the injury increased the torment making the wound larger and deeper.

4138 When He was arrested in the garden, the Saviour's venerable hands were bound so tightly by ropes and tied with such violence that blood spontaneously ran out of the veins, the flesh and the nails of His hands. Because the nails were rough and sharp, during the bitter martyrdom of the cross, they not only went through His divine palms but even took part of the skin and flesh from the other part of the cross causing great shedding of blood and more pain to the Saviour.

³⁸ Regarding the Shroud of Turin see the volumes by Mons. Giulio Ricci, *L'uomo della Sindone è Gesù*, Milano 1985.

³⁹ Jn 19, 30.

Christ's most sacred heart was the gathering place of all the suffering and pain that racked every member of His body because of the link with the source of life. This was especially the case while He was hanging on the cross and especially when He breather forth his most blessed soul, since when shaking together with his stomach, He experienced as much pain and suffering as if He was being cut to pieces by blunt steel. Therefore He is very pleased when the faithful recall the extreme martyrdom of His most noble heart which merited the prise of paradise.

When His most sacred feet were fixed to the cross with long and rough nails he suffered a double martyrdom because all the nerves of the legs and thighs are linked with that part and are made up of small and delicate bones with each one of these causing specific torment, which, as Giovanni Lanspergio states number thirty six.

4139 Finally the large wound in His side, which was opened by Longinus' lance, was caused primarily by the pangs of divine love. (St Bernard says) *The soldier would never have pierced it unless love had wounded it firstly*. Once blood and water had flowed from that wound, nothing further was required of us than the water of tears and the blood of affectionate love. The same Saint says; *For so much let love be sufficient from me*.

Finally, because this wound was so deep that it reached the heart itself it opened to us the way to reach the Holy of Holies of divine love, and it closed the gate of Hell, which is sin, because, as Saint Anthony of Padua says, *Meditation on the crucifix, crucifies every vice*.⁴⁰

I conclude here humbly asking your pardon for setting bad example through my evil life while I was living in the world, and I beg of heaven to send me the grace of God together with peace in this world and glory in the next world. *Amen*.

⁴⁰ Cf. S Antonii Patavini, O. Min., *Sermones Domenicales et festivos* II, Patavi 1979, 223 (= *Domenica XV post Pentecostem*).