

## Rules for Mental Prayer by Jerome of Molfetta

Jerome Spinazzola of Molfetta<sup>1</sup> who came from the Province of Apulia took part in the General Chapter at Santa Eufemia in Rome from 1535-1536 where he also received fifteen votes for the office of definator. He was a Capuchin preacher and Mattia da Salò relates that “he was a tall fine man with a long red beard with the capacity to make his audience cry by his manner of speaking. He was a pupil and admirer of Bernardino Ochino, whose lot he sadly shared. Among other things, when preaching, he often promoted devotion to the “rosary of the Name of Jesus” among the people. He composed a short appealing tract on this subject and attached it to the *Dialogue of Union* by Bartholomew Cordoni which he republished in Milan at the beginning of 1539.

This rosary depicted the whole life of Christ from the Incarnation to Pentecost in thirty three mysteries to parallel the thirty years which Christ lived on earth “since our Saviour Jesus Christ spent thirty three years on earth with His spouse, that is His rational soul, undergoing suffering and being mortal, enduring all kinds of affliction in his own person”. These are like “thirty three precious stones in which his divine and human actions were undertaken for us”, with “seven rubies for the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit”. While meditating on each mystery one says the Our Father together with the invocation *Jesus Christ my crucified love*.

There is a direct almost literal dependence in this writing on the spirituality of Cordoni, as is demonstrated in the image of the “spouse” who is dramatically searching for her beloved among an assorted variety of people, including relatives and acquaintances, experts in science and literature, those who are wise in the eyes of the world, the wealthy, soldiers, publicans, both male and female sinners, and those who live among the low classes. She finally reaches the “religious state” that favours reform. In practice Jerome of Molfetta is doing nothing more than adopting the critically polemical attitude of Cordoni’s mystical work but adapting it by taking up the alternative for Franciscan renewal as it was presented in the Capuchin reform, combined with the spiritualist convictions which characterised Italian evangelism, which he undoubtedly absorbed from his master Bernadine Ochino whom he idolised.

Never the less devotion to the Name of Jesus and the development of an affective method of meditating on the mysteries of Christ are the most fundamental basis of Franciscan spirituality and that of Bernadine as an Observant and later as a Capuchin.

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<sup>1</sup> Translated by Bro. Patrick Colbourne OFM Cap in 2012. The Italian introduction, footnotes and transcription of the Ms of the *Regule de la orazione mentale* are by Costanzo Cargnoni OFM Cap in *I Frati Cappuccini. Documenti e testimonianze del primo secolo*, a cura di Costanzo Cargnoni, III/1, Edizione Frate Indovino, Perugia, 1991, pp.429-445

Some noteworthy rules for mental and vocal prayer by means of which one can seek out the beloved Spouse Jesus our Lord. This is the method for reciting and contemplating the Rosary of His Name, that Brother Jerome of Molfetta, who was a member of the Friars Minor known as Capuchins, preached about. The Christian Chart (tavola cristiana) has been also added at the end.<sup>2</sup>

*Introduction of the Bride who is searching for her beloved Spouse.*<sup>3</sup>

When I was a small child I was married at the time of my Baptism to the divine Spouse and later when I became an adult I was told many things concerning the magnificence, goodness, beauty and charm of my divine Spouse so that it melted my heart.<sup>4</sup> When I had waited for a long time and not wishing to be either widowed or remarried, I decided not to wait in vain any longer and I proposed to search for Him everywhere and in every creature.<sup>5</sup>

So I began to search for Him diligently among those whom I did not know and those whom I knew by questioning them saying:<sup>6</sup> “Have you seen Him whom my soul loves?” They said to me: “O most beautiful among women, who is your beloved?” I answered: “My beloved is white and ruddy, chosen out of thousands, the most saintly of the saints, God of the gods, Lord of lords.”<sup>7</sup> Then I heard a voice that said to me: “Do not seek Him here because you will not find Him because these are those who adore craven images and glory in their idols.”<sup>8</sup> Turning back to them I said: “If you find my beloved, tell Him that I languish with desire to see Him.”<sup>9</sup>

Departing from there I went to find those who were educated and put similar questions to them, and a voice that came from not far away said to me: “Do not look

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<sup>2</sup> This “Christian Chart” is a small catechism of Christian doctrine, regarding which see below, in the section concerning the apostolate in *I Frati Cappuccini. Documenti e testimonianze del primo secolo*, a cura di Costanzo Cargnoni, III/2, Edizione Frate Indovino, Perugia, 1991, pp.3225-3228. The author, Jerome of Molfetta, comes from the Spinazzola family, as Pietro Manelfi, who was a priest in S. Vito di Venezia, stated in 1551, in his deposition to the Sacred Office in reference to the years 1540-42. Cf. R. Bainton, *Bernardino Ochino*, 48.

<sup>3</sup> This Introduction (f. 1v-4v) is copied literally with a few changes from chapter 9 of the *Dyalogue* by Bartolomeo Cordoni: *Narration of the way the soul conducts herself to find God and unite herself to Him*. (f. 29r-32v). (*Narrazione del modo il qual tiene questa anima per trovar Dio et unirsi a lui.*)

<sup>4</sup> B. Cordoni finished the phrase like this: “out of a desire to see Him, and give Him accolades, and unite myself to Him” (“per desiderio di vederlo, e decorarlo, e unirmi a lui.”) in *Dyalogue*, f. 29v.

<sup>5</sup> “... After waiting for a long time for Him to come and see His Bride...”. (“... Avendo aspettato per molto tempo ch’elli venisse a vedere questa sua Sposa...”)

<sup>6</sup> Here the author has not understood Cordoni’s text well which says: “... I began to search for Him diligently among relatives and those who I knew ...” thus among family members and acquaintances and not “those whom I did not know and those whom I knew”! (“... Cominciai a cercarlo diligentemente *inter cognates et notos*...”)

<sup>7</sup> This conversation is a patchwork of biblical quotations, respectively, Song 3, 3; 1, 8. 9-10; Dan 9, 24 and Dan 10, 17. In Cordoni’s text these citations are quoted in Latin as are all quotes from Sacred Scripture and the Fathers.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Ps 96, 7 (Vulg.).

<sup>9</sup> Song, 5, 8.

here because you will not find Him because these are they who say: Let us magnify our tongue, our lips shall be our own.”<sup>10</sup>

Then I went to ask those who are wise according to worldly standards and I was told:<sup>11</sup> “Do not look here because you will not find Him, because these have become wise to do evil and they do not know how to do good.”<sup>12</sup>

After that I went to find the worldly leaders and the voice said to me; “Your Spouse is not here, because these are they who do not know God and whose hands are covered with the blood of the poor and their underlings.”<sup>13</sup>

After that I wanted to ask tradesmen and businessmen and the voice said: “Your Spouse is not here because they are swamped with worries, wealth and pleasure and do not attribute success to God”.<sup>14</sup>

After that I went to ask those who are puffed up and the gluttons, and the voice said to me: “Your Spouse is not here, because these are they whose God is their belly and whose end is death and whose glory is their shame.”<sup>15</sup>

After that I went to ask soldiers, mercenaries, publicans and sinners, and the voice said to me: “Do not look here; because these are those who are glad when they have done something evil, and rejoice at the most wicked of things, who leave the right way and whose steps are infamous.”<sup>16</sup>

After that when I was worn out and tied from much searching and almost beset by desperation I said to myself: “I have searched for Him among many generations and people, and have not found Him<sup>17</sup> now I will send out a call or proclamation in the villages and towns in case someone else in the crowd or population has seen my Spouse.”<sup>18</sup> The voice said to me: “Do not tire yourself over this, because you have not found him, since these are the ones who have strayed out of the way together, and are in fact worthless, none of them do good, not even one.”<sup>19</sup>

Then, seeing that I had been tricked by my desire, and unsuccessful in all my searching, I had in mind<sup>20</sup> to carry out the search in another way and I said; “I will arise and abound in pleasure and enjoy good things”; so I acquired houses and

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ps 12,5; Ps 11. 5. “For these are those who have said; “We will magnify our tongue: our lips are our own.” Cordonì puts it better: “I went in search of men of science and letters.” (“Andai a trovar li scientati e literati”) (*Dyalogo*, f. 30r.)

<sup>11</sup> In the text; *fommi*.

<sup>12</sup> Jer. 4, 22: “They are wise to do evil, but to good they have no knowledge.”

<sup>13</sup> The text has been altered here. Cordonì wrote: “Your God is not here: *For these are they who spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell* (Job 21,13) while Molfetta after inadvertently jumping some lines, copied Biblical quotations from 1 Thes 4, 5 and Is 1, 15; 59, 3 which in the *Dyalogue* are applied to the category of “princes and tyrants.”

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Lk 8, 14.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Phil. 3, 19.

<sup>16</sup> Prov 2, 14-15. – Cordonì refers to “soldati, venturieri, publicani, peccatori e peccatrici” (*Dyalogo* f. 31r), while in the remake by Molfetta we read; “soldati e venturini (!), publicani e peccatori”.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Song 3, 1, 2.

<sup>18</sup> Song 3, 2. – *Dyaloglo*, f. 31r: “Se mai per aventura mio diletto forse intertenuto [= intrattenuto] da qualcuno della plebe e popolazzo”. (If perhaps by chance my beloved might have been encountered by someone in the crowd or population).

<sup>19</sup> Ps 13, 3; 52, 4 (*Vulg*); Rom 3, 12.

<sup>20</sup> In the text: *io me misse*.

palaces, clothes and curios. I shall plant vineyards and create gardens and fountains to see if in all of these I may find my beloved. I sought Him but did not find Him.<sup>21</sup>

After that I looked for Him in beautiful places, songs and sounds, in sensual pleasures and worldly delights.<sup>22</sup> To cut a long story short I looked for Him in everything that the eye could behold and the heart desire and after I had tried all these things, I said: “What more has man acquired for all his effort and from what he has worked at under the sun? Man cannot explain all difficult things for all his talk. The eye is not filled with seeing, neither is the ear filled with hearing. I have seen what has been done under the sun. All is vanity and affliction of spirit, vanity of vanities and all is vanity” I looked for Him in those things and did not find Him.<sup>23</sup>

After that I remembered that I had not looked for Him in the religious state which gave me a little bit of hope. There appeared to be two kinds of these religious so before I approached them more closely I asked them: “Have you seen my beloved?”<sup>24</sup> A voice answered me before they did: “In vain do you seek for Him here, since all of these are looking out for themselves and not for Jesus Christ.<sup>25</sup> God says of such people through the Prophet – These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me -.”<sup>26</sup> In the Gospel the Lord says: - They are blind and leaders of the blind. For they bind heavy and insupportable burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders; but with a finger of their own hand they will not move them. All their works they do to be seen by men, since they talk but do not act –”<sup>27</sup>

After that I went to the other religious, who were more advanced than I was on account of my imperfection, and when I went there the voice said to me: “Adore God here because this is the generation that seeks the Lord, which seeks the face of the God of Jacob.<sup>28</sup> All these are saints, God’s friends. These are not afraid of murmuring but with exaltation they hear the Lord saying: - Come you blessed of My Father take the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world.-”<sup>29</sup> Therefore cast off the works of darkness,<sup>30</sup> and follow your true Spouse Christ Jesus using the rules that follow since this is the way of finding Him again.

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Qo (Qoheleth - Ecclesiastes) 2, 1-5; Song 3, 1-2.

<sup>22</sup> Cordoni put this down in more detail: “After that I looked for Him in honours, prestigious situations, precious stones, to the best of my ability. *I sought Him and did not find Him*. After that I looked for Him in dances, songs, sounds and sensuality, worldly pleasures and delights...,” (*Dyalogo*, f. 1 v). (Pio io cercai in onori e dignità e pietre preziose, secondo lo mio potere. *Quaesivi eum et non invenit*. Poi lo cercai in balli, canti, suoni e in sensuaità, piaceri e dilette mundani ...”

<sup>23</sup> Qo (Qoheleth - Ecclesiastes) 1, 2-3, 8. 14; 2, 11; Song 3, 1-2. “These are saintly men, who have become God’s friends. They are not frightened by hearing about evil, but in a voice of exaltation hear God saying to them” (Isti sunt viri sancti, facti amici Dei. Hi ab auditiione mala non timebunt, sed in voce exultationis audient Dominus dicentem sibi) (*Dyalogo*, f. 32v). Molfetta is slightly inaccurate in his rendition; he says; “they shall not fear murmuring” (“non timeranno memorazione” that is mormorazioni as it is transcribed). The final biblical passage is Mt 25, 34 with which Cordoni concludes chapter 9 of the *Dyalogo*.

<sup>24</sup> Song 3, 3.

<sup>25</sup> Phil 2, 21.

<sup>26</sup> This is a Gospel expression which made an impression on many of the early Capuchins (*Cost. 1536* n. 36): Mt 15, 8; Mk 7, 6; Is 29, 13.

<sup>27</sup> Mt 15, 14; 23, 3-4.

<sup>28</sup> Ps 23, 6 (*Vulg*).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Ps 111, 7 (*Vulg*)

<sup>30</sup> Rom 13, 12

[*Some rules for mental prayer*]

When you wish to discover your Spouse, O Soul, the most important thing for you to do is give yourself up to silence, avoiding murmuring and wasting time, which usually happens when you are in company.

To do this you need, as far as possible without causing scandal, to keep away from conversation with others, where necessity, especially obedience, does not dictate the opposite.

To achieve this, the best thing to do is to go into the church or your cell or some other place that is suitable for holy prayer, because when people see you in such places they will not dare to come and disturb you. Once you are in one of the above places, kneel down, sit or take up another suitable posture without greatly inconveniencing your body. So that you do not disturb the mind you should perform one of the following exercises carefully.<sup>31</sup>

It is firstly necessary that the spirit enter into itself and enter carefully into the house of its thoughts. When it finds itself in the busy place of vain, fleeting, useless, dangerous, worldly or carnal thoughts it should strongly send them away and show them the door and mount guard very carefully that they or similar thoughts do not return. If they still return one must fight them forcefully so that they do not make their nest within the mind, because otherwise, they can breed such children in the mind that would kill true devotion and holiness.

What we have already said concerning the house of thoughts and the contest and battle over them applies no more or less to the need to stir up your spirit with respect to the house or inner habitat of vane and depraved desires, because it is necessary that the spirit take every care to be on guard with respect to its desires and fight against the bad and useless ones and arouse good and holy desires.<sup>32</sup>

Even when the Spouse has been soothed and serenaded, one still needs to raise his mind to converse spiritually with the immense Spouse, God, as if He were present, believing firmly that God is present and sees all your thoughts and desires, without speaking with your bodily lips.

Once the dear little Spouse is like this in the sight of the omnipotent, immense and holy God, it is necessary that she speak mentally and spiritually as a child would speak to a dear father and a servant to her tremendous lord. When we speak in this way to God our Lord and Father we need to ask for the graces that God wants us to ask for and in the way and order that he wishes.<sup>33</sup>

This is the effective way and it is known and observed only by a few. It makes prayer pleasing and acceptable to God and consequently of great merit in the sight of His holy and ever blessed Majesty.

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<sup>31</sup> Thus preparation for prayer requires silence, solitude and the choice of a place, a devout bodily posture and calm.

<sup>32</sup> This is the battle to concentrate and remain recollected without distractions in the mind and heart, because of thoughts or desires.

<sup>33</sup> This concept was well developed by the early Capuchins, as well as the concept of approaching God from the heart, with childlike love and “in an orderly manner”, where the last expression reflects the *devotio moderna*.

## [Five steps of grace]

There are five steps of graces which our Lord and Father God wants the Bride to ask for when she is praying mentally in His sight and speaking spiritually with His tremendous Majesty as we have described above.

On the first step He wishes her to ask God for some favours for God Himself.

On the second step He wishes her to ask for some favours for the human race which is living and will live on earth.

On the third step He wishes her to ask for some favours for the Christian Church militant which is joined in battle with and will battle Antichrist and the infernal serpent until the end of the world.<sup>34</sup>

On the fifth step He wishes her to ask for some favours for the Bride herself who is making this prayer.

On the fifth and last step He wishes her to ask for some favours for particular persons.

Some people put things in the opposites order to this when praying because the completely submerged in self love, and having little or no love for God, they put themselves on the first step and then some of their friends and ask nothing about God, nor the human race or the Church militant.<sup>35</sup>

On the first step when the Bride is praying she may ask God for these graces and benefits for God Himself, praying to Him in this way: “O immense Spouse, my holy God, my most sweet Father and tremendous Lord, who see all my desires present, past and future, I, your poor little Bride, your daughter and unworthy servant, your creature who has been placed and preserved by You in this fallen and fragile body, anxiously desire, my Lord and Father, that Your holy Majesty be made manifest to miserable mortals, and when known believed in, and when believed in meditated on, and when meditated on loved with burning love, and when loved feared, and when feared served by them all as Your great excellence and dignity merits; because You are the first and universal Father and Lord of all creatures, whether visible or invisible, both in heaven and on earth”.<sup>36</sup>

You should consider well that you ought to tremble because the above petitions which are made concerning God Himself expound at depth the petitions that our Saviour taught us in the *Our Father* when he taught His disciples to pray to God, saying (*as the Gospel says*): “My children when you pray, pray to God in this manner: Our Father in heaven we ask and desire that Your name be held holy, and that Your kingdom come and Your holy will be done on earth as it is done and obeyed in heaven”.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Fine alla* in the text should read *fino alla*.

<sup>35</sup> The order in prayer begins with God and develops to the neighbour, the Church oneself and others, otherwise the person is praying out of love for self and not love of God.

<sup>36</sup> Note the succession of items in this beautiful prayer: to know god, to believe in God, to meditate on god, to love Him, fear Him, serve Him, which basically corresponds to what was to be set out in the Catechism of the council of Trent: “God created us to know, love and serve him in this life and then to enjoy Him in the next life in heaven”.

<sup>37</sup> My 6, 9-10; Lk 11, 2.

On the second step, which is for the whole human race, a person may say and pray mentally in this manner: “O my Lord and holy Father, I desire this grace for the human race that at present and in the future it would be converted to know, love, fear and serve You, its true Father, omnipotent and always holy Lord, faithfully”.

On the third step, which is for the Christian Church militant, the Bride might pray in this manner: “My Lord and Father with the strongest desire I pray for your Church militant, both present and future, that You would preserve it strong and constant in your holy service, and give it triumphant victory over the wiles and struggle against its enemy the devil and all that is under his perverse dominion and rule”.

On the fourth step, in which the Bride comes around to asking graces for herself, she may speak to God spiritually in this manner: “Now, my Lord and most sweet Father, I turn to asking some graces for me Your poor little Bride, unworthy daughter and useless servant, and I beg of Your infinite clemency, that you would deign to strip me and defend me from all thoughts, desires and actions that are contrary to Your holy will, and clothe me in knowledge, thoughts, desires and actions that are in accord with Your holy and just will, so that<sup>38</sup> in this way my soul would become your true daughter, servant and legitimate bride, and come to rejoice with You in Your perpetual glory”.

On the fifth step one may pray for particular people, weather friend or foe, praying in this manner: “My Lord, all the above graces which I have requested and request for myself, I ask again for whomever it may be”. In this fifth step one may extend the petition to the souls in Purgatory, to pray for them collectively or individually as one pleases. On this step remember to pray for me as I will for you.<sup>39</sup>

### *[The exercise of the virtues and of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit]*

Following this method of contemplation, rouse up the following virtues within yourself so that prayer will activate all the virtues.<sup>40</sup>

First, prayer activates faith, because if you lack faith you would not pray.

Second, prayer activates hope, because if while at prayer you have hope as a consequence God will give you grace.

Third, prayer activates charity, because when praying your heart is set on fire with the love of God to Whom you are praying.

Then prayer activates prudence, because when praying you turn and direct everything towards God.

Then prayer activates justice, which is giving everyone what is theirs by right. You give your soul to God because it is His and say: “From now on, O Lord, I wish to do everything in a just manner for love of You.”

Then prayer activates temperance, because prayer greatly mortifies the body, and weakens it in such a way that it remains subject to reason.

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<sup>38</sup> *Talmente che, cosicchè*

<sup>39</sup> Compare these prayers with those by Bernardino d’Asti.

<sup>40</sup> The order of virtues here follows that of the theological virtues and the cardinal virtues.

Then prayer activates fortitude, because when you pray fervently you are set on fire in such a way that you burn for martyrdom for the love of God.

Prayer also activates the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

First, the gift of intellect and the gift of wisdom, and you know that this is not much. Within yourself you hold it in disdain.

Prayer activates the gift of piety and the gift of counsel for your neighbour. You pray to God for him. The same applied to fear through which you humble yourself before God. During prayer the other gifts make you more alive.

You can contemplate the love of God, how gracious He has been to you in having created you and made this world for you.

Second, contemplate Christ's Passion and the love He has shown you by redeeming you with His blood.

Third, contemplate eternal happiness in which you will live forever, if you wish to be on fire with Divine love.

Fourth, think about hell where those who go there will be forever.

Fifth, always think of death.

Sixth, think of the final judgement and how horrible it will be when you are there.

Then with respect to fear, first of all fear of God. Secondly, cry over your sins.

Thirdly, always keep an eye on your family and acknowledge them.<sup>41</sup>

### [*The method of saying the Rosary*]

Since our Saviour Jesus Christ lived in the world for thirty three years in a form that was capable of suffering and death as the following mysteries clearly demonstrate we are bound when recalling them to make a crown of thirty three precious stones for His divine and human deeds which were done for us, and of seven rubies for the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>42</sup>

Firstly the *Our Father* is said three times, and then the words *Crucified Jesus Christ my love* are said seven times. After this the *Our Father* is said five times, with the immediate repetition of the same words another seven times when this has been done five times in the end this means saying the *Our Father* thirty three times. While saying this rosary, think of each mystery, while praying to God at the end for the welfare of the Roman Church.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> These are points which sum up a rich topic in spiritual literature which is traditional and enduring: the relationship between the gifts of the Spirit, prayer, the great subject of the love and the fear of God.

<sup>42</sup> This is the "devout" motivation of Christ's mysteries which will appear again in a more analytical manner in Bernardino da Balvano and Paolo Manassei.

<sup>43</sup> The distribution of the *Our Father* and the antiphon in an ejaculatory manner (3+7 and then 5+7 times) has a stereotype modality which facilitates the recall of the mysteries of the God-Man Jesus Christ. The mention of the Roman Church is indicative of the complete orthodoxy of the author before his apostasy in the footsteps of Ochino.



## [Procedure for the Contemplation of the Rosary]

At the name of Jesus every creature in heaven, on earth and under the earth should bow and ever tongue confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father,<sup>44</sup> and that God has placed a crown of precious stones on His head.<sup>45</sup> Go forth, daughters of Zion, and see King Jesus with the crown with which His Mother crowned Him on the day of His heart's joy.<sup>46</sup>

With words like these, O Spouse, you are invited to search for your beloved Spouse Jesus, who is crowned with delightful, painful, melancholy and cheerful mysteries. You are awakened not only by the sound of these by solicited and exhorted by other sweet and charming tones when He says: "Rise up, come with me my beloved, my dove, come, my fair one who torments me with love. The winter is passed and the flowers have already begun to appear in the land. Come into my garden, my sister and spouse, because I have picked the myrrh. O my soul, arrange a bunch for my beloved, and you shall enjoy delights."<sup>47</sup>

When the inflamed Spouse heard such a loving invocation she replied with a humble song: "My beloved is a bundle of myrrh, and he lies on my breast."<sup>48</sup> Wishing to adjust the binding strap the astute Spouse began to mull over the great amount of bitterness in the life of her Spouse Jesus:

"O how charming it is to contemplate and dwell on your works!

Seeing how You were sent by the Father, not leaving Your place, but endowing us with the gift of Your presence;<sup>49</sup>

Being conceived without stain, made the son of a handmaid for me, being born without corruption of most pure virginity;<sup>50</sup>

Lying in a manger. There was a hard stone near the cheek of Your holy head and instead of having purple clothing You lay on dry straw.<sup>51</sup>

You were circumcised after eight days, shedding Your most precious Blood for my redemption.

Seeing how as a poor little child You were adored by the Magi, who offered gold, incense and myrrh.<sup>52</sup>

Seeing how You fled into Egypt, to live there in poverty for seven years and then return to Galilee with your feet treading the earth with great exhaustion.<sup>53</sup> Weep

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Phil, 2, 10-11.

<sup>45</sup> Ps 20, 4 (*Vulg.*)

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Song 3, 11.

<sup>47</sup> Free quotation of Song 2, 10-12; 5, 1.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Song 1, 13. This image as applied to Christ's Passion is common in spiritual and mystical literature.

<sup>49</sup> Note the Patristic and Liturgical musing of the Athanasian Creed.

<sup>50</sup> The virgin birth that maintained Mary's Immaculate Conception.

<sup>51</sup> This brings to mind the verse of the hymn *A solis ortus cardine*, at Christmas Lauds, where it says: *Feno jacens pertulit, / praesepe non abhorruit.*

<sup>52</sup> The text has *gli offerseno* for *gli offirono*.

<sup>53</sup> We read these apocryphal details in the pseudo-Bonaventurian *Meditationes vitae Christi*. Cf. *Meditazioni sulla vita di Cristo*, Traduzione e prefazione a cura di Silvano Cola, Roma, 1982, 49-51.

and cry, my soul, while accompanying your Spouse Jesus, who is no longer undergoing such exertion.

Then seeing You disputing among the doctors while Mary and Joseph searched for You in deep distress for three days.

Seeing You baptised by John the Baptist in the flow of the Jordan River, and to hear the voice of the Eternal Father saying: “This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”<sup>54</sup>

Seeing You fasting for forty days as well as nights in the dry and wild desert having wild beasts for company and damp earth for a bed,<sup>55</sup> tempted by the devil, though remaining victorious over him in the end, ministered to by the angels;

Obedying Mary and Joseph with the greatest humility for well on thirty years.

Seeing you call the simple disciples and teach them about the kingdom of heaven;

Changing water into wine at Cana in Galilee;

Seeing You exhausted by the long journey, sitting at Jacob’s well and asking for a drink from the Samaritan women;

Pursued by the Canaanite woman who cried out: “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me, my daughter is oppressed by a devil”,<sup>56</sup> and You freeing the girl from the oppression.

Seeing You resurrect the son of the widow out of pity for the sorrowful widow;

Restoring sight to a man born blind;

Seeing You transfigured in glory, when Peter said: “ Lord, it is good for us to be here”,<sup>57</sup>

Forgiving the sinner Madeleine her sins;

Seeing You crying at the resurrection of Lazarus, who had been dead for four days.

Seeing You washing the feet of Your disciples while giving them Your flesh to eat and your blood to drink.

Sold for thirty pieces of silver, praying to Your Father in the garden saying; “If it is possible let this cup pass from me; yet not my will but your will be done”,<sup>58</sup> and in such agony that the earth was bathed in sweaty blood;

Betrayed with a kiss, taken and bound by cruel hands carrying arms, and led to a harsh prison;

Your virginal flesh tormented with rough scourges. O ungrateful soul, think how there were six thousand six hundred and sixty six lashes!<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. Mk 1, 11; Mt 3, 17; Lk 3, 22.

<sup>55</sup> This detail always impressed the ascetical sensitivity of the early Capuchins. Cf. *Const. 1536*, n. 25.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Mt 15, 22.

<sup>57</sup> Mt 17, 4; Mk 9, 4; Lk 9, 33.

<sup>58</sup> Mt 26, 39.

<sup>59</sup> This apocryphal detail, which is contained in the revelations of the mystics, was known to the early Capuchins. The chroniclers relate the Father Antonio Corso was: “accustomed to take the discipline every year, which last for five hours, striking himself all over from head to foot because he estimated that in that time the same number of lashes could be administered as were administered to our Lord

Seeing Your head crowned with thorns and being struck with a rod; nor was this enough to satisfy them, as the crowd cried out” “Crucify Him, Crucify Him.”<sup>60</sup>

Battered by bursts of laughter and scoffing and being mocked in a white garment; Seeing You unjustly condemned to death, ascending Mount Calvary with the cross on Your shoulder in great breathlessness and pain.

Finally when fastened to the cross you prayer for those who had crucified You.

Seeing You thirsty and with Your last breath drinking vinegar and gall; the wishing to cleanse me You poured out Your blood through Your five wounds, to bestow peace on me; with Your head inclined You committed Your spirit to the Eternal Father; bestowing paradise on the repentant thief.

When the Officer Longinus’ sharp spear was laid to Your side, you enlightened his blindness;<sup>61</sup> and he confessed impulsively that You really were the Son of the true God.

Seeing You taken down from the cross and placed in the lap of Your mournful and suffering Mother with infinite sighs and expressions of grief;

Later You were anointed with precious ointments; placed in a sepulchre, Your soul descended into Limbo to free the holy fathers from the power of the devil.

Seeing You rise from the dead on the third day and appear to Your most holy Mother, consoling her with Your shining splendour<sup>62</sup> because love for me had made You suffer such a striking death and such bitter and cruel sufferings; when You showed Yourself to Your disciples You lived with them for forty days.

Seeing You ascend into heaven and sit at the right hand of the Father, sending the Consoling Spirit to Your faithful.

O Jesus what a joy You are to the hearts of those who think of You! Calling upon Jesus resonates with sweetness! O how good You are to those who love You! What could be more charming to the human mind than recalling the life of the Spouse Jesus with heartfelt tears?

Where Jesus is, there can be no sound of distress or sadness. Jesus is the joy of those who are afflicted, the eternity of the living, the fascination of those who mourn, the riches of the poor, the health of those who are ill, the life of those who have died, the shield of those in battle, the crown of those who have triumphed, the gate of heaven.

Where Jesus is, there is the Eternal Father, the Divine Word with the Holy Spirit. Where Jesus is, there is the Immaculate Virgin. Where Jesus is, there are the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles Martyrs, Doctors and most holy Confessors together with the whole array of pure Virgins.

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Jesus Christ, namely, 6666”. This is stated by Mattia da Salò and Colpetrazzo (*MHOC* III, 251; VI, 173). Cf. C. Vagagn – Giorgio Penco, *La preghiera nella Bibbia e nella tradizione patristica e monastica*, Roma 1964, 867ff, note 67.

<sup>60</sup> Mt 27, 22-23.

<sup>61</sup> This is the famous legend of the Middle Ages. Cf. *Longus von Cäsarea der Centurio*, in *Lexikon der Christlichen Ikonographie*, VII, Herder 1974, 410s.

<sup>62</sup> This detail can be found in the *Meditations* quoted in note 52.

Where Jesus is, there are all the blessed souls. Where Jesus is, there are all the Angels, Archangels, Thrones, Dominations, Principalities, Powers, Cherubim and Seraphim.

Where Jesus is, there are all the holy spirits praising and glorifying His Holy Name.<sup>63</sup>

O my Soul, if you wish to be at rest, cry out, and call out Jesus, Jesus and say: “My heart will be restless until it rests in Thee.”<sup>64</sup>

O Jesus, the seal on my heart,<sup>65</sup> enlighten the darkness of my mind; give me faith and firm hope, perfect charity, good judgment and knowledge so that I may obey Your commandments.<sup>66</sup> Give me time for true penance and the remission of my sins and then peace, repose and the grace to rejoice with all the saints in Your kingdom forever.<sup>67</sup>

This is the true bundle of myrrh put together as a crown on the head of our Lord Jesus.<sup>68</sup> And if you, O my Soul, meditate like this you will be filled with fragrant blossoms, bitter myrrh but also with sweet and delightful fruit. It will assist you on the ladder as you climb to Heaven where Jesus reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

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<sup>63</sup> This glorification of the Name of Jesus shines forth in the form of a litany and poetry.

<sup>64</sup> The famous passage from St Augustine which can be found in chapter one of the first book of his *Confessions*.

<sup>65</sup> *Song* 8, 6.

<sup>66</sup> This is the prayer of St Francis before the Crucifix.

<sup>67</sup> This is reminiscent of liturgical prayers.

<sup>68</sup> It could well be that this text was composed by an older author and recomposed in an abbreviated manner by Molfetta.