

**English translation of “Meditation on the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ”  
by Bernardino Da Montolomo.  
Translated by Patrick Colbourne O.F.M.Cap.**

**Translator’s note:**

This translation is based on the introduction, text and footnotes which were published by P. Costanzo Cargnoni O.F.M. Cap. In I Frati Cappuccini: Documenti e testimonianze dell primo secolo, Edizioni Frate Indovino, Perugia, vol III/1, pp.33-340. The only additions to the notes made by the translator are references to Francis of Assisi: The Early Documents, edited by Regis Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., J. A. Wayne Hellmann, O.F.M. and William J. Short O.F.M. Conv., New York City Press, New York, London, Manila, (1999) for an English version of quotations from the Writings or Biographies of St Francis.

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### Introduction by Coctanzo Cargoni O.F.M.Cap.

*Bernardino Ducaina da Montolomo (today Corridonia) (+1565), a Conventual Friar since his early youth, became one of the most famous Scotist theologians in the Franciscan Order (he was known as ‘the soul of Scotus’). One day, when he was reading the Book of Conformities while he was teaching in Pisa, he was struck by the story he fell into a profound spiritual crisis. He abandoned books and the chair of a professor and went over to the reformed Conventuals in the small friary of S. Angelo in Vado and later became a Capuchin about 1534 or 1535 before the General Chapter of 1536 which he attended and in which he received 56 votes when elected as a Definitor General. He had an ascetical disposition and was unshakably opposed to studies even though he was subsequently called upon to teach young Capuchin clerics including Mario Mercato Saraceno and Bernardino da Colpetrazzo. He possessed a kindly manner and maintained that Superiors “ought to encourage quiet and devout friars to observe the Rule authentically”. (MHOC, III, 66).*

*Colpetrazzo has left us a picture of his method of prayer. “After he had said Mass he immediately went into the woods. Because I wanted to observe him I went secretly to see what he was doing and I saw him walk along a little path for about four or five paces and then stop with his face looking up to heaven for about a quarter of an hour. Then, as he went on, he would sometimes kneel and sometimes recite vocal prayers. This would go on for three or four hours at a time. He did not sleep for long at night. Following the first bell he would kneel on the bed and pray until the bell rang for Office,” {MHOC, III, 55).*

*What follows is a meditation by this author on Christ’s Passion, It consists of fifty points which treat events and moments in the Passion, each one of which is followed by a short intense affective prayer.*

*The method is simple yet helpful in promoting conformity to Christ Crucified by means of spiritual love which is the soul of Capuchin spirituality. The introductory description of the internal and external conditions for meditation on the Passion are*

*interesting and form a practical synopsis of what was set out in the early Capuchin Constitutions of 1536.*

*In addition to this the reader cannot miss the very beautiful titles that are assigned to Jesus Christ who is called “Lord, Jesus, God, Father, teacher, doctor, wisdom, Saviour, Son of the Father, Love, Redeemer” with adjectives denoting increasing strength, “most sweet, most heartfelt, most loving, good, beloved, fond, gentle, kind, merciful, dear, ardent, most innocent, most perfect, most holy, etc.” This is very “affective” terminology.*

*This text can be compared with “The Crown of the Name of Jesus” by Molfetta and “The Spiritual Crown” by Mattia Bellintani da Salò. (Respectively nn. 4006-4012; 4204-4219; 5179-5202; 4454-5407).*

## Meditation on the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ

**4112** You know that if you want to feel at ease meditating on the most exalted Passion as a natural prerequisite you have to possess virtue and the purest intentions, because a carnal and sensual mind, filled with too many desires and which is in love with the flesh and the self will not be able to taste the appeal that comes from the Passion. However, a person who is humble, meek, charitable, obedient, silent, abstemious, willing to suffer with the Crucified Christ, who loves being despised and poor, shuns honours, renown and vanity, is sober and temperate with food, fights off sleep, is compassionate towards his neighbour, is careful about the Office and the Psalms, opposes what gives delight and is sensual, is not suspicious about what others are doing and does not judge<sup>1</sup> them, is straightforward in all that he does and says, is free from hypocrisy and dissimulation, is free from detraction and murmuring, cherishes quiet, peace and solitude, shuns rumour, laughing, idle-talk and telling stories,<sup>2</sup> and habitually has constructive and fruitful thoughts, such a person is able to rise with certainty to the fruits of the wood of life,<sup>3</sup> as they are described here.<sup>4</sup>

Here begins the method of meditating on the Passion of the Lord

**4113** 1. Firstly, when you have cleared your mind of all rust, and recollected yourself as mentioned above, contemplate the sweetest Lord on Holy Thursday,<sup>5</sup> having a loving meal<sup>6</sup> with his disciples in the cenacle, wanting to comfort them concerning his most bitter Passion<sup>7</sup> then say with this sacred mystery in mind: “I beg

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<sup>1</sup> *Iudizi* in the text = *iudici*.

<sup>2</sup> The second copy of the manuscript has the words in a different order which is: *idle-talk, rumour, laughter and making up stories*.

<sup>3</sup> This summary description of ascetical and spiritual concepts as prerequisites and preparation for meditation on the Passion is perhaps the best example and presentation of how the Author understands spirituality. With regard to the sources, in addition to St Bonaventure (“fruits of the wood of life” reminds us of the Title of one of St Bonaventure’s works: *Lignum vitae* – The Wood of Life) it seems to me that this introduction shows a connection to a work entitled “The Wood of Life” by Gabriele di Perugia who was an Observant friar, Cf. G. Perini, *Un “libro della vita” di gabriele da Perugia composto tra il 1496/1503*, in *CF* 41 (1971)81s,

<sup>4</sup> The first copy of the manuscript has *di sotto qui* = as contained below.

<sup>5</sup> *Santo Giobbia* in the text = *Giovedì Santo* – Holy Thursday.

<sup>6</sup> In the text we can read *ci* or as it is in the second copy *si*.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. JN. 13, 1; 14, 1ss; Lk. 22, 15.

of you most sad Lord my Jesus Christ, grant me the grace of offering bodily and spiritual food to my neighbour from the depth of my heart out of love for you because this is my duty.”

2. After that, think about the great love with which he rose from the table and took off his outer garment<sup>8</sup> and say: “O my love, most sweet Jesus, sincerely I beg of you rid me of all overabundance of earthly things which might prove to be an obstacle to carrying out your service.”

3. Contemplate how sweet it is to see him wrap the shining white cloth around himself, and say: “O, my most loving Lord, rid me of every impure thought and wrap my loins in the cleanest band of shining and most pure chastity.”

4. Then, contemplate the most humble Jesus on his knees on the ground washing the feet of his dear disciples,<sup>9</sup> and say: “O loving Jesus, grant me the grace to be meek and humble so as to be of fervent service to everyone for love of you.”

**4114** 5. Contemplate the great humility with which he returned to the table and consecrated his most sacred body and most precious blood <sup>10</sup> “O Son of the living God give me burning love your most precious body and blood, and deep humility.”

6. Contemplate how he delivered a very noble and inspiring sermon commanding that we should love one another.<sup>11</sup> “O most sweet and kind Lord Jesus I beg of you from the depth of my heart to grant me the grace to keep all your commandments especially having very great love for my neighbours.”

7. Contemplate how he said to his disciples: “*Sit here until I go to pray.*”<sup>12</sup> He prayed the first time saying: “*My Father, if it be possible let this chalice pass from me.*”<sup>13</sup> O my Saviour and the one who consoles me, most sweet Jesus, rid me of the chalice of eternal and perpetual damnation.

8. Contemplate how he went to his disciples waking them from sleep and comforting them in prayer.<sup>14</sup> “O my most sweet Father, wake me, comfort me and take care of me with the arrows<sup>15</sup> of your holy and sweet breath.

9. Contemplate how he prayed the second time, saying; “*The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*”<sup>16</sup> O my gentle love, grant me the grace to humbly admit that I am more fragile than any other creature.

**4115** 10. Contemplate how he prayed for the third time, saying: “*Father, not what I will, but what you will*”.<sup>17</sup> O most loving Father, grant me the grace to seek your most holy will in everything and not my own will.

11. Contemplate how on account of a great flow of blood and his agony he sweated blood.<sup>18</sup> O my most loving God, grant me the grace to endure all tribulation and anxiety for love of you.

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Jn. 13, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Jn. 13, 4-5.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Mt. 26, 26=29; Mk. 14, 22-25; Lk. 22, 17-20. The second copy adds *e dirai – then say.*

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Jn. 13, 33-35.

<sup>12</sup> Mt 26, 36.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Mt. 36, 29.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Mt 26, 40-41.

<sup>15</sup> *Sagette in the text =saette.*

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Mt. 26, 41. This is not exactly the prayer that Jesus Christ said. However note the intimacy, the simplicity and the impression that a single meditation that is responding with the heart has on the exegesis.

<sup>17</sup> Mt. 26, 42-44; Mk. 14, 34, 36.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Lk. 22, 44.

12. Contemplate how he came back to his disciples upset and worn out through fervent prayer.<sup>19</sup> O my most sweet Lord, grant me the grace and the strength to never tire of praying; thanking you, my Father, for all the favours that you have done for me.

13. Contemplate how he met Judas the traitor patiently accepting his kiss.<sup>20</sup> O my Lord and my God, grant me the grace to peacefully endure all creatures who have committed any kind of error and to leave judgement to you alone. O most just God.

**4116** 14. Contemplate how he faced the mob saying: “Whom do you seek? If you are seeking me, let these go their way.”<sup>21</sup> My most loving Lord, I beg of you to grant me the grace that by means of true contrition I may ask for punishment for my sins while asking for and wishing that there be mercy for the sins of my neighbour.

15. Contemplate how he was stripped naked and very cruelly bound tightly with ropes around his neck and had his hands placed behind his back.<sup>22</sup> O my kind Lord, by means of such bitter suffering and affliction I beg you to have the powers of hell bound so that they may not injure my soul or my body.

16. Contemplate the amount of charity with which he healed the ear of Malchus<sup>23</sup> while he was under such pain and suffering. Therefore, medical Doctor, I beg you to heal me of all infirmity and to grant me the grace to dedicate all my steps and activities to loving you.

17. Once more contemplate how, in the presence of Annas the high priest, he received a blow to the cheek.<sup>24</sup> O my most loving God, grant me the grace to be cleansed of all sin so that when I am led before the just judge I may feel safe and unafraid. Also, by means of the injustice of that blow to the cheek grant me the grace to endure every injustice and disrespect with patience out of love for you.

**4117** 18. Contemplate how he was hurriedly and hastily manhandled to the house of Caphias.<sup>25</sup> O my most holy Father, grant me the grace of never taking a step against what is pleasing to your most sacred will.

19. Contemplate how he stood erect before Caiaphas who placed him under oath to declare if he was the Christ the Son of God.<sup>26</sup> O Lord of heaven and of earth, give me the grace to proclaim the truth at all times and in every place, before any creature and not to fail through human respect even if this means *giving up* my life for the truth.

20. Contemplate how he was scourged and beaten the first time in Caiaphas' house with such shame and hurt.<sup>27</sup> O my most beloved Lord, give me the grace to endure your scourges with patience, as well as those inflicted on me by people, out of love for you.

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Mt. 26, 43, 45.;

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Mt. 26, 47-49; Mk. 14, 43-45; Lk. 22, 47-48.

<sup>21</sup> Jn 18, 8.

<sup>22</sup> Jn. 18, 8.

<sup>23</sup> These details are the result of using devout and ardent images. However we know that Jesus was not stripped here but only arrested and bound. Cf. Jn. 18, 12.

<sup>24</sup> Jn. 18, 22.

<sup>25</sup> Jn. 18, 12-14; Mt. 26, 57.

<sup>26</sup> Mt. 26, 63; Jn. 16, 24.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Mt. 26, 67; Mk. 11, 65; Lk. 22, 63. Actually the fact that Jesus was scourged in the house of Caiaphas is not found in the Gospel. The Gospel only says that he was punched and slapped.

21. Contemplate how he was sent to prison and tightly bound until dawn and repeatedly treated badly by the cruel and merciless soldiers.<sup>28</sup> O my loving God, bind my heart and all my senses so that I may not think of anything that is contrary to your most holy will. Once more I beg you to grant me the grace to control my miserable flesh by means of an increase in virtue.

**4118** 22. Contemplate how he was led by the Jews with much hustle and shame early next morning to the palace of Pilate<sup>29</sup>. O my good Master, grant me the grace to not be lethargic regarding the things that pertain to holy obedience.

23. Contemplate how he stood in front of Pilate with his hands bound behind his back while being questioned by him and how good Jesus had little to say.<sup>30</sup> O good kind Lord, grant me the grace not to speak except when it is necessary and shows love for my neighbour.

24. Then think about the shame of being led to Herod,<sup>31</sup> O most loving Lord, grant me the grace in whatever I am doing to keep in mind all your most bitter suffering.

25. Contemplate how he was mocked and treated as a fool by cruel Herod.<sup>32</sup> O Wisdom of the eternal Father, make me wish for shame and insult for love of you!

26. Contemplate how he was sent to Pilate and what was said about him on the way.<sup>33</sup> O loving Jesus my God, by means of this sixth calumny I beg you to grant me the grace to moderate all affection for family and friends.

**4119** 27. Contemplate when he was scourged at the column and brutally beaten a second time.<sup>34</sup> O my most sweet Saviour grant me the grace to control my flesh with discipline, fasting and other penances.

28. Contemplate how he was dressed in purple to make fun of him, to demean and embarrass him.<sup>35</sup> O my most sweet Saviour rid me of all worldly love.

29. Contemplate how he was crowned with thorns and how his face was covered with blood.<sup>36</sup> O my gentle Lord, grant me the grace of having my soul adorned and crowned with every spiritual virtue.

30. Contemplate how his eyes were covered and he was blindfolded.<sup>37</sup> O most loving Jesus, grant me the grace of having custody of the eyes.

31. Contemplate his humiliation, embarrassment and pain when they plucked his beard.<sup>38</sup> O most loving God, grant me the grace to be free from all inquisitiveness.

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<sup>28</sup> Lk. 22, 63-65; Once again this is a devotional reconstruction which is attempting to fill in what is missing from the Gospel.

<sup>29</sup> Mt. 27, 1-2; Mk. 15, 1; Jn. 18, 29

<sup>30</sup> Mt. 27, 11-14; Mk. 15, 2-5.

<sup>31</sup> Lk. 23, 7

<sup>32</sup> Lk. 23, 9-11.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Lk. 23, 15. No detail escapes from anyone who loves..

<sup>34</sup> Mt. 27, 26; Mk. 15, 15; Jn. 19, 1.

<sup>35</sup> Mt. 27, 28; Mk. 15, 17; Jn. 19, 2.

<sup>36</sup> Mt. 27, 29; Mk. 15, 12; Jn. 19, 2.

<sup>37</sup> Mk. 14, 65; Lk. 22, 64.

<sup>38</sup> This detail is not in the Gospels. However it is based on a pious reading of Is. 50, 6.

**4120** 32. Contemplate the shame and contempt of them spitting in his most beautiful, loving and angelic face.<sup>39</sup> O my most innocent Jesus, grant me the grace to affectionately desire to be afflicted, shamed and abused<sup>40</sup> for love of you.

33. Contemplate how he was led out of the Pretorium covered in lacerations and blood and shown to the people.<sup>41</sup> O my most sweet Jesus, grant me the grace to delight in shame and abuse for love of you.

34. Contemplate how he was sentenced to the shameful death of the cross.<sup>42</sup> O my merciful Father and my God, grant that when I die you will judge me with mercy rather than with justice.

35. Contemplate how he accepted the cross on his most holy shoulders<sup>43</sup> to carry it towards Mount Calvary.<sup>44</sup> O my most perfect love, grant me the grace of fervent charity towards my neighbour so that I may endure living in this holy Order without monotony.

36. Contemplate how he met his most holy Mother who fell down overcome by great sorrow.<sup>45</sup> O Jesus of immense mercy, grant me authentic compassionate sorrow for you and for your sorrowful Mother.

**4121** 37. Contemplate how when he had arrived at Mount Calvary as if he had been a thief, completely worn out and exhausted. O Jesus, Son of God, bind me to the cross so that I may never think about anything worldly but have you as all that I desire.

38. After that contemplate how he was stripped naked and had all his wounds very painfully reopened.<sup>46</sup> O Jesus my most sweet love, strip me of all mental and physical sensuality.

39. Contemplate how bitter he felt as he was placed on the cross,<sup>47</sup> O Redeemer of the world and my most gentle Father, grant me the grace to be mentally crucified with you, sharing your sorrows in my heart, not only now, but also when I am standing, sitting, going about, talking and ultimately while I am doing anything.

40. Contemplate how the cross was lifted up high with his most holy body covered in lacerations and blood on it. O Jesus ardent furnace, most sweet Jesus, grant me the grace of having my heart lifted up high to contemplate your most bitter Passion.

41. Contemplate how he was placed between two thieves,<sup>48</sup> as if he had been their captain. O Jesus, Son of the Most High, rid me of every appetite and desire for worldly vanities and grant me the grace of being grateful to you, my Lord, for the much hard work that you underwent for me and for all sinners from the day of your birth to this hour of your most bitter Passion and death.

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<sup>39</sup> Mk. 15, 19; Mt. 27, 30. The second manuscript had *faccia* instead of *viso*.

<sup>40</sup> The second manuscript has *appenato* instead of *vituperato*.

<sup>41</sup> Jn. 19, 5.

<sup>42</sup> Lk 22, 24. In the second manuscript by way of error the number 33 is assigned to two consecutive paragraphs so that from here on the numbers differ by one digit.

<sup>43</sup> *Sopra* in the second manuscript in place of *nelle*.

<sup>44</sup> Jn. 19, 17.

<sup>45</sup> This detail is taken from popular Stations of the Cross.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Mt. 27, 35. This detail cannot be found in the Gospel, but serves to increase heartfelt compassion.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Mk. 15, 25; Jn. 19, 23; Lk. 25, 33.

<sup>48</sup> Mt 27, 38; Mk. 15, 27; Lk. 23, 43.

**4122** 42. Contemplate of the love he felt when he said: *Father forgive them for ...*<sup>49</sup> My most sweet Lord I beg you to make my heart so docile as to forgive everyone who ever offended me. I also ask of you, my Father, to forgive all my iniquity which is almost infinite.

43. Think of what he said to the thief: “This day you shall be with me in paradise.”<sup>50</sup> O Jesus my love, I beg of you through your infinite mercy that, at the hour of my death, I will have sufficient grace to deserve to hear the words: “To day you will be with me in paradise.”

44. Contemplate what he said to his dear Mother “*Woman behold your son.*” *After that he said to the disciple: “Behold your mother”.*<sup>51</sup> O my Redeemer, grant me the grace of being among your chosen ones, commit me to your Mother in the person of John.

45. Contemplate when he said those loving words: “*I thirst.*”<sup>52</sup> O good Jesus, grant me the grace of always thirsting for your honour and for the salvation of my soul and of my neighbours.

46. Contemplate how he drank vinegar and the bitterest gall.<sup>53</sup> O Jesus, who thirsted for my soul, I beg of you through that very bitter beverage to grant me the grace to resist every desire, sensuality, greediness and carnal appetite.

**4123** 47. Then contemplate when he said: “*My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?*”<sup>54</sup> O my most loving Father, clasping you most holy feet, I beg you not to abandon me at the hour of my death.

48. Contemplate when he said his last word, that is: “*It is consummated.*”<sup>55</sup> O sweet Father, grant me the grace that my entire life might be spent in praiseworthy and holy actions.

49. Contemplate: “*Into your hands I commend my spirit.*”<sup>56</sup> O loving Jesus, I beg of you that in the end my soul and my spirit<sup>57</sup> may be commended to you.

50. Finally contemplate here how he gave up his spirit gloriously.<sup>58</sup> O God’s immense charity, I beg of you through the most intense sorrow that you experienced in separating your spirit from your body to support and help me at the hour of my painful death by means of your grace and blessing. Once again, I thank you, O most clement Lord, for the toil and hardship that you endured for me and for all of humankind in this world.<sup>59</sup> I also thank you for the many tears which you shed for me on the cross at the hour of your death. Amen.

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<sup>49</sup> Lk. 23 34.

<sup>50</sup> Lk. 23, 43.

<sup>51</sup> Jn. 19, 26-27.

<sup>52</sup> Jn. 19, 28.

<sup>53</sup> Mt. 27, 48; Mk. 15, 36; Jn. 19, 29; Lk. 23, 36.

<sup>54</sup> Mt. 27, 46; Mk. 15, 34.

<sup>55</sup> Jn 19, 30.

<sup>56</sup> Lk. 23, 46.

<sup>57</sup> In the second manuscript we read *corpo (body)* which is immediately crossed out and substituted by *spirito*.

<sup>58</sup> Mt. 27, 50; Mk. 15, 37; Lk. 23, 46; Jn 19, 30.

<sup>59</sup> In the second manuscript we read *che ti hai partito per me in questo mondo. (that you suffered for me in this world)*.