I

HERE BEGINS THE CHRONICLE, AND WE SHALL FIRST TELL OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THAT MOST WORTHY CONVENT DEDICATED TO THE MOST PRECIOUS BODY OF THE GLORIOUS LORD JESUS CHRIST. INCIPIT CAPITULO PRIMO.

There was a woman named Sister Lucia Tiepolo, a nun in the convent of Santa Maria degli Angeli of Murano, which maintained a good reputation and observance [of the monastic rule].[1] This woman entered the convent when she was eleven years old, and she remained there for thirty-four years, living in a holy fashion. It so happened that the Lord God brought about the death of the abbess of the convent of Sant'Apostolo of Ammiano, and as a result the lord bishop sought out this woman and asked insistently that she become abbess of that other convent.[2] She did not want to go and so objected strenuously, saying that she had lived in that convent for thirty-four years and could not imagine changing her residence now that she was old. She resisted fiercely, arguing as best she could with many other words and tears; but the lord bishop enjoined her to obey and she, being a dutiful daughter, could not refuse him, though she went with many tears and a bitter heart, and with the intention of sneaking away and going to some unknown place. She remained there for three unhappy years, continually begging God that he might grant her the grace to be his true servant and to do his holy will. Now, one day when this woman was in tearful prayer between sext and none,[3] almost lost and absorbed in spirit, she let her head droop and, behold, she seemed to hear a person come through the church chatting away. She turned and saw the Lord Jesus in the form of a man tied to the column, all wounded and bloody, with the crown of thorns on his head; and he placed his hands heavily on her shoulders and said, "Go to Venice and build me a convent in my name." She said, "What name should it have?" The Lord answered, "The Body of Christ." She asked, "My

1. Santa Maria degli Angeli was a convent of Augustinian nuns on the island of Murano, in the Venetian lagoon. This convent was a fertile seedbed of monastic institutions: women from Santa Maria degli Angeli founded the convents of San Giacomo of Murano and San Girolamo of Venice in addition to Corpus Domini. Flaminio Corner, *Notizie storiche delle chiese e monasteri di Venezia e di Torcello* (Padua, 1758; reprinted Bologna: Arnaldo Forni, 1990), 654

2. Sant'Apostolo was one of several Benedictine monasteries and convents on the isolated island of Ammiano, in the Venetian lagoon. Malaria, frequent flooding, and a decline in vocations forced many of these communities to abandon Ammiano and transfer to Venice in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

3. That is, in the early afternoon, between noon and 3:00.

Lord, how can I do this? I'm a poor little woman; I have no relatives or friends who I might hope would give a penny to help me." The Lord replied, "Have faith that it will be famous throughout the world and I will be its protector." And he showed her the palms of his pierced hands, saying, "Rejoice, for you will see some great and glorious marvels." She came to herself and stood up, thinking she could catch him, and she looked all over the church but saw nothing. The following three nights she saw the same vision, which kept repeating, "Go and do what I tell you, without delay." And as soon as day dawned, she found an excuse to come to Venice to buy what she needed for her convent, and when she arrived in Venice she went to the lord patriarch Francesco Querini, a most holy man, and recounted her vision.[4] He said to her, "Don't be troubled. Since the Lord tells you that this must be, you need have no doubts."

Something that happened gave her an acceptable reason to leave that convent, so she had a departure permit drawn up and came to reside in Venice, where she eagerly sought to make the vision a reality. She pressed her request to our government that she be allowed to construct a convent dedicated to the Body of Christ, until the measure passed in the Great Council and she was granted permission to build it—though it took a full six years after the vision before she managed to win approval. Once permission was granted, she set about looking for a suitable location; she was shown many sites, but none of them satisfied her. When it pleased the Lord God, she was shown this place called Capo de Zirada, which was a shoal where boats were beached, and it so pleased her that she immediately made arrangements to buy it.[5] The land belonged to certain widowed noblewomen who offered to help her erect the building and to come reside with her. Trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ and in these women, she purchased some lumber; but when it came time to pay for it, the women backed out and she was left on her own. She happened to have some money that she had earned by practicing medicine (she treated great crowds of sick people), and with these funds she paid for the land and the lumber and began to have the church constructed out of wood. When the church was built, she had a stone altar made so that mass could be said on the feast of Corpus Christi, which was just a few days off, and she had the church consecrated. As for the aforementioned women, not much time passed before one came down with a tumor on her face and died in agony, another got married and was killed by her husband, another burned herself up, and the fourth fell into great poverty: so it was that all four died in the greatest misery.

4. Francesco Querini was patriarch of Grado from 1367 to his death in 1372.

5. Capo de Zirada was a sparsely inhabited area at the extreme northwest tip of Venice, where the train station is now located.

II

HOW THE LORD JESUS CHRIST INSPIRED MESSER FRANCESCO RABIA TO VISIT HER CHURCH

Messer Francesco Rabia, who was then a young man, often came to visit this church, for he was very devoted to an image of Our Lady that was in that church, and every feast day he offered on the altar a large candle and so much money that it covered a large share of the expenses.[6] He persevered in this manner for some time until God, by means of a woman who went to Rome, arranged that a privilege with many indulgences be granted to this church, which inspired people to flock to receive this pardon for a long time, and many people's devotion increased—for before then few people even knew that this city had a church dedicated to the Body of Christ.[7] But this pardon soon ended, because it was discovered that it had not been granted by the pope but rather by someone at [the papal] court at the instigation of the aforesaid woman, and so people stopped seeking the pardon. All this happened by divine dispensation in order to demonstrate what would follow, for the glorious Lord God wished to fulfill what he had promised to his devout handmaiden: that she would see a great convent. When Messer Francesco Rabia saw that this prioress was left all alone, he offered to help her, and so he did. She promptly bought lumber and built a wooden dormitory with seven cells and lived there with one companion dressed in the habit of Saint Benedict and two other women in secular clothing, and she lived on the offerings to the church. Many people asked her, "Tell me, good woman, what are you doing here in this desert place?" She replied, "When it pleases my Lord God, he will see to what he has promised me," and she persevered like this for twenty-eight years.

During the great war that Genoa and other cities waged against our illustrious city of Venice, when it looked as if all would be lost from one moment to the next, Messer Francesco Rabia started to pray with great fervor before the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, saying, "My Lord, I beg you: do not let this city perish, and I promise you, my Lord, to have your church walled." As soon as this offer was made, the enemies who were at our port withdrew to Chioggia, and within a year peace was made.[8] Now, when this Messer Francesco went to

6. "Messer" was the honorific term of address used for noblemen, doctors of medicine and of law, and priests.

7. An indulgence allowed a penitent who had confessed his or her sin to substitute for the penance due some other act or work of charity, such as a contribution to the building of a church

8. The War of Chioggia was brought to a close in 1381 by the Treaty of Turin

measure the church of Corpus Domini, the prioress saw him and rushed to greet him, saying, "You are the man that the Lord has showed me in vision and said to me, 'This is he who shall build my church, and I shall send you a person who will build the convent, and you will live until you see there more than sixty women.'" Messer Francesco replied laughing, "Good mother, you'll see sixty hens." She answered, "I hope by the precious Body of Christ to see that which he has promised me." And so it was: she saw more than seventy women. Thus the wooden church was demolished and a stone one erected.

III

OF CERTAIN BEAUTIFUL VISIONS OF THE PRIORESS

Before she came to live here, this Sister Lucia saw a gold brood hen with all her chicks, and when she tried to embrace or grasp it, it plunged underground and she saw it no more. On another occasion, a spiritual woman saw in a vision her dead mother, who said to her, "Go to Corpus Domini and receive that pardon for my soul." And she seemed to come there, and when she was at the landing she saw a great multitude of white lambs. Coming from a distance to enter the church, when she reached the door she saw a woman dressed in sky blue who took her by the hand and drew her inside, saying, "Come receive this pardon." She asked her, "Tell me, my lady, what are these animals doing here?" The woman replied, "They are souls for whom this pardon is received, and they derive a great benefit from it." Then she added, "Come, let me show you my house" and led her on top of a mountain and showed her a church, saying, "I caused it to snow as much as this church can hold and hence it was named the church of Saint Mary of the Snow; and so it shall be at my son's church." This woman came to the prioress and told her about the vision. Before the year was out, during the month of August, when the prioress had gone to perform her devotions in the church at dawn, she found that it had snowed in one spot enough to cover an altar. The snow was frozen solid; she tried to sweep it away but could not. It lasted for seven days, and everyone who saw it marveled at this miracle. In this manner the Lord showed that he wanted the main altar built there, and so it was done. Shortly thereafter the prioress saw that when the stone to build the church had been purchased and unloaded in that spot, a crowd of children gathered and scampered over these stones and acted as if they were grasping something with their hands, and they leaped about laughing and having a lot of fun. They said that they saw many curly-haired little children and many other fine things that they didn't know how to explain because of their youth; and many other fine things were seen that I will leave out

so as not to ramble too much. This holy prioress also said to me, "Believe me, dearest daughter, my Lord will yet make this convent extend as far as Santa Lucia, which will also be ours."[9] Another vision was seen by one of the first women who wanted to enter the convent. She had a great desire to serve God, but her relatives opposed her, saying, "Why do you want to go perish from hunger in a new convent that still has nothing?" Nonetheless she entrusted herself to the Lord, and while sleeping one night she saw herself at the door of the church of Corpus Domini. She looked and saw a very handsome gentleman dressed all in the most brilliant gold and with his arms open wide. Turning around and around, he looked toward Santa Lucia and said, "Who doubts that everything is mine and all is mine?" She woke up trusting completely in the Lord God, realizing that this blessed convent would never lack his grace.

IV

HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT TOUCHED THE HEART OF THE VERY REVEREND FATHER BROTHER GIOVANNI DOMINICI, AND OTHER THINGS THAT HAPPENED

Since the glorious Lord Jesus Christ wished to fulfill what he had promised to his servant—that she would yet see a great convent—he touched the hearts of two virgin sisters, one of them fifteen years old and the other eleven, the older named Isabetta and the younger Andreola. They were daughters of a very virtuous and upright man and woman; their father was named Messer Facio Tommasini and their mother Lady Zaneta, and she was from the Contarini family.[10] When their father and mother died, these girls were left in the hands of Messer Marco Paruta and his wife, Lady Margarita, who raised them as her daughters and brought them up in the fear of God. Since these girls wanted to serve the Lord God but could not find any place in the city that satisfied them, she revealed their desire to her confessor, Messer Giovanni Dominici of the order of preaching friars, who was then lector and preacher at San Zanipolo

9. Corpus Domini took possession of the nearby parish church of Santa Lucia in 1444 and continued to administer it until 1476 when, after a long and bitter dispute, it was handed over to the Servite nuns of the Annunziata. The sisters of Corpus Domini sought to retain possession of the relics of the martyr Saint Lucy, whose uncorrupted body reposed in the church dedicated to her. Even as negotiations with the Annunziata reached a critical point, the sisters of Corpus Domini took the body of Saint Lucy and hid it under their staircase—provoking outraged reactions from both ecclesiastical and civil authorities and generating a mass of documentation that has yet to be thoroughly studied. See Corner, *Notizie storiche*, 251–56.

10. The Contarini were one of the largest and most eminent families in Venice. The Paruta also belonged to the Venetian patriciate.

and a man of great holiness and fame.[11] He advised them to become nuns at Sant'Andrea, since he had no thought of getting involved in creating a convent.[12] But the great God, whose wisdom and will no one can resist, appeared to a sick virgin, his devoted servant, who was an elderly woman of great virtue and reputation. He showed her this Brother Giovanni Dominici and these two sisters with many other women here in this place where the church of Corpus Domini stood and told her that he wanted her to build a convent on that site. Similarly, these sisters also had some beautiful visions on this subject, which I will not write here since they have been recorded elsewhere. When he learned of all these visions, Brother Giovanni Dominici still did not budge, and for a long time he objected that he did not want to get himself embroiled in such things. But the Lord Jesus made his heart race so while he was praying and saying mass that he could resist no longer and determined to go to the [papal] court to request permission to build a convent for women affiliated with the Dominican order. Looking over various sites throughout Venice, he could find to his liking only the one the Lord had prepared. He was told about this woman who lived in the little church of Corpus Domini in the habit of Saint Benedict, and he came to speak with her and told her that if she wished to receive the habit of Saint Dominic, he would build a convent for her and bring many women to join her. She humbly agreed and consented to step down as abbess and become prioress. Once Brother Giovanni had understood her intentions, he set out from Venice and in a few days arrived in Perugia, where the papal court was located at that time, and he presented his request to the holy father on the day of the martyr Saint Agnes.[13] On the octave of her feast he received the bulls in full with everything he had requested. When he returned to Venice, with great rejoicing he set about creating the convent with the aid of the Lord Jesus Christ and of many gentlemen and good *popolari*, and above all Messer Marco Paruta.[14] With the dowries of those two sisters and the grace of the Lord God, it was finished in a year: and the amazing thing was that for the entire year it never rained on workdays, but only at night or on holidays.

11. Giovanni Dominici had been appointed lector at San Zanipolo, the chief Dominican church of Venice, in 1388. He went on to become a leader in the reform of the Dominican order, was named a cardinal by Pope Gregory XII, and figured prominently in ecclesiastical politics during the later years of the Great Schism. His career is recounted at length in the necrology, chapter 31.

12. The Augustinian convent of Sant'Andrea della Zirada was not far from Corpus Domini.

13. Saint Agnes, who was martyred in the early fourth century, is honored on January 21 and 28. Giovanni recounted his trip to the papal court in a letter, known as the "Iter perusinum," addressed to Tommaso Tommasini, Isabetta and Andreola's brother.

14. The characterization of some of these backers as "good *popolari*" indicates that they were well-to-do but not members of the Venetian nobility.

When the convent was completed in its present form, with curtains covering the windows as the sisters wished, he got permission from the holy father and from the master general of the order (who was called Master Raymond) to receive and vest whomever he wished.[15] Even before the convent was completed and enclosed, he vested the aforementioned two sisters and a woman named Sister Margarita Mussolini. He also stripped the habit of Saint Benedict from the abbess and her companion and vested them in the habit of Saint Dominic. They remained like this, with the habit under their other clothes, until they entered the convent together with the other women.

V

OF THE DAY THAT THE CONVENT WAS ENCLOSED, AND OF THE WOMEN WHO ENTERED THAT DAY WITH THE GRACE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, MAY HE BE FOREVER PRAISED

This blessed convent was enclosed on the feast day of Saints Peter and Paul in the form it has at present, and the women who were to enter were prepared.[16] Brother Giovanni Dominici came with Brother Giovanni Benedetto and Brother Bartolomeo of Pisa and Brother Bartolomeo of Florence and many gentlemen and ladies, and our father Brother Giovanni Dominici said mass outside and consecrated those five women who had worn the habit under their clothing for some time: Sister Isabetta Paruta and her sister [Andreola], Sister Margarita Mussolini, and Sister Lucia Dandolo [and the prioress].[17] When the mass was over, we went inside with the aforesaid friars and with some laywomen, including Lady Margarita Paruta, the doge's daughters-in-law, and the mothers of those being enclosed. We all assembled in chapter and our father preached a devout sermon, and then he and the other friars vested those women who had not yet received the habit. He confirmed the former abbess as prioress and Sister Isabetta Tommasini as subprioress; and since the prioress was extremely old—almost eighty—he named as vicaress Sister Lucia Dandolo, who was forty years old, a widowed woman of fine reputation and very spiritual, who had worn the habit of the Gesuates under the obedience of Sister Agnesina Soler for some time.[18] When the chapter was concluded, we went to the refectory along with the laywomen; Brother Bartolomeo and Brother [Giovanni] Benedetto served the meal.

15. Raymond of Capua, the confessor and biographer of Saint Catherine of Siena, was master general of the Dominican order from shortly after her death in 1380 until his own in 1399.

16. The feast of Saints Peter and Paul is June 29.

17. The presence of two women named Lucia—the prioress Lucia Tiepolo and the vicaress Lucia Dandolo—apparently caused some confusion for the copyist, who left one of them out. The sisters Isabetta and Andreola Tommasini are here referred to by the name of the family that had taken them in after their parents' deaths, perhaps because Margarita Paruta played a prominent role in this ceremony.

When we had risen from the table and said none, the laywomen departed.[19] Our father remained behind with the other friars: he stayed with us that whole day and had the chapter summoned and gave us our instructions for living in good observance according to the rule of Saint Augustine and the constitutions of the preaching friars.[20] It would be impossible to express the charity and devotion our father showed for his daughters that day. As he went about designating the cells with their altarpieces, he blessed them all with holy water. Then he said the office of the Virgin together with us in the dormitory and in the choir, to show us how we should perform the devout ceremonies that must be done while saying the office, and left us with his benediction. He went away very pleased. He locked the convent and gave the keys to the prioress and two other women, commanding that these two women together with the prioress should open and close the door when necessary.

Just imagine what joy lingered in those minds that had for so long yearned to be enclosed for love of the Lord Jesus Christ! The women who were enclosed that first day numbered twenty-seven: that is, the prioress, whose name was Sister Lucia Tiepolo; Sister Maruzza Contarini and her companion,[21] the two elderly ladies who constructed the first church; Sister Isabetta Tommasini, Sister Andreola her sister, Sister Margarita Palazzi, Sister Diamante Mussolini, Sister Cecilia Dotto, Sister Margarita Piacentini, Sister Andreola her sister, Sister Maria Rizzi, Sister Caterina Costantini, Sister Caterina Simoni, and Sister Isabetta Verga, who were virgin women between eleven and sixteen years old; Sister Domenica Moro, aged fifty, Sister Maria Tasso, Sister Margarita Rosso, aged twenty-three, and Sister Bartolomea Riccoboni, aged twenty-five, all these virgins as well; Sister Lucia Dandolo, Sister Marina Pisani, Sister Franceschina, mother of the abbot of San Giorgio, Sister Cateruzza Stella, and Sister Cristina dalla Terra, who were widowed women; Sister Marina Valaresso, Sister Caterina dal Pomo d'oro, Sister Maria Palazzi,

18. The Gesuates, or Apostolic Clerics of Saint Jerome, were founded in 1360 by the Blessed Giovanni Colombini, whose cousin Caterina established the female branch of the order. The order was devoted principally to charitable activity.

19. None, the fifth of the canonical hours of worship, corresponds to midafternoon.

20. The rule for Dominican nuns was based on the rule of Saint Augustine, with the addition of constitutions specific to the Dominican order.

21. This unnamed companion is presumably Margarita Mussolini.

and Sister Antonia, another four virgins. All these came as a group that first day.

Another seven were vested a week later: their names were Sister Daria Marin and Sister Orsa da Noale, who were seven years old; Sister Marina Marin and her goddaughter Sister Cita, and Sister Anna Rosso, who were virgins; Sister Orsa da Noale, a widowed woman who was the grandmother of the aforementioned Sister Orsa; and Sister Uliana, a widow. When nine days had passed, seven more women entered. Our father Brother Giovanni Dominici had the pope's permission to vest six women from any convent he wished and make them nuns in this one. When they heard of the good reputation of this convent, they came eagerly: their names were Sister Beruzza Ziroldi, Sister Caterina Rosso, and Sister Orsa Fraganesi, all three of whom were thirty years old; the others were eighteen or younger, and their names were Sister Agnesina Ingegneri, Sister Chiara Marin, Sister Gerolama [Mercanti], and Sister Paola Zorzi.[22] In nine days we numbered forty; by the end of the year we were fifty; and within two years there were seventy-two of us.

Since I have mentioned the day the convent was enclosed, I will note the year in which the first church of the precious Body of Christ was built by the prioress, Sister Lucia Tiepolo, which was 1366. The second construction of the church and of the convent that was enclosed by the hand of our father (who is at present cardinal of Ragusa) took place in 1395.[23]

VI

OF THE COMMUNITY AND UNITY OF THE HOLY WOMEN

It was a true community in true charity: never a vain word, but only talk of the Lord God in all places, since while sleeping, waking and eating, at all hours they called on Jesus. When our father knew that his daughters' minds were filled with the Holy Spirit, he felt the greatest joy. When he saw how they called on Jesus at all hours, he wrote a beautiful hymn that named Jesus a hundred times. Perfect silence was observed, such that from the time compline was said until

22. Beruzza Ziroldi's surname is given as Ciriuola in the necrology.

23. Sister Bartolomea's dates are frequently inaccurate: the construction of the first church, for instance, took place in 1375, not 1366 as she says here, and the dedication of the convent was June 28, 1394, not 1395. These errors resulted from the lapse of years between the events and the time when she wrote. Since Giovanni Dominici was named archbishop of Ragusa in 1407 and cardinal of San Sisto in 1408, the chronicle was composed more than a decade after the events described here, if the phrase identifying him as a cardinal is not a later insertion. Sister Bartolomea herself says in the preamble that she had put off writing for twenty years.

mass the following day was finished (that is, the one that is said after the hours) no one would utter a single word.[24] Even the confessors marveled at such perfection, and especially at the great silence. This was because the good father had taught his daughters well; he used to say that he would rather hear that a barrel of wine or oil had been spilled than that a sister had broken the silence. Their fervor reached the point that going to the windows bothered them terribly.[25] Some of the sisters were so given to devotion and meditation that as they walked they seemed to speak with God. Some meditated on the Passion of Christ, saying Our Fathers and doing as many acts of supplication as there were acts in his life. Some others said as many psalters as Christ's person has limbs; still others said two psalters a day; and in this manner all led a holy life. The vicaress had to command them to go easy and temper their great fervor, and she gave them a direct order to take food, since they were so fervent they did not want to eat. When our father saw such perfection and such humility, wanting to sate them with that angelic bread they so craved, he came every Sunday to say mass and give communion to those who wished—which led to his being reproved by some servants of God who did not know how virtuous these women were. He replied that when someone asks him for the holy sacrament and he refuses to give it, may God deprive him of his grace.

These women also practiced great abstinence. Many dragged their mattresses away and slept on bare planks, and they slept very little. They frequented the choir so much that they could hardly wait to go to the office; some of them told me that when they entered the choir they seemed to see an angel that led them in singing God's praises, and they sang the office with such joy that they seemed to be among choirs of angels. Moreover, they tasted such sweetness on their palates when they said the office that their mouths seemed full of every savory candy. When one sister was in ecstasy, she saw white puffs like cotton issue from the mouths of the sisters as they sang the office and fly up to heaven, while the good angel remained very happy by their side; she also saw the devil waiting eagerly to see if anyone left out a syllable, to make a note of it. All day long there were women in ecstasy at all hours, now this one and now that. When the chime sounded they could hardly tear themselves away from prayer to go take bodily food, but obedience constrained them. Some of them ate nothing but bread and the basics.

24. Compline, the last of the canonical hours of worship, followed the evening meal. Once compline had concluded the monastic day, silence was to be observed until the next day began with matins.

25. The windows let in air and light, but also temptations. The sisters of Corpus Domini avoided showing their faces at the windows and engaging in idle gossip with passers-by, limiting their conversations to the barest minimum and offering only words of devout exhortation.

They were well supplied with hair shirts, chains, and whips. Some were so humble that they arranged to go off together in a group to beat themselves, and they scourged themselves with great shedding of blood. As an indication that this humility was pleasing to God, I will recount one miracle that occurred. There were three young women who went every evening to scourge themselves together. One evening they went about this business with such fervor that they were locked out of the dormitory because they had been at it too long. When they sought to come in they found the doors closed and could not open them no matter how hard they pushed. They did not want to knock for fear of being recognized. They stood there quite dismayed, not knowing what they should do. They started to pray, saying, "My Lord Jesus Christ, you know well that we have been moved purely by love of you, and so we beg you, please see that no one knows of this and open the door for us." Having made their prayer, they returned and found the door open. They looked to see whether anybody was around and saw no one, so thanking God they went off quietly to their cells; shortly thereafter came the knock on the cells and matins sounded. God performed many marvels of this sort, so that anyone who wished to recount them all would find the task too long.

When our father observed that many women were falling ill because of their frequent penances and abstinences, he commanded that all the whips and chains be brought to him. When he saw how many there were, he was utterly dumbfounded. He ordered that no one should scourge herself without permission from the vicaress or himself. He did this because he knew they would refrain from asking for this permission, and he likewise ordered them to take food according to their needs, because many rose from table having eaten little.

I shall also speak of the perfect observance [of the rule], and especially of the three principal vows.[26] First of all, as for bodily chastity, may God maintain it as it now is: perfect in the highest degree. The same was true of obedience and poverty of mind and body. When the superiors commanded anything, blessed was she who said yes most promptly. No one would go speak at the windows for any reason without permission, and likewise they maintained with all diligence all the ceremonies of the order. Chapter was held every night, and when they heard that bell they welcomed it as the greatest opportunity, thinking they could humble themselves and announce their defects and accuse themselves of every lapse in conduct. If any little word

26. The three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience had been the foundation of monastic life ever since the sixth century, when they were enshrined in the rule of Saint Benedict.

passed between them, they immediately admitted their fault before the sun set. They were of such purity and poverty that they did not even hang on to a penny. They had nothing but a quilt and a blanket, a single tunic and a single scapular; when they needed to change, they went to the wardrobe mistress and were satisfied with whatever she gave them. The wardrobe mistresses routinely changed all their tunics and scapulars four times a year; no one recognized her own things. It was lovely to see so many—indeed, all of them—so clean. They did exactly the same thing with the bedclothes: there were two sisters who washed everyone's linens; and those women changed their things, giving them clean and taking away the dirty, and in this way everything was made common. All the alms that were sent to the sisters by their relatives or friends were held in common; many a time those to whom the alms were sent did not know about it. Everything belonged to everyone, and all had their needs met. The Lord God provided for us.

Our father was our procurator and kept us supplied with everything necessary; all the officials went to him as daughters go to a good father, and like a good father he provided everything with great charity.[27] In addition to the living expenses, he bought so much cloth that everyone had what she needed. There was no need to ask our relatives, since he provided for everything. Indeed, I often saw this marvel: more bread was cleared from the table than had been set out. God performed many wonders that I shall omit for brevity's sake, but in them one can recognize how pleased God is with the religious life when unity and charity are joined with observance of the three principal vows. I can truly say that many were so steeped in obedience that if the prelates had said, "Throw yourselves into the fire," they would have done so. Our venerable father Brother Giovanni Dominici procured for us and governed us for five years, and he provided for us in both spiritual and temporal matters. I have already spoken of temporal things. As for the spiritual, he consecrated us and preached every day during Lent and many times during the year; he wrote to us and explained all the books that were needed for the office and for masses during the whole year. Because of his good reputation, our convent loomed larger in the devotion of many people, and especially of many gentlemen who adorned our sacristy with chalices and vestments and everything that was needed—thanks to our father, who provided us with everything, as I said already. In short, we were like a child at its mother's breast, without the slightest care or thought.

The convent remained without its vineyard for six years after it was enclosed (while Sister Lucia Tiepolo was prioress), and what is more, the cells on

27. The procurator was legally empowered to act on behalf of the cloistered community.

that side were without windows.[28] But our Lord Jesus Christ, who has always looked after his maidservants, inspired the hearts of certain men and women—including Messer Piero Vicaran and Messer Nicoletto Zane and Lady Marina Valaresso and Lady Beatrice Giustiniani—who bought us some houses that were attached and enclosed the place for us. Other persons with great devotion and charity saw to it that our walls were raised, the cells' windows opened, and the vineyard planted. Then Sister Margarita Paruta, the second vicaress, built the new dormitory and the parlor; Sister Geronima dei Cancellieri, who was the second prioress, had the parlors inside the sacristy refurbished; and Sister Isabetta Tommasini, who was the third prioress, had the chapter room fixed up and decorated with paintings, while Sister Andreola had the Last Supper painted in the refectory.[29] The aforementioned prioress observed that for thirty years this convent had had terrible problems with water, so she had the big well dug at a cost of 300 gold ducats.

VII

HOW THE LARGE CHURCH OF THE PRECIOUS BODY OF CHRIST WAS BUILT, AND WITH WHOSE HELP

During the time that Sister Margarita Bocco was prioress,[30] when we were living in very straitened circumstances and had urgent need of an infirmary, our most clement Lord Jesus Christ stirred the heart of our venerable father Messer Tommaso Tommasini, bishop of Feltre.[31] Moved by compassion, he bought the houses of the Diedo family, paying 500 ducats from his own pocket and 100 ducats that we had collected from various people. Those houses of the Diedo family cost 500 ducats in all, and this was in 1436. In 1440

28. This paragraph, like the following chapter, may have been inserted later, since it represents a leap forward in time. Lucia Tiepolo, the first prioress, died in 1413. She was succeeded by Geronima dei Cancellieri (died 1431), who served for a decade before falling ill and being replaced by Isabetta Tommasini in 1422 or 1423.

29. The word used for the painting of the chapter room is *istoriar*, indicating that these were narrative paintings. The Last Supper was a standard decoration for monastic dining halls.

30. This chapter is certainly a later insertion, since it recounts events after Sister Bartolomea's death in 1440. The author was probably her sister, Chiara Riccoboni, who made a careful record of the expenditures for this building project (ASV, Corpus Domini, busta 19: Spese della nostra giesa fabricata nel 1440) and wrote an account of the new church's consecration that closely resembles this passage (ASV, Corpus Domini, busta 1: L'antichità ravivata).

31. Tommaso Tommasini was bishop, in succession, of several cities in the Venetian sphere of influence: Cittanova, in Istria (1409–20); Pola (1420–23); Urbino (1423–24); Trau, in Dalmatia (1424–35); Recanati and Macerata (1435–40); and Belluno and Feltre (1440–47).

our gracious God inspired the reverend father Messer Fantin Dandolo (who, bearing great love and devotion for the convent and its women, often visited it and gave lavish alms) and moved his soul to remodel the church. With the agreement of the lord bishop of Feltre and the other procurators and of us women, he set about building the church in the middle of Santa Croce out of reverence for the precious body of the Lord Jesus Christ, to increase people's devotion. He spent 300 ducats at the outset, and construction of the church was begun in 1440 (it was completed in 1444) on November 24, the vigil of Saint Catherine [of Alexandria]. His reverence monsignor the patriarch, Messer Lorenzo Giustiniani, came, as did our reverend father Messer Fantin Dandolo and Messer Tommaso Tommasini and other devout persons.[32] The lord patriarch laid the first stone in the foundation and then came to sing the mass of Corpus Christi, because that day was a Thursday,[33] and when he had sung the mass he gave the sisters a perpetual indulgence of forty days for every time they passed before the high altar and said an Our Father and a Hail Mary. He also gave twice forty days of indulgence to laypersons who would visit the church and give an offering for its construction after the prayers. And when the said church was finished, our venerable father Messer Fantin wanted his reverence Messer Lorenzo Giustiniani, patriarch of Venice, to come and consecrate the church; and this was done with great devotion on July 12. Messer Fantin spent 4,000 ducats to have this church built, and his reverence has given many other alms and goods to our convent. Once the church was consecrated, the Lord Jesus Christ granted that he be named archbishop of Candia, which he resisted firmly; but since the holy father insisted by all means, he accepted like an obedient son on September 13, and on February 20 he was consecrated in our church of Corpus Domini by the hands of the most reverend monsignor, the lord patriarch of Venice, and by the bishops of Ferrara and Jesolo as well, with great devotion and solemnity.[34] On the day our church was consecrated, monsignor the patriarch granted in perpetuity to each person who came to visit the church on that day—that is, July 12—a year's indulgence, and the other two bishops gave forty days each. After the church was built the prioress, Sister Margarita Bocco, had the gratings made

32. The saintly Lorenzo Giustiniani became the first patriarch of Venice in 1451, so this passage must have been revised after that date.

33. He honored the convent of Corpus Domini (or Corpus Christi) by singing the mass for the homonymous feast of Corpus Christi, which is celebrated on the first Thursday after Trinity Sunday.

34. Fantin Dandolo (1379–1459) was named archbishop of Candia in 1444 and bishop of Padua in 1448; he was buried at Corpus Domini. Giuseppe Gullino, "Fantin Dandolo," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 32 (Rome, 1986), 460–64.

around the inside of our church, using money received with the arrival of sisters, and she also made the two altarpieces of Our Lady. And this is how the church of the most worthy and most precious Body of the Lord Jesus Christ was constructed. But to return to what we were saying, I want to recount a tribulation that I do not think should be passed over in silence.

VIII
HOW THE WIND KNOCKED THE HOLY SACRAMENT DOWN FROM THE PLACE WHERE IT IS KEPT BECAUSE THE DOOR WAS LEFT OPEN

Three years after the convent was enclosed, when the feast of the precious Body of Christ was approaching, the magnificent officers of our confraternity organized a procession.[35] Together with many friars of the order, they devoutly set out from San Geremia carrying large candles in their hands and the sacrament in its tabernacle. Having arrived in our church, the precious consecrated host was placed way up high where it would be safe. And in order that the sisters might receive that spiritual consolation, with our reverend father's permission we kept our little inside door open that whole week. The sisters found very great consolation in this. At all hours of the day and night sisters could be found in the church, and many of them kept their eyes constantly fixed there with many tears and prayers. Some were seen rapt in ecstasy, raised off the earth; others cried mercy, mercy while prostrate on the ground; some spoke to the host and thought it answered them; some saw it in the form of a lovely little child, while others saw it crucified. What a pious sight to see those young women all inflamed and filled with fervor for this most holy sacrament! As the feast of Corpus Christi grew closer, they seemed to lick their lips with desire to be able to contemplate their dear spouse.

The octave of the feast arrived (which that year fell on the vigil of the feast of Saint Peter the apostle), marking three years to the day since the convent was enclosed.[36] After vespers had been sung, when the subprioress was saying the prayer, the wind suddenly sprang up with a great gust that struck the little

35. The feast of Corpus Christi, instituted as a universal feast of the Catholic Church in 1317, was celebrated in Venice with elaborate processions staged by the lay confraternities. See Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 164–85, and Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 223–30. The parish church of San Geremia was in the vicinity of Corpus Domini.

36. In 1397 the octave of Corpus Christi fell on June 28, the day before the feast of Saints Peter and Paul.

window of the tabernacle and knocked over the chalice that holds the hosts left over after the sisters have received communion (though the tabernacle containing the host that had been borne in the procession remained steady). Those hosts tumbled down, and some of them landed on the women who were under the altar—on the heads of some and on the shoulders or chests of others, and one young novice had one of those hosts land in her mouth. No one could express the pain and sorrow the sisters felt. Almost all began to cry mercy, beating their breasts with many tears and sighs as if they were seeing the Lord Jesus Christ dead when they saw those most holy hosts on the ground, and no one knew how to pick them up or dared touch them out of reverence. Our chaplain was summoned; he suggested that the sacristan should wrap her hands in a handkerchief and gather those most holy hosts from the ground, and that is what was done. The sacristan put them in the chalice, and then the chalice was placed on the wheel, and the chaplain put them up in the tabernacle.[37] And from that time forth, that door has no longer been kept open during the octave for fear of such a mishap. When our father heard of this and of our anguish, he wrote us a letter of consolation, saying that we should rejoice and thank the Lord Jesus Christ who had deigned to consecrate our church for himself and had wanted to give his spouses communion himself, and that he was very pleased that this had happened inside rather than outside, since he was glad that the Lord wished his handmaidens to follow their Lord and Redeemer on the way of tribulation.[38] He added many other words, prophesying what would happen to him and how we would remain afflicted and troubled, as indeed came true soon thereafter.

IX
HOW OUR FATHER BROTHER GIOVANNI DOMINICI WAS BANISHED

I will tell of the enormous tribulation that the Lord God sent three years after the affair of the sacrament, which was most burdensome and painful for us. At that time there arose a group called the Bianchi who went throughout the world crying mercy, for which reason many religious men and women and people of every sort were moved to follow them, and everyone dressed in white cloth as they did and set about forming processions through all the cities

37. The *ruota*, a sort of lazy susan, allowed objects to be passed in and out of the convent without opening the door to the outside world.

38. See Dominici, *Lettere spirituali*, 70–74 (letter 4).

with the crucifix at their heads, crying and singing mercy with great devotion and tears. And many enemies made peace with one another, for which reason those processions were deemed to work great miracles.[39] When our father saw that the whole world—except for Venice—adopted this devotion, moved by very great piety and faith he made arrangements with many citizens and priests to perform this devotion in this city. He borrowed our crucifix and sang the mass at San Geremia and organized the procession with many men and women, both religious and secular, all singing and crying mercy; and in this manner they came to San Zanipolo. When they arrived at the square, they found one of the heads of the Ten all ready with his officers on behalf of the government: he wrenched the crucifix from the hands of Messer Antonio Soranzo, who was in the lead, broke the arms of the crucifix, and scattered the procession with many insults and injuries to both men and women.[40]

The government was very indignant with our father on this account, since he had organized this procession without its permission. They called a meeting at night—almost the way the Lord Jesus Christ was treated, everyone was shouting "Crucifige, crucifige eum"—and he was banished from Venice for five years; the priest Messer Leonardo [Pisani] and Messer Antonio Soranzo were banished for one year, because they too had been very fervent in this devotion.[41] This happened the night between Thursday and Friday; he left Venice immediately that night, and in the morning his mother and all of us daughters heard the news that we had been deprived of such a venerable father. No one could express the anguish and bitterness of his mother and of all us daughters, our tremendous wailing and laments when we saw ourselves deprived of the many consolations and spiritual and temporal benefits that we had received thanks to our father! He truly loved us like a good father. After his departure alms seemed to stop coming our way, and from that point we had to scrounge for bread, which had not been necessary before: indeed, we used to feed many poor with what we had left over. When our venerable father learned of his daughters' suffering and need, he often

39. The devotional movement of the Bianchi spread through northern and central Italy in the summer and early fall of 1399; the main processions had been over for some time before Giovanni Dominici's procession and arrest on November 18 and his exile on November 21. On the Bianchi movement, see Daniel E. Bornstein, *The Bianchi of 1399. Popular Devotion in Late Medieval Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993). For a detailed analysis of Giovanni Dominici's procession in Venice, which I argue was not as closely linked to the Bianchi movement as Sister Bartolomea claims, see Daniel Bornstein, "Giovanni Dominici, the Bianchi, and Venice. Symbolic Action and Interpretive Grids," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 23 (1993): 143–71.

40. The Council of Ten was responsible for maintaining public order in Venice. Giovanni's procession violated a decree of the Ten banning all such demonstrations without their express approval.

41. Leonardo Pisani and Antonio Soranzo had been dedicated supporters of Giovanni's activites in Venice, as well as organizers of this procession. The cry of "Crucify, crucify him" is from Luke 23:21; Sister Bartolomea quotes it repeatedly.

consoled us, sending us lovely letters comforting us and strengthening our resolve to persevere in our good behavior.[42]

When the term of his exile was finished, he returned to Venice. No one could express the rejoicing in this city among all those who were devoted to him and loved him, and especially his mother and all of us, his daughters, some of whom had waited to be consecrated by him; and he graciously came in here and with the greatest devotion consecrated all those who had not yet been consecrated. During that brief time that he stayed in Venice we received great consolation from him; he gave us communion and preached to us and gave us many spiritual remedies with much fervor and charity. The daughters remained under their father's care for five and a half years until he was banished, and then after six years had passed he returned to Venice and stayed for three months before going back to Florence. As God promised, he bore great fruit, like a man who was always eager for God's honor and the salvation of his neighbor. Since his reverence recognized that the holy father wished to restore unity to the holy church, he went to the [papal] court to urge the holy father to bring about this peace. Because the holy father knew that he was a man of great virtue and wisdom, he named him a cardinal; and as such he has labored long and still labors for unity. We have been deprived of hearing him for fifteen years now; but even though he is far away physically, his reverence never ceases to provide his daughters with whatever he can. We have received 215 ducats since his departure from Venice, and he has promised us that if God lets him live so long as to see the holy church reunited, he will arrange to have the convent endowed so that we will have no need for family or friends, but only prayer, contemplation, and study. In this way our good father constantly thought that his daughters should and would be able to remain always united with their dear spouse, the glorious Lord Jesus Christ, to whom I pray that in his kindly charity he may grant us the grace that this might be *per infinita secula seculorum. Amen.*

X

OF THE VINEYARD WALL THAT COLLAPSED AND THE DORMITORY THAT WAS DAMAGED

Ab incarnatione Domini millesimo quadringentesimo nono, on the day of Saint Lawrence, martyr,[43] at the hour of vespers, there was a blast of wind through the entire city so terrible that the very oldest people said they had never seen

42. Giovanni Dominici's feelings for the sisters of Corpus Domini seem to have cooled with the passage of time: of the forty-one letters to them published in his *Lettere spirituali,* twenty-seven (two-thirds) were written within three years of Giovanni's departure from Venice.

43. August 10, 1409.

its like in all their days. All those who happened to be out in boats were in trouble; more than three hundred people—men, women, and children—were reportedly drowned on the way from Mestre, and many corpses washed up in the canal of San Segondo. Many houses collapsed; a good many tops of bell towers and churches and chimneys of houses crashed to the earth, so that people could not walk through the streets. They said that if this weather had lasted more than an hour, all Venice would have been demolished. The Lord God willed that we too would have our share of this tribulation, since the peak of the bell tower fell and smashed part of the new dormitory, and one of the chimneys fell on the old dormitory and crashed right through to the floor. The whole face of the vineyard wall that is joined to the parlor fell down and damaged the shed used for washing the sisters' clothing, and many of the trees in the garden were blown over, leaving their roots dangling in the air. We were all terrified by this, especially on account of the wall, since any layperson could come inside the convent. We had to stand guard every night for fear of thieves, until our most clement Lord Jesus Christ provided for us through the intercession of some gentlemen who arranged for us to have 200 ducats, some from the most illustrious government of Venice and some from their own pockets, so that the wall was soon rebuilt.

XI

OF THE TRIBULATIONS WE SUFFERED ON ACCOUNT OF THE SCHISM

In that same year, after Messer Angelo Correr, a man of great sanctity, had been made pope, an enormous schism divided his cardinals, as a result of which they abandoned him and elected another pope named Pope Alexander [V], and Messer Angelo, who took the name Pope Gregory XII, made our father a cardinal.[44] Our father stood by Pope Gregory because he recognized the authenticity and sanctity of the holy father, and he defended him with all his might. This Alexander managed to gain the allegiance of almost the whole world—that is, all the realms and the leaders or rulers of cities—while few

44. Angelo Correr of Venice was elected pope in 1406 and took the name Gregory XII. Before the election he (like all the cardinals) promised to meet with his rival, the Avignon pope Benedict XIII, to negotiate an end to the schism that had divided the church since 1378. When he failed to fulfill this promise, seven of Gregory's cardinals abandoned him and, together with most of Benedict's cardinals, assembled in Pisa. In 1409 the Council of Pisa deposed both popes and elected a new one, Alexander V. Though much of Europe, including Venice, accepted Alexander as pope, both Gregory and Benedict refused to resign, and the schism dragged on for several more years. See Aldo Landi, *Il papa deposto (Pisa 1409): L'idea conciliare nel grande scisma* (Turin: Claudiana, 1985).

stood by Gregory. However, many people and all the servants of the Lord God sided with Gregory, and thus the whole world and all the religious orders, male and female, were divided among themselves. Since we knew our reverend father to be a man of great wisdom and sanctity, and likewise Pope Gregory, we sided with them and remained steadfastly under his obedience.

After a few months had passed, doubt crept into the minds of some of our sisters. Seeing that our most illustrious government of Venice and also our order had given Alexander their allegiance and recognized him as the true pope, they sought the advice of our father confessors, who were divided among themselves and gave counsel that reflected their own convictions. As a result, twenty of our sisters were very troubled in their consciences and said that they wanted to align with the order and accept Alexander as the true pope; those who held that Gregory was the true pope numbered forty-five, which left us deeply divided—and not only us, but the whole world, and especially this noble and magnificent city of Venice. Our most illustrious government saw that the city was divided and reached an agreement with his reverence, monsignor the patriarch, who (thinking this would restore unity) ordered all priests and religious to mention Pope Alexander by name when they said their prayer for the pope. When they heard this command, those of our sisters who supported Alexander wanted to obey. At that time our custom was to say a prayer for the holy father after the *Salve Regina* during the hours of the office, mentioning him by name. But those who supported Gregory did not want to name Alexander, since they felt in their consciences that to do so would be a grave sin. They said, "We do not want to mention anyone by name until peace is restored to the church." This statement was acceptable and pleasing to everyone. But when Alexander's supporters recited the prayer, they boldly invoked Pope Alexander by name in the prayer, saying that they wanted to be in line with our order. When Gregory's backers were hebdomadary,[45] they named no one so as not to betray their consciences, and they felt great discomfort when they heard named someone whom they did not consider to be the true pope, so that we were in terrible anguish. Then it happened that some devout laypeople who would most devoutly come to hear mass and the office in our church, and who were supporters of Pope Gregory and gave us generous alms, got up and left our church when they heard Alexander named and withdrew their alms, so that we suffered great hardship.

Now, those who supported Alexander, seeking to make peace among us, wrote of how we were in schism among ourselves to our most reverend lord fa-

45 The hebdomadary was the person appointed to lead the recitation of the canonical hours for the week.

ther the general of the order, named Master Tommaso of Fermo—who was one of the principal figures in bringing about this schism, since he was very insistent that all the brothers and sisters of the order should declare for Pope Alexander.[46] When he heard how we were divided, he instructed his vicar, Master Domeneghin of Venice, to appear in his name and order us under pain of excommunication that we must all name Pope Alexander in our prayer. This vicar came and had all of us sisters assemble in the parlor at the sound of the bell. When we had gathered, he began to praise warmly those of our sisters who sided with Alexander, since they were truly obedient daughters, and he commanded us by obedience and under pain of excommunication that we all must name Pope Alexander in our prayer, and anyone who did not do this would be punished severely as a rebel. We were in great tribulation over this, since those who supported Pope Gregory felt they would be offending the Lord God if they obeyed, because in their consciences they believed that Pope Gregory was the true pastor, while if they disobeyed they would suffer excommunication. This inspired intense prayers with much weeping, and thus we remained in terrible anguish.

In the middle of all this, and before the year was out, this Alexander died, which thoroughly pleased all of Gregory's supporters, since they hoped they would be left in peace. After a few days had passed they elected another pope, who was reputed to have been one of the principal instigators of the schism when they broke with Gregory and went with Alexander.[47] This fellow, so far as I understand, was a malicious man. It was said that he had had Alexander murdered so that he could be made pope and that the cardinals elected him out of fear. For these reasons all the rulers and leaders of cities and lands were displeased at having such a pastor; nonetheless, for various worldly considerations, they gave him their obedience.

Holy week came, when it is the custom to say a prayer for the pope during the mass on Good Friday. All of Gregory's partisans refused to name this third pope, who was called John [XXIII]. Our most illustrious government became very indignant at this, since it seemed that its authority was being flouted, and it issued an order that all friars and priests had to say the prayer for the pope during the mass every day for an entire month, mentioning John by name. For this reason many people—and nearly all the religious—left Venice, since

46. Tommaso Paccaroni of Fermo was master general of the Dominican order 1399–1414.

47. The cardinals of the Pisan obedience elected the archbishop of Bologna, Baldassar Cossa, who took the name John XXIII. This second pope in the Pisan line was later deemed an antipope and so was not included in the official numeration of popes. He acquired such an unsavory reputation that over five hundred years were to pass before Angelo Roncalli took the name John upon his election in 1958, thereby becoming the second (and much more beloved) John XXIII.

they did not want John as pope. Some of those who remained got it in their heads to not say the prayer, for which many were banished from Venice, some for six months and some forever. Never had this city seen such persecution of the servants of God. Then an even stricter injunction was issued: that those male and female religious who would not obey the most illustrious government and name Pope John in their prayers would remain locked in prison for two years and then be banished forever from Venetian territory. This provoked the greatest wails and laments from those who saw themselves constrained to speak against their consciences. It was heartbreaking to see so many servants of God afflicted, not knowing what course to follow: either to speak against their consciences, believing this to be a mortal sin, or to go wandering through the world. No one could express the tribulation that was felt, especially by nuns and women sealed in cloisters. In short, everyone was tormented and afflicted because the holy father did not wish his adversary to be proclaimed to be what he was not.

As I said, all Venice was denuded of the servants of God who left because of this persecution. The women of Sant'Andrea were ready to let themselves be expelled from this city rather than say this prayer.[48] They did not want their chaplain to say it in his church, and were it not for his relatives, the government would have decided to throw them out.

Now, to return to our affairs, our mother the vicaress ordered that the hebdomadary should name Pope John, which his partisans did very willingly; and when it was the turn of one of Gregory's supporters to be hebdomadary, she should ask one of Pope John's to do it for her. This was a great relief for Gregory's partisans, whose confessor secretly sided with Pope Gregory. In the midst of this, our most reverend general died; and his death was a great relief to the entire order, since he was the one who kept the order divided. With his death we could remain in peace, since Master Leonardo [Dati] of Florence was made general and he did not insist that one be named rather than the other.[49] We said the prayer without naming anyone, and thus we could remain united and in good harmony right down to this very day. But we suffered this tribulation of the schism for five years, and in the sixth year we remained in peace by the grace of our Lord God, who tests his servants by letting them travel the road of tribulations. However, through his kind charity our consciences remained unblemished and untroubled by any vexing pricks, because both of the parties acted with good intentions.

48. That is, the Augustinian convent of Sant'Andrea, not far from Corpus Domini.

49. Leonardo Dati succeeded Tommaso of Fermo as master general of the Dominican order in 1414 and held that office until his own death in 1425.

XII

OF THE PERSECUTION THAT THE HOLY FATHER SUFFERED BECAUSE OF THE SCHISM, AND OF HOW GOD DELIVERED HIM MIRACULOUSLY FROM MANY PERILS, AND HOW AFTER A HOLY LIFE AND WITH A GOOD REPUTATION HE DIED IN PEACE

Holy Scripture tells us how from the beginning of the world to the present hour the holy church has always been persecuted, and always the Spouse of the holy church has marvelously delivered it from great and powerful tribulations. Whoever cares to go look will find that the holy church—starting with Abel the just, who was the first victim, and continuing to Moses—has often been assailed by the devil's envy by means of wicked men, and it has been sustained and aided by the glorious God by means of just and holy men, from Moses to David and from David to the Lord Jesus Christ, and from Christ to the present time. And this shall continue until the very last day, because this is the church militant and hence anyone who wishes to accede to the church triumphant is called to fight in it—taking the example set by our first knight, the Lord Jesus Christ, and followed by his holy apostles, martyrs, confessors, and virgins and by all his saints and all his elect as well.

XIII

HOW THE HOLY FATHER WAS MADE POPE

Holy Scripture recounts how the people of God were slaves in Egypt for four hundred years under the rule of Pharaoh, who afflicted that people with so many harsh tasks that they did not rest day or night and could never sacrifice to the God of heaven, until the glorious God sent them Moses and Aaron, who freed that people from Pharaoh's hands. Just so we might say that in the present time the glorious God has remembered his Christian people, who, because of the schism, did not know their true pastor and went wandering from the way of truth, since the church of God was divided for thirty years and in the hands of two pastors. One part held that the Roman pope was the true pope, while many others thought it was the one in Avignon; and because of this division those who were true servants of God remained in continuous affliction of spirit, constantly weeping and praying in desire for the unity of the holy church. But our glorious God heeded the groans and heard the voices of his servants and sent another Moses to free the Christian people from the

hands of Pharaoh—that is, from the infernal devil who held many under his dominion because of the schism and many other faults. In particular the cardinals, bishops, and priests were corrupted by the sin of simony: they bought and sold the grace of the Holy Spirit for money; they helped themselves to benefices; and thus the house of the celestial Father had become a den of thieves. Every man looked to his own profit, and no one cared about restoring peace and unity in the church of God.

When the Lord Jesus Christ saw how his Father's house was corrupted by sins, he was moved by his usual kindly charity, and in the year 1406 he sent his vicar to right his little boat. This was Messer Angelo Correr, a Venetian nobleman, who was named Pope Gregory XII: a man of great sanctity, a doctor [of theology], adorned with the greatest virtues.[50] When the Roman pope died, by general agreement he was elected as a man zealous for the honor of God and the church, and he humbly accepted with a promise to restore unity, for he had always longed to see the holy church in peace. Since he often demonstrated his feelings for the church, once, while he was still bishop or rather patriarch of Castello, a servant of God told him that he had seen his name written in three colors, black, red, and gold; the black signified that he was a bishop, while the red indicated that he would be a cardinal and the gold that he would be pope. Hearing this, he said in reply, "If the Lord God allows this to come to pass, I shall strive to see that unity is established. I will send to the antipope and, if need be, I will renounce the papacy." He did exactly what he said. Twelve days after his coronation, with his cardinals' approval, he sent a messenger to the antipope in Avignon, saying that he was prepared to renounce the papacy if the antipope would step down as well, in order that the holy church might be led by a single pastor.

This most holy man sent by God, meek and humble like another Moses, struggled to free the Christian people from Pharaoh's clutches, beginning with the clergy. He especially wanted the cardinals to live justly and without simony. He himself, like a true pastor, did not sell benefices for money but lavishly dispensed the grace of the Holy Spirit upon just and worthy persons, and thus he furnished his little boat with good pastors. He created cardinals, bishops, and many prelates who were all men of good life and reputation, and so the holy church began to flourish in the freedom of the Holy Spirit. The glorious God sent him our father Brother Giovanni Dominici as his aid and comfort, almost like another Aaron for Moses, and he always encouraged him in this good initiative and in seeking holy unity. When the holy father wished to do what he had promised—negotiate with the antipope—he could not find

50. Angelo Correr, bishop of Castello (that is, Venice), was elected pope on November 30, 1406.