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The Life of Raymond "The Palmer"

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the life of raymond "the palmer"

(by Rufino, early thirteenth century)

translated by

Kenneth Baxter Wolf



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Medieval Texts in Translation

Raymond "The Palmer" (Palmario or Palmerio) of Piacenza (d. 1200) is a good example of a medieval pilgrim saint who, after the death of his wife and five children, committed himself to an endless series of pilgrimages to various shrines, including Jerusalem. Raymond ultimately suspended his itinerant life, dedicating himself to the relief of the poor and sick in his native Piacenza. This transformation made him typical of the lay "civic saints" who dominated Italian hagiography from the late twelfth to the late thirteenth centuries.

The Life of Raymond "the Palmer," written in Latin by Rufino, then translated anonymously into Italian, and now newly rendered into Latin, faithfully restored from the Italian manuscript of the archive of the nuns of St. Raymond of Piacenza.[1]

The author's preface and the dedication of the work:

To the humble servants of Jesus Christ, the poor[2] of the hospital of our most blessed father Raymond "the Palmer,"[3] I, Rufino, the least of the masters in the Canonry of the Twelve Apostles, greet you.

1. My most beloved sons in the precious blood of the only begotten Son of the most pure Virgin, I cannot praise enough your desire and your most ardent prayers, with which you a short time ago inspired me--indeed, almost compelled me, to commit to writing the life of Raymond, your most holy father and mine, from its beginning, through its happy course, to its most commendable end, and to record his marvelous powers and his stupendous miracles, most of which I saw with my own eyes, the most clement Lord God being present in him, our blessed father. Many of you, dear sons, being intimately familiar with him, have described most clearly to me his piety as well as the unimaginable toils and harsh journeys that our most pious father endured day and night to lend his assistance to this hospital,[4] fully devoted to the poor and the sick.

2. Despite all of this encouragement, which should have forestalled any hesitation on my part, I still imagined myself as unworthy of such a task, and thought to myself: "How could my effort

ever be worthy of such a holy father given that my skills as a narrator are so inept and, more importantly, that I am a sinner?" Because of this I abstained for some time. Indeed I would not have dared to do it even now if I had not been compelled by the most urgent goading and reasonable arguments which were produced by our beloved brother and spiritual son, brother Gerard, a subdeacon in our canonry, and the only living son of our blessed father Raymond. In this regard, I want you to know, most blessed sons, that when I was laid up for a time, gripped by a very serious fever, this very son of our father Raymond came to my narrow cell with a truly anxious soul and, despairing about my illness, prostrated himself before my humble bed and, in tears, began to speak.

3. "Woe is me, dear master! If you should die now who will leave behind written testimony of the happy and holy life of my blessed father, who was, as you know best of all, the clearest mirror of virtue to all of us in this city of Piacenza: an indefatigable refuge to the poor of the hospital; and, to those who will come after him in the future, the most diligent guardian and example to all of goodness, in particular of patience, humility, and perseverance. I beg you, my dear master, don't put off the task any longer. Consider that perhaps it was divine justice that afflicted you with this illness so that you would come to realize your own negligence. Don't reject this admonishment, offered out of filial piety. Considering the ardent love that you feel toward God, toward my blessed father, and toward me, his unworthy son, I entreat you to set your mind to applying your hand to this sacred work as soon as you are free from this illness. I trust that the cumulative merits of my sacred father will be available to assist you in the future."

4. Overcome by this well-argued request, I turned my mind to God and to my blessed father Raymond, deciding that if the burning fever should leave me, I would apply myself to the execution of this sacred task without further delay. Restored to good health three days later, I confirmed my intention. May you accept this, my narrative, in which I have laid it all out, so that I might speak out and make my blessed father Raymond known to everyone. Lest perchance I be accused of being rash for daring to write such unbelievable things about a simple, frank, and unlettered man like Raymond, I will draw only upon those things to which I or you were eye-witnesses, or those things witnessed by others who have sworn to their veracity with a hand on the sacred gospels. Let us therefore, in the name of God, set in order what we have been describing, dividing it into appropriate chapters.

Chapter 1: The homeland, parents, and condition of S. Raymond; the death of his father; his pilgrimage with his widowed mother to the Holy Land, and his return.

5. As regards his homeland, blessed Raymond was a Piacenzan, being born in the city of Piacenza itself. He had parents who were neither illustrious in origin nor completely lowborn. They were private citizens who were neither rich nor poor, if you consider domestic matters. The blessed father was of medium height and slender of body. Though thin and reduced, he was agile and expedient when it came to getting things done. He had an adroit mind, equipped with an inborn prudence and a wonderfully temperate candor, which might even have been seen as a dove-like simplicity. He shrank from distrust as well as from joking, and knew neither shrewdness nor simulation when dealing with people. He was a man of good and sincere faith with reference to whom you might aptly cite the scripture that reads: "Behold an Israelite in whom there is no guile." [5]

6. Raymond's mother educated and reared her child at home. But when he had reached approximately his twelfth year of age, he was sent off by his father to a certain workshop, not to dedicate himself to letters or learning, but to apply himself to his father's servile and ignoble craft and thus to learn those things necessary to engage in commerce. This kind of skill was such

that it could not be mastered through argumentation; those who wish to become shoemakers are led not by science but by conjecture.[6] It is however true that regardless of what kind of craft it was, it would have been displeasing to that remarkable young man. Still, though born for a greater purpose than this, Raymond had to keep his suffering to himself. Being under the power of his father, the boy had to tolerate this craft for some time. Thus he submitted to the mandate of God, who demanded, by divine law,[7] that honor and obedience be given to ones parents.

7. Blessed Raymond had already reached the years of puberty or adolescence, which begin in the fourteenth year, when his father passed from this brief life to his celestial homeland. The holy young man [Raymond], considering himself to have been liberated, decided to say good-bye to the dark workshop, not so that he could pursue a life of leisure or to prostitute himself to vices as ordinary adolescents are wont to do, but to adhere more closely to his Savior through a life consecrated with all of his heart to divine obedience. So as to burn deeply with love for the blessed Jesus Christ, he decided to take a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulcher and to visit the sacred places that are in Jerusalem as well as those that lie nearby. But he did not wish to set out before he had asked his widowed mother and she had given her approval. Coming to see her one day, he entered a room with her alone and addressed her in this manner: “My dearest and most beloved mother, I give infinite thanks to my Creator, who has inspired me with the idea that I should leave distasteful matters and profane skills to profane men; that I should leave this land, say good-bye to all my friends and relatives and, embracing the cross of our sweet Savior Jesus, visit the Lord’s Sepulcher as a pilgrim. The only thing that troubles me, dear parent, is your care, for you who are alone and widowed and you have no other solace or refuge aside from me, your only son. Though I love you, consider what it says in the scripture: ‘He who loves father or mother more than me, is not worthy of my grace.’[8] Therefore, mother, I beg you. Do not be the reason why I give up the grace of my Savior, but instead send me off with your permission and your blessing.”

8. Hearing this, his most pious mother, drenched by her own copious tears, embraced her son and burst forth with these words: “O my dear and only light! O sole supporter of your wretched, widowed mother! Do not suffer for my sake. You could not have said anything more pleasing to me, especially at this time, finding myself released from the bonds of marriage and having no children--aside from you who, already reared, are no longer a boy—and being already being advanced in age. I had already decided to dedicate what remains of my life to the divine offices and to visiting holy places. I have asked that such grace be granted to me from the Creator, with which I might be able to emulate that holy widow Anna, who would not leave the Temple of God in Jerusalem even at night.[9] Be of good cheer! We shall go together, my son, to the Holy Sepulcher. Only death will keep me from it!”

9. Who here is able to comprehend in his mind the joy of this mother and her young son when they realized that they were both equally excited about the same pious plan. Both gave as much thanks as possible to the Lord God, who had enflamed them with spiritual desire once they had removed themselves from love and affection for this world. Then, with an eye to fulfilling their vows, they arranged everything that were necessary for the pilgrimage and, after saying goodbye to their friends and relatives, they approached the most venerable bishop[10] of the city of Piacenza and said: “Most revered father and shepherd, we have decided to leave, traveling abroad to the Holy Sepulcher. With our hands out together in the shape of a cross, we ask for that which pilgrims of this kind are wont to ask.” When the bishop recognized the reasonableness of the request made by a mother and her son, he placed a red cross on their chests. “Behold,” he said, “the sign that will keep you safe from all danger. May the most clement Savior guide you

there and bring you back unharmed. May you be mindful your homeland when you are praying there.”

10. Having gathered everything together, they left, not without many tears on the part of their relatives, neighbors, and friends. After facing many dangers and expending great effort, on land as well as sea, they finally reached the port for which they longed. As they explored the most holy city of Jerusalem, both of them overflowing with a most tender sense of piety, they contemplated in their souls the obstinate cruelty of the Jews, who were so blinded at that time that they surrendered the very author of life to his death. They also brought to mind the immense charity of the eternal Father who, in order to redeem sinning slaves, permitted his Son born of the undefiled Virgin to be nailed to a cross. When they went down to the Holy Sepulcher, they explored the site of the holy cross and, with sobs, sighs, and copious tears bursting from their breasts, they prayed most fervently in the following manner: “You, Lord, who died on account of our sins and was buried in this place, remember us! We beseech you, sweet Savior: accept our souls in peace. Don’t let them remain much longer in this valley of misery. The whole world seems to us to be smoke, nor will any part of it ever again be able to entice our senses, now that we have perceived with our own eyes and our own minds the sweet spiritual solace, with which this glorious place of your death, burial, and divine resurrection has affected us.”

11. After these two suppliants had visited the holy sites of Jerusalem and kissed them a thousand times and more, they made their way to the town of Bethlehem to venerate the palace--that is to say, the stable--of the Son of the most chaste Virgin. They fainted at the sight of a place so religious and so adorned, seized as they were with an interior sweetness of the spirit. Regarding as nothing all the places throughout the world that are thought of as sumptuous, they were totally absorbed in meditating on the goodness of the Lord of all things, who deigned to forgive the world for having rejected him. From there they went to the most holy and precious tomb of the glorious Virgin, located in the Valley of Jehosaphat; then to Bethany to the house of the beloved Magdalene, whom they regarded as most fortunate in so far as she sat at the feet of the sweet Master and listened to his divine and most wise words. After many days had passed and they had gone around to all the holy places, they began to think of returning to their homeland, so that they could share the marvelous things that they had seen with pious and religious people and ignite the frigid hearts of worldly men and women with divine love. So after they visited the sacred places again, splashing them with their tears one last time, they made their way back to the coast so that they could return by ship to Italy and once again see their homeland.

12. Blessed Raymond had suffered a great deal over the course of his pilgrimages from disagreeable food and drink, from protracted sleeplessness, from the effort and fatigue of the journey, and finally from the heat and the cold. But the miseries that he suffered on the ship that was to bring him home were twice as onerous, in so far as he was afflicted with a serious disease. It proceeded from the bilge of the ship, as it breathed out an intolerable and rotten pestilence, infecting the air all around. When the rains poured down, this most patient father was exposed to much of it since his place on the ship was one that was not in the least bit protected. These evils, added to the previous ones, contributed more and more to his burning fever, as divine providence tested the patience of its servant. After a few days, Raymond was so weakened that there seemed to be nothing left to him but his last breath.

13. When the sailors saw that he was almost dead, they decided to throw him into the sea, so that he would not die on the ship. They were operating under the superstitious belief that if anyone dies on a ship, there would henceforth be no protection for the vessel in the event of danger; it would, in short, sink and everyone would drown. Having taken counsel, they had already decided

to carry out this cruel crime, when Raymond's poor and widowed pilgrim mother, hearing of their plan, threw herself on the body of her son, spreading herself over it, and cried out with bitter tears: "Do not, you monsters, deprive a miserable widow of her only light. Do not take away my life's support. Do not remove the offspring from my womb. Leave my son to me, or throw me along with him into the depths of the sea. If you want to lighten the ship, begin with me, for I am laden with grief. Can you not see how my eyes have been turned into fountains of bitter tears? Trust in sweet Jesus, my sons, for the sake of whose love I and my son have withstood great difficulties. Pour forth your prayers alongside mine with unwavering trust. I expect that we will be heard by the divine goodness."

14. The sailors, swayed toward mercy by so many tears and sweet words, prostrated themselves and prayed in the following manner: "You, Lord, are a protector of poor pilgrims and a consoler of widows; you are a port for sailors and a cure for the sick. We beseech you, Lord, that you accept our prayers and that you restore your servant Raymond to health, lest we inflict an act of cruelty on his miserable mother." Scarcely had they pronounced this prayer when the good father [Raymond] began to speak. Weeping, he said: "The Lord God has punished me with this illness; but he has not given death any power over me." Hearing these words, his mother and the sailors praised God together, saying: "Blessed be your name! Blessed are you, our Protector, you who do not desert those calling upon You with sincere faith!" Not many days later, the good father was completely restored to health.

Chapter 2: The death of the saint's mother; his marriage and study of Christian teachings; the death of his five children; his love of continence; the birth and surrender of his last son; the death of his wife.

15. After that difficult and perilous journey had been completed and the ship had arrived safely in Italy, but before the two had actually reached Piacenza, Raymond's poor mother, so shaken with concern and so exhausted from the exertion, fell ill. When she sensed that she was not far away from the end of her burdensome life, she summoned her son and said: "Dear Raymond, my sweet son, I see that the time is at hand in which my Creator is inviting me to rest and to receive the long-desired reward for the labors that I have undertaken. Therefore I ask that you not receive this with a sad heart. You know that Jesus blessed me once by giving me life, but in death the reward will be eternal. I am not deserting you, son. I am simply going to prepare a holy place for you."

16. Good Raymond lowered his eyes and, repressing his tears, restrained his weeping, lest he seem upset about his beloved mother's happy ending and in the process offend divine mercy, which he realized was working for the good in all matters pertaining to his loved ones. He responded: "Most sweet mother, the Lord God offered himself to us as a companion in each of our pilgrimages. We have fulfilled our pious vows. If it please his Majesty to separate us now, what else is there left to be said, except: may his most just will be done! I beg you, holy parent, when you come before your and my Savior, that you make it clear to him in your own words that I have had enough of this life. To live without you, dear mother, is an intolerable punishment for me. So pray, in the presence of God, that he may quickly gather my spirit too in peace." After that, the mother received the sacraments of the church, and a few days later she gave up her life. The pious son closed his beloved mother's eyes and carried out the funeral rites most religiously amid many tears.

17. Once his dear mother had been buried, good Raymond, seeing that he had been left all alone, directed his soul toward the Lord God and said, weeping: "O how wretched am I now that both my father and mother have left me. But I trust in you, Lord, that you will adopt me. I beg you,

Lord, be my father and my mother! I place my hope in nothing but you. Trusting in that hope, I will now return to my homeland.” So good Raymond set out on his journey home, dressed in the habit of a pilgrim--which those who return from the Holy Sepulcher customarily wear--and displaying certain signs: a red cross on his pure chest and a palm branch in his hand—the latter of which leading him to assume the cognomen “Palmer.” There are those who think that his family was already called “Palmer,” but regarding this there is no clear evidence to report. When he finally arrived at Piacenza, Before heading to his own home, he made his way to the cathedral and presented himself, with the symbols of his pilgrimage, to the most venerable bishop. Then, giving thanks to the Creator for the benefits he had received, he accepted the bishop’s blessing and was then welcomed in his own home by a crowd of relatives and friends with a singular expression of goodwill.

18. A few days after his return to his homeland, Raymond’s relatives began to suggest the following to him: “Brother Raymond, if you continue to live alone as a single man, you will have to work very hard, for you have no one to take care of your affairs. Let us assist you in taking a wife.[11] Remember that married people are also capable of serving God; In fact marriage was instituted by God.”[12] Good Raymond allowed himself to be persuaded. Indeed Divine Goodness permitted it, so that his servant would experience the miseries that he [and his wife], joined in matrimony, would have to suffer, with her needing to be governed and the household needing to be administered, and the children needing to be fed and reared. So Raymond married and, knowing that his patrimony was not enough to support a family, he returned to the workshop, to that trade--that is, shoemaking--that he had learned at the command of his father. He turned to it completely and, without deceit or avarice, made enough to feed himself, his wife, and his children, with enough left over to be generous in his almsgiving to the poor.

19. But the craft of shoemaking was not pleasing to Raymond, since it diverted his soul from its spiritual purpose. So during those few hours that he was able to set aside by applying himself with greater intensity to his work, he gave some effort to matters of the soul. He did this especially in anticipation of holy days, so that he could converse with religious men, outstanding in their probity and their teaching, for Raymond was inspired by the desire to familiarize himself with divine law and sacred letters. Indeed he made such progress in that area that even though he was unlettered—which is not to say that he lacked the gift of divine wisdom--he appeared to be the most learned of those connected to God and to the Catholic religion. In order to turn profane men-- especially those who practiced his particular craft--away from lascivious stories and useless amusements, he would, on holy days, chose for himself a certain workshop, where he could preach, in an informal way and with the great ardor of his charity, to his fellows, the true teachings of God’s holy law. Thus he shared with them the reasons for living according to the divine precepts, for following virtue, and for fleeing vice.

20. It was not long before the fame of Good Raymond had grown to the point that, on holy days, as soon as it was ascertained which house or workshop he was to be found in, many would rush to it to hear his ardent words. Some asked him to hold the assembly in a public place, even in the forum itself. But this humble servant of God refused to do so, asserting repeatedly that that was the duty of priests and learned men; that errors could creep into his words, since he was not a man educated in letters.[13] Knowing himself well, Raymond would not acquiesce to counsel of this kind. Nevertheless the homey and humble exhortations that he delivered in the presence of his colleagues in the workshop that whenever they pondered a certain religious matter, they would rush to none other than Good Raymond, their father and spiritual leader.

21. This servant in the works of God organized his life according to the example of holy Tobias:[14] modest in eating, assiduous in almsgiving, and indefatigable with regard to fasting, prayer, and the divine offices. He rehearsed the confession of his sins often and with a truly contrite heart so that he might enjoy the sacred mass, which was followed by a flood of his tears. For the entire time that he lived in his body on earth, he was busy directing his whole mind toward heaven. He was accustomed to dressing modestly. He corrected and taught his wife like a daughter, loved her like a sister, and venerated her like a mother. From her he received a number of children. It was his habit to offer them to the Lord God, author of all good things, while each of them was being immersed in the sacred font. He would say: "These ones bear your image, Lord. You bestowed them on me; now I present them back to you, since they were created by you. Their life and death is in your hands."

22. Knowing that his servant would not be able to apply himself with all of his heart to the efforts of a spiritual life given the bonds of marriage and the concerns associated with rearing children, the Good Creator took pity on him and sought to give him some freedom from all this. So within the space of a single year, He gathered up all of Raymond's young children from this life.[15] As a result of the instinctive love of a father for his children, this grieved Raymond. But he concluded that it had happened in accordance with the divine will and so he acquiesced totally, applying to himself that dictum associated with holy Job: "'The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. May the name of the Lord be blessed.'"[16] Thus have I been conveniently freed from profane concerns."

23. The death of his children extinguished in blessed Raymond all desire associated with this life. Seeking to dedicate himself completely to God, he began to encourage his wife to agree to maintain sexual continence from that point on. For the time was at hand in which it was appropriate for them both to transfer all of their love to God, not to work to create new offspring. But she, being little drawn to celestial things, impudently responded in the following manner: "When I become a nun, I will pay heed to your warnings. But for now it is certainly as a wife--and not as a widow or a nun--that I am governed by you." Being prudent, and noting his wife's imperfection and peril, the servant of God did not want to push her in a troublesome fashion. So they lived together in peace and without sin.[17]

24. It happened by divine providence that she bore yet another child and Raymond saw himself returning to servitude.[18] One day when his wife was out he took in his arms his child, wrapped up just as he lay in his cradle, and made for Piacenza and the church of S. Brigid,[19] where he was accustomed to attending the divine office in the presence of the sacred image of the cross. Lifting the small boy up as high as he was able, he prayed: "My Lord and Savior, you who open your arms to all those who flee to you, I beg you, just as you took my five sons up to you at a tender age, receiving them as co-heirs to eternal happiness, deign to accept my new little son, who was unexpectedly given to me by you. I beg you to do this, my Savior, so that he will not be separated from his brothers. But if you should decree for him a longer life, then let me offer and dedicate him right now, chaste and pure, to this servant of holy religion (S. Brigid), to whom I wish him one day to be assigned." His prayers completed, Raymond secretly returned the child to its cradle, saying nothing about the matter to his wife.

25. After offering his young son to the most sweet Savior, the desire was fixed even deeper in Raymond's breast to strive, in so far as he was able, for perpetual continence. Still he did not wish to cross his wife, knowing that she was unlikely to give her consent. But the Lord God, in his wisdom, opened up another path for Raymond to achieve his goal. He permitted Raymond's wife to be afflicted with an incurable disease, so that she would by no means be able to engage in

any more conjugal activity. As a result, the servant of God was able to fulfill his vow without upsetting his wife and without sinning. Her illness lasted many days and months, afflicting Raymond himself with no little discomfort. He tried to encourage his wife with his constant commiseration, sighing: "It is on account of me, that this evil has befallen you, my sister. I would happily take it upon myself." But it pleased the Lord God to preserve his servant for more noble and useful pursuits and at the same time to free his wife, already totally exhausted by the long illness, from her suffering. Thus he allowed her--once her soul had been properly prepared, tamed by perfect patience--to leave this life. Blessed Raymond, released from the bonds of marriage, then confirmed his intention to live in perpetual chastity and continence.

Chapter 3: Having left everything behind, he sets out on pilgrimages, until, commanded by Christ to return, he dedicates himself completely to works of mercy in his own homeland according to the instructions he received from Him.

26. Seeing himself unburdened from his father, his mother, his wife, and his children—with the exception of his youngest child--the Servant of God relentlessly turned his soul inward and totally shook off his concern and desire for fleeting things. Since it was clear to him that rearing his little son would be a hindrance for him, he was divinely inspired to approach his parents-in-law. Carrying the small child in his arms, and deposited him in their presence, saying: "To you, my honorable and dear father-in-law, and to you, my mother-in-law, I offer and commit this little child, born of your daughter and me. Take care, I beseech you, that he be reared correctly and be educated, imbued with good letters, so that he turns out to be religious and upright and useful, for I have offered him to the blessed Jesus Christ. I am placing all of my resources at your disposal. Spend them for the good of my son who is now yours. For my part I am bound and determined to renounce the world and to head off for those holy places where the bodies of the saints are honored, especially to Rome and to the church of St. James in Galicia,[20] to St. Anthony's,[21] and to the rest of the most celebrated places. I will never return here nor will you ever see me again. I will not let myself be detained any longer. I will apply whatever remains of my life to undertaking continuous pilgrimages. I have asked my Savior to grant me only one thing: that my journey finally come to an end where his most holy body--born from the most pure Virgin--was buried.

27. When Raymond's parents-in-law had heard these things, they both rushed to embrace him and responded, with no few tears, as follows: "Beloved son-in-law, it pleases us greatly that you have brought this young child to us and have committed him to our care. Since you have no one in your household to take care of him, he will be fittingly reared and educated right here. But we are by no means able to bear the fact that you want to leave your homeland and spend your life in misery, in the manner of unhappy and hopeless men, wandering here and there, for whom there is no rest anywhere. This will be as hard for us as it is shameful for you. Why not come and live with us, leaving the care of the child to us so that you can dedicate yourself to fulfilling your pious obligations right here? You would thus be doing something very pleasing to us. Is it not possible for you to serve your Creator in your homeland, as rich as it is in sacred relics?"[22] Raymond gave his heartfelt thanks for their offer, but he declined to follow their advice to remain in his homeland, saying that having had his liberty restored by the Lord God, he simply could not stay, this having been divinely inspired in him. He also argued that he would be of more use to their souls absent and far away than he would be if he remained close at hand. So over the next few days he disposed of all of his possessions as if he were about to die and secretly left Piacenza lest he meet someone who might try to detain him. He was well aware that the advice offered by his worldly family and friends was not healthy for his soul.

28. Setting out from Piacenza, Raymond did not stop before he had reached the church of St. James in Galicia. All the while he supported himself through begging, always with great patience and a humble soul. After paying his respects to the body of the most holy Apostle, he made his way back toward Italy, by way of the relics of the most holy Magdalene and from there to that bitter place of penance not far from Marseilles.[23] Then he hastened through Provence, to the bodies of the “Three Marys” and to those of Sts. Martha and Lazarus.[24] He then made his way to St. Anthony[25] and St. Bernard.[26] Once he had entered Italy again, he venerated whatever pious sites he found there, especially the relics of St. Augustine in the Pavia region. He then went on to Rome where he was able to spend several days visiting the sacred remains of the Prince of the Apostles and of the most holy martyrs and virgins. He then decided to visit Jerusalem a second time planning to stay in that holy place for the rest of his life. But, lo and behold, while he was waiting for an opportunity to cross the sea, he received an admonition from our Savior, which we will now recount.

29. When Blessed Raymond was in Rome, sleeping under a certain portico at St. Peter’s basilica in the manner of a poor pilgrim, blessed Jesus Christ appeared to him dressed as if he were on a pilgrimage, just as he had formerly appeared to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus,[27] and he spoke to him as follows: “My servant Raymond, your requests have been pleasing to me, so up until this now I have respected your pious wishes to go on pilgrimage, and for that reason I liberated you from your servitude to your wife and children. But now you have seen all of the holy places, which are the most pleasing, and nothing of your vow remains except to return to my holy Sepulcher. But this plan is not acceptable to me. Instead I want you to occupy yourself with works of mercy, for such things are more pleasing to me and more helpful to you. You should not think that the kind of pilgrimages and pious exercises [in which you have been engaging thus far] will be held in particular regard by me at the time of judgment, when I will say: ‘Come, blessed of my Father. Take possession of the kingdom of heaven. I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in jail and you ransomed me.’[28] And so I do not want you, my son, to travel about the world anymore. I want you to return to your homeland of Piacenza, where there are so many poor people and so many who are sick and oppressed by various calamities who beg for my mercy; for there is no one there to help them. You will go and I will be there with you and I will give you grace, with which you will be able to lead the rich to almsgiving, rival parties to peace, and those who have strayed--especially wayward women--to a proper way of life.”

30. The faithful servant of God responded in a humble voice: “Lord, I am not well suited for assuming such a task, for I am an ignorant and uneducated man without the initiative necessary to act. Moreover I am full of sin. I beg you, Lord; do not send me to my fellow citizens. You have seen how contentious, how bitterly divided among themselves they can be. They will not listen to me and thus I will labor in vane. I know their ways. Did you yourself, Lord, not once assert that a man is not accepted in his own country?”[29] The Savior responded: “Why do you despair, Raymond, when human hearts lie in my hands and I can incline them toward anyone I wish. I will add virtue, spirit, and grace to your words and prudence to your direction so that no one will be able to contradict you.”

31. “You will return to Piacenza and there you will commence using these symbols of your pious purpose: You will dress in a garment the color of the sky, that extends down to the middle of your legs, with loose sleeves and no hood. You will always carry my cross over your shoulder, executing every act of piety in its name and under its power. You will establish through your

own effort a pious place for the indigent and for pilgrims. Inscribed with your name, it will remain forever in perpetual memory of its founder. Rise and do what I say. Do not despair. Leave Rome, where you are wasting your time and energy, and make your way to your own country. I will make it so that you will be welcomed as my servant and messenger. Before you enter the city, you will first dress in accordance with my instructions, and then, with my cross placed on your shoulder, you will visit the bishop, to whom you will explain the idea that you intend to carry out in my name. I will cause him to be supportive of your plans.” After Blessed Raymond fully understood this to be his Savior’s intention, he acquiesced to it: “You are my Lord and I, your servant. Thy will be done.” And with that the heavenly vision disappeared.

32. En route from Rome to Piacenza, Raymond came to the village of Taro,[30] where he put on the clothing that he had been commanded to wear. Then he made for himself a wooden cross, two cubits[31] long and proportionately wide. He covered his head with only the cap that travelers typically wear.[32] On his shoulder he carried the holy cross as well as a large bag in which he would put alms destined for the poor. When he finally came to Piacenza, all of those who saw him were dumbfounded by his unaccustomed appearance. A large number of them followed him to the cathedral church, but he neither spoke nor responded to anyone. Modestly keeping his voice and his gaze low, he went to the bishop,[33] whose blessing he sought. “Most venerable father,” he said, “though I had decided in my heart never to return to my homeland again, my Savior urged me to do so and, with your favor, to dedicate myself completely--in the name of the holy cross--to seeking alms for the indigent, to gathering together poor pilgrims, and to reconciling enemies. I will be able to do none of these things without your good will.

Therefore I beseech you, most venerable father, by the command and words of my Savior, to reach out your helping hands for the sake of this most holy exercise, for which I admit I am completely unworthy.

33. The most venerable prelate received the servant of God with great happiness and said: “May our Savior, who sent you here, always be blessed! I will help and protect you in whatever way that I am able.” Taking leave of the bishop, Raymond did not wish to go to his own house, as if he was still master of it, for he had already transferred all of his resources to his in-laws when he had consulted them with regard to his young son. Many offered him their hospitality, but it did not please him to turn to any of them. Seeing his in-laws again, he spoke to them as follows: “I left a pauper and I return a pauper, not out of any desire of my own, but because it is the will of my Savior. I want to live a life of poverty and be of service to the poor.” Then he shared with them the reasons for his decision. They did not dare to try to dissuade him lest they appear to be obstructing divine will.

34. When Raymond realized that in order to fulfill this task properly he would need a pious and spacious place, he selected a dwelling next to the canonry of the Twelve Apostles--granted to him by these same canons—that was big enough for collecting alms and well-suited for offering hospitality to the poor of both sexes whether they be pilgrims or sick people. Having obtained this, blessed Raymond began to search the entire city for indigent people who were prevented from begging either by their shame or by some infirmity. Once he had secured information about these sorts, he openly sought alms for them throughout the entire city, carrying his cross on his shoulder and calling out with a tense voice: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. But woe to you, O greedy rich men, because a final judgment will be pronounced upon you!”[34] The good and the liberal were ignited by his words, while the avaricious and hardhearted were terrified; and as a result he obtained large amounts of alms from both. He did not, however, accept any alms that were not voluntarily given, because he wanted them to them

to be able to take away some merit in exchange for their donations. Carrying these things home with him, he distributed them with great fairness to the poor, the sick, and the modest, keeping only the smallest portion for himself.

35. A huge crowd of beggars rushed toward him, pleading for some portion of the alms that he had collected. The blessed servant of God said to them: “Why not go and ask for alms as you are wont to do? You are not sick and you are accustomed to the shame of it.” They called back to him: “We do beg, but we get nothing for our efforts.” When he heard this, the blessed Raymond was ignited in his charity and so roused himself against the hard-heartedness of the wealthy. Taking up the holy cross on his shoulder, he ordered the pitiful ones to follow him and, made his way from one crossroads to the next, shouting: “Help, help, O cruel and hard-hearted Christians, for I am dying of hunger while you live in abundance.” The citizens, especially the women, were struck by his voice. Some rushed to their windows, others rushed from their previously locked doors into the street, saying: “Come, Raymond, come and eat. Do not torture yourself so.” But he, stepping forward, said: “I do not have just this one mouth—which, by the way, I willingly allow it to be vexed with hunger. In truth I have many mouths, as many as you see before you dying of hunger. Therefore I entreat you, through this most holy cross, to have mercy on the poor of Jesus Christ.” Saying this, he lifted the blessed cross into the air. Having witnessed such charity on the part of the servant of God, everyone was moved to pity and kindly gave aid to the miserable flock of beggars. Raymond’s reputation grew in such a short time, that all who were afflicted, infirm, or poor, both those who suffered in public as well as those hidden from view, regarded him as a surrogate father and protector. Moreover many pious men left their homes and came to him so that they might bring their collective effort to bear on such a holy task by collecting alms and ministering to the sick and especially to the pilgrims who were welcomed there as guests.

36. Blessed Raymond observed that beyond the acts of mercy that needed to be performed, he also needed to provide shelter for men and for women. So as to avoid giving the group any occasion for sin or disgrace, he decided to separate the men’s and the women’s quarters. He did this by assigning the women to a particular domicile adjacent to the Canonry of the Twelve Apostles which was somewhat better furnished and yet more closed off. To this shelter Raymond admitted not only female pilgrims but also impoverished citizens of Piacenza who were destitute of all property. Raymond did not hesitate to accept even those women who had come from dens of iniquity, hoping that he might make them repent for their sins and thereafter want to lead a life of chastity. He guided them by mature and blameless example, having committed them to the custody of matrons who were of great purity.

37. After as much time as prudence required had passed, Raymond asked each of these women what type of life she wanted to lead from then on. Some responded that they thought themselves more suited for married life, whereby they could pursue with greater security their plans to lead honest lives. Raymond himself provided for the wishes of these, collecting dowries for them from upright men. Others replied that they wished to continue to cultivate the chaste life that they had been living. Raymond took care to have them admitted to decent, cloistered monasteries, knowing full well how hard it would be to preserve their virtue unimpaired in the outside world, especially when only a short time ago they were used to such baseness. There were also those who wanted to deviate from his chaste counsel and return to their prior shame. Whenever this great servant of God realized this, he would chastise such women with the most humane words, using his great spirit to exhort them to shame. “Consider, daughters” he said, “how unhappy your condition is. If you return to such filthy activities, you will by all means

prostitute your honor, you will lose your souls, you will be bound to the infamy of men, and you will die in misery. I beseech you, my daughters, on behalf of this holy cross, on behalf of the most pure Virgin, and on behalf of Jesus Christ himself, who deigned to die for you: take pity on your own souls and be not unmindful of such a great favor.” Some of these women ultimately yielded to his ardent persuasion, but others remained obdurate. These he quietly expelled from his hospice lest they succeed in infecting the more upright women with the disease of their shameful example.

Chapter 4: His charity toward widows and orphans, toward people in conflict, toward captives, and toward sick and destitute children. His holy death.

38. His sincere sanctity produced such respect for Blessed Raymond, that poor people, widows, orphans, and others rushed to him--the common parent and protector of all the wretched--whenever they were iniquitously vexed by others and were unable to obtain a judgment before the judges and magnates. They called out: “Servant of God, help us. We lack the money we need to go to contend with our adversaries in judgment.” Informed of such an injury, Raymond became inflamed and, like another Elijah,[35] welcomed the sorrowful ones, saying:

“Remember, sons, that those who undergo adversity out of love of their Creator are blessed. So have heart and be hopeful. You will not be without my assistance.” Having said this, he prostrated himself in front of his most holy cross and prayed in the following manner: “You know, Lord, that the poor have been left to you. You promised that you would be their helper always. Therefore I beg you, my Savior, through this most holy cross, that you provide me with the power I need to protect your poor from iniquitous judges.”

39. Then, rising from his prayer, with his cross placed on his shoulder and his whole heart caught up in God, Raymond made his way to the tribunal. There, taking the cross in his hands, he spoke out about injustice in the presence of the judges: “Love and administer justice to the needy, O you judges who judge here on earth. Remember that you also will be placed in judgment, judged by him who died for you on the cross. Remember that after this life you will not be doing the judging; instead you will be the ones being judged.” Raymond added the holiness of his life to the power and weightiness of his words, so that he was not interrupted by the magnates and the prefect of the city. And when he managed to be heard, many things were accomplished by these same men. Indeed if the city faced a particular difficulty or danger, these same ones would Blessed Raymond as if he were a prophet, and often deferred to his judgment with regard to what ought be done.

40. Raymond held peace--without which, he knew, nothing could be preserved--in such high regard that when he sensed contention or hatred between others, he would not rest until he had recalled them to concord. He was wont to use the following supplication: “Are you ignorant, my sons, that the Son of God himself descended from heaven to earth and that his life was placed on a most cruel cross, so that he might reconcile men to God? Why then do you want to be enemies to one another? Those who have enemies never have peace. They are spun around in constant danger, building traps for each other and themselves. They are deprived of the grace of the Savior, who commanded them to love one another.”[36] Not a few, influenced by his pious warnings, referred the causes of their dissension to Good Raymond so that he could put an end to them. Bestowing upon them the gift of his prudent counsel, he quickly restored them to grace.

41. Raymond could by no mean tolerate the factions and divisions that he saw tearing apart the citizens [of Piacenza]. In order to avert such things, he persisted with his assiduous prayers to God. Moreover, he spared no effort, in the presence of the most reverend bishop, in advising the following: “Do you not see, my father, how your sheep are being scattered? Then act! Show

them that you are their good shepherd. Lead them back together and compel them to be one, so that they might be a single flock, a united city.” To which the most venerable prelate, wounded [by Raymond’s words], responded: “My son, the problem is too deeply rooted. Only the omnipotence of God could restore concord.” Good Raymond then made his way to public places and when he noticed factions rising up and making an uproar and cursing one another, he called out, all the while crying and burdened down by his cross: “Woe to you, seditious Piacenza! God has already prepared a scourge with which to beat you. You will be plundered and set on fire. You will lose your fortunes and your lives. Because your body[37] is torn apart, you do not revere God.” This prophecy of the Servant of God turned out to be true, as the people of Piacenza learned first-hand after Raymond’s death.[38]

42. In Blessed Raymond’s time, Piacenza was torn not only by internal hatred, but by external wars. Cities were armed for mutual destruction, with armies from each side being compelled to fight. The people of Cremona in particular did just that against the people of Piacenza. When Raymond first learned that such armies were being assembled, he left Piacenza, armed only with his most holy cross. Going out to meet both battle lines, he cried out in a tearful voice: “Look to him, brothers, who did not hesitate to die to keep you from dying.[39] Why do you rush toward death, invading or attacking your neighbors for the sake of transitory wealth? Why do you hasten to inflict injury for things that are not eternal? Come, now, remember that you are Christians and imitate your Savior! Forgive, forgive, and make peace! Commit the whole matter to me, whom you might consider to be the fairest of arbiters.” And so, rushing first to one army and then to the next, Raymond strove to achieve concord. In the process he was not displeasing to the leaders of Piacenza, but those of Cremona repelled the servant of God with threats and no few lashes.

43. Raymond bore this all patiently, but still modestly assigned some blame when he said: “I seek only peace and you repay me with insults. My Savior will judge between your cause and mine.” These words enraged the people of Cremona even more, so that they dragged Raymond to Cremona and put him in jail so that they would no longer be bothered by him. There Raymond directed his cries up toward heaven--cries which everyone who was present there could hear--saying: “My Savior, I commend your paupers back to you. I fear they will die of hunger while I am detained here as a captive. Whatever might happen to me, I am prepared to undergo not only the discomforts of prison, but even death. May you turn the hostile souls of both of these peoples toward peace. Forgive the people of Cremona, Lord, who threw me into this place. For they do not know what is in store for them.” Scarcely had the citizens of Cremona heard this when, having been made aware of the exceptional sanctity of Blessed Raymond, they made arrangements to free him and restore him to his own people. They begged forgiveness for the injuries he had sustained because they feared the avenging presence of God. Indeed the terror of divine judgment stayed with those who had confined him to prison, to the point that when the life of Blessed Raymond had ended, they visited his tomb as suppliants to obtain forgiveness from him.[40] They feared him even more after he was dead than they had feared him when he was still alive, well aware of how powerful and terrible God can be through his saints.

44. Many times it happened that Blessed Raymond would see a large crowd of mounted men preparing to compete in Trojan games, or some other kind of gladiatorial context in which brawling, injury, and murder were commonplace. He being so alien to these ludicrous contests, his entire being would become agitated and he would rebuke them, saying: “Our Savior does not want you to exercise your fury by engaging in the games of brutal, savage beasts. He wants you to establish ones that are decent, peaceful, and civil; ones that serve to relax the soul. He does not want anyone risking his life out of a desire for empty glory but for the safe-keeping of the

fatherland and for the authority of divine law. If therefore the love of your Savior has touched you, be concerned about saving your souls as well as your bodies and leave these pernicious contests behind.” So he spoke. But because the crowd was full of youths, who are typically excited by the fervor of blood and the thirst for glory, his admonishment was in vain. He used to make his way to the most venerable bishop and to the city magistrate, not leaving before they had followed him to site of such a contest with the intention of disrupting and breaking up the games through their intervention. Raymond did not care that his actions were displeasing to those unstable and inconsiderate youths, for in the process he had subverted occasions of sin.

45. Blessed Raymond was assiduous in visiting prisoners, bringing those things with him that he had secured that were suitable for healing the bodies of these wretched ones, so that he could prepare them to accept a cure for their souls. After they had recovered their strength, he offered them the following words: “My sons, the end of this life is not the same for everyone: one may die in bed, another in war, another at sea, another in solitude; this one might die a spontaneous death, that one might meet a violent death. Do not give up your hope and your souls based on the type of death that you are facing, “lest you be frightened by those things that can kill the body but which, after that, cannot do anything else to you.”[41] Instead fear that which, after you are dead, has the power to send people to hell, just as my Savior, who was sacrificed for your sake on this most cruel cross, said.[42] Make the decision, my sons, to change your lives and your ways from this point on. Place your faith in the mercy of the Savior. To the extent that I am able, I will not let you be abandoned.”

46. The power of his prayer, which flowed forth from Raymond’s most ardent charity, was such that he found no one, no matter how much his soul had been given over to shameful things, whom he could not convert to piety and patience. Inspired by God, Raymond understood when their penance was serious and their intention to do good was solid. He knew that they would someday, through their holy works and the illustrious examples that they provided, be useful to the people of God. He begged for the release of such as these in the presence of the judges and officials. “Lord judge,” he used to say: “I have fathered a spiritual son who has much to offer Christian society. I beg you, through this holy cross--which gave true life to us, decorated by the death of the Son of the most pure Virgin--I beg you to give him to me. You will not be sorry. He will most certainly be a comfort to the entire city.” The judges, moved by the well-known sanctity of the man and by the voice of God speaking through him, assented without hesitation to what had been asked of them. Many who were thus released remained steadfast in their virtue, attentively weighing the dangers of secular life, and, at the urging of blessed Raymond, embracing the religious life at the canonry of the Twelve Apostles, where they most faithfully served God.

47. If I were to try to describe one by one all of blessed Raymond’s virtues, all of his labors, and each of his pious works, an entire year would not be sufficient for the task. So I think it will suffice to have briefly culled a few from them, for the glory of God and his saint and as an example to those living now as well as to those who will come in the future. So I will not mention how many times he came upon children here and there who had been abandoned and secretly cast aside; children whom he carried--often two at a time, one in each arm, lest they perish in their misery, all the while crying out of pity--back to his hospital to nurture with his care. Nor will I say how many sick people, especially foreigners and pilgrims, destitute and on the street without any resources, he carried on his own back. These things I pass over, so that I might move on to describe the laudable and blessed end of his life.

48. When that time, which Divine Mercy had preordained for bringing to an end and generously rewarding the toil and anguish of his servant, had arrived, Raymond was seized by a very serious fever. Since it only got worse with each passing day, the blessed one sensed that the time for his passing was approaching. So he asked that he be given the sacrament, which he received from the hands of the good priests in that place. Fortified in this way, he handed over all the cares and concerns of his hospital to his associates, who had, for twenty-two straight years, provided faithful labor to him in his pious efforts on behalf of the poor of Jesus Christ.[43] He spoke to those whom he summoned to his room in the following manner: "My brothers and comrades in these pious labors, fix my most holy cross before my eyes and listen to me. I give thanks first to you, my Savior, and to you, most holy cross, because I see that my pilgrimage and the course of my laborious life are now leading me to their long desired end. Next, I thank you, O faithful companions, who did and accomplished so much with me to feed and strengthen the poor, to whom I gave birth in the spirit of charity. And now I beseech you through this most holy cross in which I have placed all my hope: do not grow cold or be intimidated by the labors undertaken thus far. I bequeath to you this, place of mine as well as my needy ones, and at the same time I am entrusting you with this most holy cross. Place your faith in it; it will not be found wanting in the midst of any holy undertaking. The time is at hand for me to return to my Savior, from whom--trusting not in my own merit but in his infinite kindness--I expect eternal mercy.

49. Upon hearing such a sad message, his faithful comrades poured out their tears. "Holy Father," they said, "Do not leave us pitiful ones, for we are nothing without you. No matter how hard we work, we will not be able to sustain your holy task for long. You are our leader, our support, and our counsel. Holy Father, do not leave your paupers behind. Do you not see how shameful, how hard, how obstinate men can be? When you are gone, we will be pressured from the outside, and your paupers will be scattered." These words moved Blessed Raymond in his heart and he replied as follows: "I beg you, do not afflict my soul in the midst of such a welcome departure. Have faith, for I conquered the world, as unmerciful it was, and without a doubt I will be more useful to you and to my needy ones after my death, than I was as a living man; so you will be able to care for them not only in the usual appropriate fashion but even more abundantly." His dear comrades acquiesced to this response as if to a divine oracle, even though it pained them most bitterly to be separated from such a father.

50. Blessed Raymond was already on the verge of death when the image of his son, who was present with him at the time, came into his mind. "Come here, son," he said. "Reach out your hand to me and give me the kiss that you owe your parent. Then promise to do what I ask." His son approached and, with tears flowing from his eyes, kissed his father. Then Blessed Raymond said: "If you wish me to die content, then renounce the world and embrace the religious life on behalf of which I long ago removed you from your crib and presented you at the Church of S. Brigid in the presence of the image of my Savior. I have often admonished you about this, but up to now you have not fulfilled my wish. Do not put this off any longer, my son. Consider how the contours of this world are passing away and how death awaits nearby. Do not place your trust in the world's comfort and wealth. Think about real riches and how those who follow voluntary poverty will abound in them while greedy rich men will become beggars. May my Lord bless you, my son. Now close my eyes." Having said this, turning his serene face to the holy cross, he said: "In your arms and by your name and your power, I pass from this world to my Savior and Creator." And thus Raymond's most holy soul departed, led by holy angels.

51. As he observed this, the son dropped to his knees and closed the eyes of his blessed father with the greatest reverence. The rest of Raymond's associates who were present prostrated

themselves with equal veneration and kissed the sacred corpse, which gave off a heavenly odor that was not of this earth. Then they began to lament, shouting: "Woe to us, the unfortunate, who must live without a father! Be mindful, O holy soul, of your servants; remember your faithful promise." [44] Such was the happy death of Blessed Raymond "the Palmer" of Piacenza in the year 1200, the 26th of July, in the sixtieth year of his life. [45]

Chapter 5: The honoring of the dead body and its funeral. The conversion of Gerard. The rush to the sepulcher and the celebrated miracles.

52. Scarcely had that most holy soul departed when the news spread throughout the entire city, that Blessed Raymond had passed on from this life. The most important men in the city, the nobles, and the venerable matrons all rushed to his residence, not to mourn but to venerate the dead man and to commend themselves to the Servant of God, already in their opinion blessed and powerful with his great merit in the presence of the Savior. What a marvelous thing it was, beyond what you could possibly imagine would happen, to see the princes of the city, the counts, and the nobles all prostrated before the body of this little poor man. In their feelings of incredible piety, they contended with one another, some to touch or kiss his hand, others his foot, and others to obtain a piece cut from his garment. This rush to the body lasted for three days, after which it was decreed by the city leaders that the body be deposited in a precious sarcophagus and placed in the Canonry of the Twelve Apostles, in a place of honor, where it could be humbly approached and venerated by the faithful. They did not doubt that our Creator would illuminate the merits of our Servant with great prodigies, which did, in fact, come to pass.

53. But before he was brought there, his guests-- paupers and foster children [46] of both sexes-- made a worthy spectacle of their commiseration. They moaned in pity and, with their hands joined, wept before the sacred body, crying out: "O holy father! O shepherd, our teacher. What will become of us wretched ones? Who will feed us? Who will instruct us in virtue? Do not, holy Father, forget us and our care, for we have no hope except from you." Approaching his body were also the women whom he had led to an honest life--some who had been given in marriage, and others, as we mentioned above, who had been made nuns. These ones threw themselves on the ground with such emotion in their souls that it is impossible for them to complete their praises commemorating their father or to express the intolerable pain that followed from not being permitted to watch over and venerate him in that place where his sacred remains were to be deposited.

54. A short time after all of the things required for such a funeral had been prepared, the most venerable bishop [47] arrived with all of the clergy. He translated this holiest of bodies with the greatest of solemnity to the already mentioned canonry and deposited it there, so that Raymond's sacred tomb might be venerated more easily by anyone on bended knee. After the worthy celebration of Raymond's funeral had been carried out, his son came forth in the presence of the most venerable bishop and of the venerable prior of the canons, with all of the clergy present, as well as the leaders of the city, and, falling to his knees on the ground, he said: "Most venerable father, the time has finally come for me, the faithful son that was given to my blessed father (though my vices accuse me of being unworthy to be called his son), to request the religious habit. I beg you that I be admitted into this sacred canonry and be assigned to the care of my father's sepulcher. This is my only desire, so that someday I may be able to attain eternal happiness through his merits." Both requests were granted to him. After being dressed in religious garb, he was assigned as the caretaker of the sacred relics and he was given the name of Brother Gerard, as we already said in the prologue. It was at his request and in response to his

most urgent prayers that I accepted the task of arranging and writing this account, its lack of style so unequal to great sanctity that shown forth in Blessed Raymond.

55. After the holy body had been placed, as we just now described, in the previously mentioned canonry, a huge crowd of Christians, both inhabitants of the city and outsiders, rushed to it seeking help for their illnesses and other evils. Nor was there any lack of obvious miracles, through which the Lord made manifest the sanctity of His servant. The abundance of things, of money, of images that were offered there day after day was astounding, to the point where the leaders of the city, seeing this, considered selecting honest and pious men, especially from among the dear companions of Blessed Raymond, on whom they could place the burden of using these offerings to support the paupers in Raymond's hospital. And this was in fact done. Indeed the quantity and quality of the offerings turned out to be so great that they alone sufficed for this purpose.[48] Indeed it brought back to mind what Blessed Raymond had told them not long ago: that it would be easier for him to feed the poor as a dead man than it had been for him to do so when he was alive.

56. A few days later, when the city magistrates observed how this great flow of gifts continued unabated, they decreed that a "Hospital of St. Raymond" (which still bears this name today) be established. And so that they might do it in such a way that it would be welcomed by the poor, they designated Raymond as its patron and protector so that it would remain as an eternal memorial of this Servant of God. Also hastening to his tomb were no few people from Cremona, who, as we said above, had afflicted the Servant of God with lies, lashings, and prison when he had come to them to invite them to a peaceful settlement. These ones came prepared with many curses and, with fists pummeling their chests, they begged for his forgiveness. They were terrified lest the blessed one invoke vengeance from the hand of God, saying: "Lord, avenge the injuries and oppressions suffered by your servant."

57. So many and so great were the signs and prodigies which the divine power displayed through the merits of its servant Raymond--with the sick being healed, with those possessed by demons being liberated, and with people in peril on the sea, on rivers, in wars, in prisons, on journeys, as well as those suffering from any of the various other calamities to which this life is exposed being succored--that it would be impossible to relate all of them equally even with a level of industry far beyond my own. I reckon that it will be sufficient if I commemorate a few of the many so as to prove Raymond's sanctity as well as to encourage and delight the piety of the faithful, so that these same might have something to use for preaching and persuading their descendants about the sanctity of this servant of God. I want everyone who might read this account to know that I have recorded no miracle here without it being verified by the sworn testimony of mature men worthy of confidence.

58. In the upper reaches of Italy, in an area referred to as the Piedmont,[49] there was a certain German named Ogerius who, on the feast of the Lord's nativity, ate cabbage cooked with ox meat. Unfortunately it happened that a piece of bone lay hidden mixed up in the stew. The man was eating the food so voraciously that he swallowed the bone along with the cabbage. The bone went down into his chest and stuck there, tormenting the poor man for many days, the doctors being ignorant of the cause of the malady. While he was suffering from this pain, it happened that a certain countryman of his had come to Piacenza to visit the tomb of the Blessed Raymond, so that he might see the marvelous prodigies. When he returned to the Piedmont, he recounted all that he had seen and heard to the abovementioned Ogerius, who immediately conceived of a vow: he promised that if somehow he might be made well again, that he would go to Piacenza himself and visit the tomb of this blessed man with pious gifts in hand. Scarcely had he made the

promise than he vomited up the bone into his hand. He carried the bone with him and after he had venerated the holy sepulcher as promised he asked that it be hung up so that it would bear witness to such a worthy miracle.

59. In the county of Lavagna[50] in the diocese of Genoa, there was a woman--whose mother was named Sophia and her father Hugo--who was possessed by an evil demon. In hopes of ridding her of it, her parents committed her to the care of exorcists, but they were unable to coax anything out of her, except a voice of an inhabitant of hell, saying: "Raymond expels [demons] easily." When the demon was interrogated as to who and where this Raymond might be, he responded: "He is a new saint[51] among the people of Piacenza." Once this was understood, the parents immediately and with great effort brought the girl to the glorious sepulcher. As soon as she had touched it, the demon began to shout: "Raymond, Raymond, may you be cursed, forcing me to leave this place." Although the demon had vexed her a great deal up to that point, he left her.

60. In the same county, there was a certain nobleman named Bernard de la Torre who, with his wife Gelasia, had a daughter by the name of Mabilina. For two years she had been unable to relax her contracted tendons to the point that she had no use of her limbs. Her body could not hold itself up, she being unable to stand up on her own feet. It happened by chance that her mother heard about how Blessed Raymond had restored the girl possessed by the demon, about which we have just spoken. She therefore vowed on behalf of her daughter to send a wax statue to Raymond's tomb if her prayer was answered. On the fifth day her daughter felt herself to be so healthy and full of life that she actually rose, stood up, and began to walk as if she had never been crippled or impeded in any way. The mother then carried out the vow that she had pronounced, making the offering that she had conditionally agreed to make.

61. A certain woman from Pavia by the name of Berta, a most noteworthy woman in this city, was, by some divine judgment, allowed to be possessed by the power of demons. Once they had entered her body, they frequently shouted out loud. One would say: "I am Tralinus." Another: "I am Capricius." Finally a third: "And I am Carincius." This woman was tormented with such misery as a result of these demons that at times it seemed as though she were dead, for she showed no sign of any sensation or movement. Some poked pieces of reeds and needles between her fingers and her nails, but she did not feel any of it. Others poured liquids and even hot wax on her face but she did not move. Yet other times she was so agitated that two of the strongest youths were not enough to hold her down. Sometimes the demons threw her up into the air six cubits high and then let her fall like a cadaver. Sometimes they inflated her so that she swelled up like a barrel.

62. Certain learned men would come to her often and sing particular verses, which they called "Verses of S. Maurice." It was believed that these verses, when sung, had the power to expel demons from possessed bodies, and indeed they had often been used successfully in such expulsions. But this woman, lacking education, could only repeat the same verse when she sang, and she did so without any improvement to her condition. She was then led by her sister all around the neighboring areas to various churches and monasteries, especially those celebrated for their relics, but she was unable to obtain what she hoped for. For this had been reserved by divine providence to be among many Blessed Raymond's many prodigies, so that his glory would shine forth near and far. She was finally led, with great effort, to his tomb. Scarcely had she gotten down on her knees, when the demons began to wail a kind of song, saying: "Cursed Raymond! We retreat to a wicked place." Thus the body of this woman was purged of all

diabolical foulness by the merits of our Blessed Raymond, and it became a domicile of decency from that point on.

63. In the county of Piacenza, in a village called Ripa, there was a man named Gerald Vitalis, or so the people called him, who suffered a hernia such that the intestines, sunken into his abdominal cavity, swelled to the point that he was unable to walk or engage in any kind of work. His wife encouraged him to make a vow and hasten to Blessed Raymond. But he refused to do it, for he had not yet been persuaded that Raymond was indeed a saint. Then his wife, most sincere in her faith, made a vow on his behalf, but did so secretly, not revealing anything about it to her husband: “My husband promises, I say, ‘to bring a candle to Raymond’s tomb along with some money, so that the sacred ceremony of the curates can be performed.’” Having made this vow, she asked her husband to at least accompany her to the tomb of the saint. He complied, although he expected nothing good to come from it. But the piety and faith of his wife was so great that when he arrived at the church and positioned himself on his knees as a suppliant, he felt himself getting increasingly better as his viscera was restored to its former state. After a few days he felt good enough to put up with the effort of working. Only then did his wife divulge the vow that she had made. After her husband heard this, he was convinced and worshipped the saint from then on with his own special devotion. He donated two measures of wine every year to the poor of Raymond’s hospital, so that from that time on the caretakers of this same institution,[52] accustomed to going about asking for donations of wine, could henceforth depend on a more stable supply.

64. For three years a Venetian Woman by the name of Maria had been bent over—in other words she was what the people normally call a hunchback—to the point that she was unable to walk without a cane or lift her head and look up at the sky no matter how much she tried. Indeed she carried herself so low that you might even say that she was a quadruped. When she had heard about the miracles of Blessed Raymond, she made her way to his tomb, exhausting herself greatly in the process. There at last she prayed, crying as a suppliant to Blessed Raymond, that he liberate her from her misery. When she had finished praying, she left her crutches behind, so that they might bear witness to the miracle, and returned home standing upright without any assistance at all. Those who had known her before and who saw her now glorified the Lord in his saint.

65. In the territory of Acquense[53] there was a certain man whose name was Lomellus, who struggled with a hernia so serious that he had to bind his bowels with an iron belt. After being informed about the outstanding miracles of Blessed Raymond, he vowed that if he were healed, he would go on foot to the tomb of this blessed one. As soon as he had made this vow, he was made whole. At the same time, his iron belt fell to the ground, broken in many pieces, lest anyone should doubt that the miracle had really occurred. His wife, who witnessed the miraculous event, had been confined to bed for an entire year suffering from some contortion of the tendons in her limbs. When she promised to accompany her husband to the sacred tomb, she too was restored to health. Both of them arranged to go there with offerings appropriate to their means so as to bear witness to both miracles.

These few prodigies have been related here only for the sake of confirming the merit and virtue of Blessed Raymond. I am not young enough to review, my memory is not great enough to grasp, and my hand and pen are not sufficient to record all the other miracles that are very well-known all throughout Lombardy. Those which exceed my powers, I have left to orators—among whom I am the least--more learned than I.

[1] This translation is based on the edition of Raymond's vita produced by the Bollandist Peter van der Bosch (1686-1736) and published in the *Acta Sanctorum*, Iul. VI, pp. 645-57. As Bosch explained in his prefatory comments, Rufino's original version of the vita, written twelve years after Raymond's death, had been safely kept in the library of the Cistercian nuns of S. Raymond of Piacenza until 1525, when it was loaned to a Dominican friar for the purposes of producing an Italian translation. The original never found its way back to the nuns and, despite Bosch's careful search, remains at large to this day. Peter Bosch took it upon himself to translate the Italian version back into Latin for the purposes of the *Acta Sanctorum*.

[2] This would seem to be addressed to those "poor" who had worked with Raymond, leading lives of voluntary poverty as they tended to the needs of the poor in the hospital.

[3] "Palmer" is the English form of the Latin *palmarius* (alternatively, *palmerius*) referring to someone who had completed the pilgrimage to the Holy Land, returning with a palm frond in hand as a symbol of his achievement. See Rufino, *Life of Raymond* 17.

[4] *Xenodochium* is the term (borrowed from the Greek *Xenodocheion*) that Latin writers in the thirteenth century used to describe this combination hospice-hospital where pilgrims and the poor could expect to find food, lodging, and some medical care.

[5] John 1:47.

[6] Here the prejudices of Rufino--who, bearing the title of "master", is likely to have been educated in theology or canon law--shine through.

[7] A reference to Exodus 20:12.

[8] Matthew 10:37.

[9] Luke 2:36-37.

[10] This would most likely have been Bishop Hugo of Piacenza (1155-1166). See AASS Iul. VI, note c, pp. 647-48.

[11] The Latin reads: *auctores itaque tibi simus, ut uxorem ducas*, suggesting that the relatives would represent him, perhaps providing surety on his behalf, in the negotiations to secure a marriage contract.

[12] Genesis 2:24.

[13] Here Rufino is careful to underscore Raymond's deference to church authority, realizing that his readers might wonder why a layman was preaching when this was a privilege reserved for the clergy. St. Francis of Assisi (d. 1226), another layman who felt inspired to preach, was permitted by Pope Innocent III to preach only penance.

[14] The reference here is to the first chapter of the apocryphal Old Testament book of Tobit (also known as Tobias), which describes the fidelity of Tobit (Tobias the elder) to the Law despite living in captivity under Assyrian rule.

[15] In other words, Raymond's children died, presumably from some epidemic.

[16] Job 1:21.

[17] Which is not to say that they abstained from sex, as the following passages make clear. The point that Rufino is making is simply that whatever sexual relations they had from that point on were "without sin" in so far as they occurred within the context of marriage.

[18] That is, the servitude to the things of this world that he associated with parenting as well as manual labor.

[19] S. Brigid (d. c. 525), about whose life there is little reliable, was an abbess of Kildare in Ireland. Her cult spread widely on the continent on the heels of the Irish missionaries who made their way to the mainland in the late sixth and seventh centuries. The abbey of Bobbio, just southwest of Piacenza, was founded by the Irish monk Columban in 612.

[20] According to legend, the body of St. James the apostle was miraculously conveyed to the northwestern corner of Spain, where it became the endpoint of the famous Camino de Santiago (“the path of St. James”) pilgrimage route.

[21] The most important cult of S. Antony, the hermit (d. 356), at the time in the Latin west was situated in Vienne.

[22] If the ultimate goal of a pilgrimage is to experience directly the physical remains--or relics--of a saint, there is, Raymond’s parents-in-law are contending, no particular reason why he could not satisfy himself with the relics in the churches of Piacenza. But this does not take into account the penitential benefits that follow from the hardships of walking to more distant shrines.

[23] From the mid-eleventh century, the abbey of Vézeley claimed to have Mary Magdalene’s body. A legend then developed that after the death of Christ she had lived out life of penance in the caverns of La Saint-Baume about 25 miles from Marseilles.

[24] The so-called “three Marys” are the three women of that name who are mentioned in the gospels as having been the first to discover that Jesus’ tomb was empty. Later legend had these three sailing to southern France, where they spread the faith. The focal point of the cult: Saints Maries de la Mer in the Camargue on the south-central coast of France. Martha and Lazarus were imagined to have accompanied the “Three Marys” on their mission in southern France.

[25] As noted above, in Vienne.

[26] In Clairvaux, where Bernard was abbot until his death in 1153.

[27] Luke 24:13-35.

[28] Matthew 25:34-6.

[29] Matthew 13:57.

[30] Val di Taro lies some fifty kilometers south of Piacenza.

[31] A cubit is traditionally the length of a forearm.

[32] The one part of Raymond’s costume that had not been specified in the vision—a traveler’s cap—perhaps reminded him of the pilgrim’s life that he had left behind.

[33] Bishop Teobaldo of Piacenza (1167-1192).

[34] Matthew 5:7; Luke 6:24.

[35] The quintessential prophet of Israel described in I Kings 17-19, 21:17-29.

[36] John 13:34.

[37] That is, the citizen body of Piacenza.

[38] As Bosch pointed out (AASS Iul. VI, note a, p. 654), Piacenza did experience a papally-imposed interdict after a violation of clerical immunity, but the contemporary chronicles are silent about any fire or plundering suffered by the people of Piacenza between Raymond’s death and 1212, when Rufino was writing.

[39] Raymond was directing the attention of the armies to his cross and having them ponder Jesus’ death on it.

[40] Rufino, Life of Raymond 56.

[41] Matthew 10:28.

[42] Ibid.

[43] This time-frame, in conjunction with the date of Raymond’s death (July 26, 1200, at age sixty; see Rufino, Life of Raymond 51) allows us to assign the foundation of his hospital to the year 1178. Raymond was approximately 38 years old at the time.

[44] That is, Raymond’s promise to be of greater assistance to his fellow hospital workers as a dead man than as a living one.

[45] This allows us to calculate the year of Raymond’s birth as approximately 1140.

[46] alumni domestici.

[47] Bishop Grimerio of Piacenza (1199-1210).

[48] In other words, there was no more need to go out looking for alms the way Raymond used to do.

[49] The northwestern-most region of Italy, bordering France and Switzerland.

[50] On the coast just east of Genoa.

[51] Rufino uses the term beatus (“blessed”) since at this point Raymond was not yet officially a saint.

[52] Here the author uses the term ptochotrophius, which, like xenodochium, seems to be a late antique linguistic import from the Greek. The term literally means “nourisher of the poor,” hence “poorhouse.” My thanks to Ian Moyer for his assistance here.

[53] This would appear to be a reference to the area around Acqui-Terme, just northwest of Genoa.