

ST. VICENT FERRER'S CATALÁN SERMON
ON SAINT MARY MAGDALENE¹

*EL SERMÓN CATALÁN DE SAN VICENTE FERRER
SOBRE SANTA MARÍA MAGDALENA*

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Resumen: Vicente Ferrer es, sin duda, uno de los predicadores dominicos más atractivos y prolíficos del bajo medievo. A pesar de que su misión de predicación se produjo en muchos lugares, gran parte de esa misión se llevó a cabo especialmente en Francia. En Francia, particularmente en la Provenza, somos testigos del surgimiento del culto a María Magdalena, promovido vigorosamente por los dominicos. No es sorprendente, Vicente Ferrer dedicó este sermón en catalán a María Magdalena, a quien propuso como modelo de la *Imitatio Christi*, para que todos los cristianos lo siguieran, no sólo para las mujeres en particular. Este artículo pretende situar este sermón en su contexto del siglo XIV con el fin de descomprimir los mensajes teológicos y morales que Vicente trató de transmitir a su público.

Palabras claves: Hagiografía; Predicación; Dominicanos; Culto de María Magdalena; Sermones catalanes.

Abstract: Vicent Ferrer is without question one of the most compelling and prolific Dominican preachers of the late Middle Ages. Although his preaching mission transpired in many places he especially carried out much of it in France. In France we witness, particularly in Provenca, the emergence of the cult of Mary Magdalene that was vigorously promoted by the Dominicans. Vicent Ferrer not surprisingly dedicated this Catalán sermon to Mary Magdalene whom he proposed as a model of the *Imitatio Christi* for all Christians to follow, not just women in particular. This article seeks to situate this sermon in its late medieval context in order to unpack the theological and moral messages that Vicent sought to convey to his audience.

Keywords: Hagiography, Preaching, Dominicans, Cult of Mary Magdalene, Catalán sermons

Of all of the women of the Bible Mary Magdalene, assuredly ranks only second to the Virgin Mary in terms of biblical theological commentary and reflection and we can safely say in Christian art across the centuries. In modern times, even quite recently, she has become even better known to audiences through fictional and convoluted books such as the *Da Vinci Code*,

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which disseminates historically and unsubstantiated claims about her. On a more serious scholarly note, Victor Saxer and Karen Ludwig Jansen published extensive monographs on Mary Magdalene outside the Iberian Peninsula². Even so, Mary Magdalene continues to hold deep attraction as always. Vicent Ferrer, that Dominican preacher *par excellence* of the late Middle Ages, wrote and delivered an eloquent sermon on Mary Magdalene entitled *Beate Marie Magdalene* (Sermo, xlviij), wherein he wove canonical and apocryphal New Testament traditions about her³.

This study is by no means the first to dedicate its efforts to analyze and understand Vicent's sermons on Mary Magdalene. Research into Vicent's sermons, theology and impact has been steady and growing especially in the past fifteen years. The most prolific contemporary scholar is undoubtedly Alfonso Esponera Cerdán whose personal bibliography is too voluminous to cite here. One comprehensive study by him published in 2005 provides an extensive study of Vicent's life and work with abundant bibliography and it supersedes the one by Garganta, although it remains useful⁴. His recent 2007 study is a lucid overview of Vicent's sermons, which contains a chapter directly relevant to our study entitled, "Las diversas vidas humanas: sermones sobre Santa María Magdalena". It is mainly a recompilation of some of his previous work on the topic⁵. Noteworthy has been the work of David J. Viera whose research has advanced our understanding of this aspect of Vicent's sermons in Catalán in general and specifically on the figure of Mary Magdalene⁶. A useful study on Vicent Ferrer's theological method is by José Ma. de Garganta wherein among other things notes that in his sermons: the Bible is his principal source, he refers frequently to *auctoritates*, cites the

²Katherine Ludwig JANSEN, *The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and popular devotion in the later Middle Ages*, Princeton, 2000. This masterful work is by far the most detailed and important study of its kind for the later Middle Ages. Although she devotes extensive commentary to the Dominicans, Vicent Ferrer does not receive attention in this study. This article, however, has benefited much in terms of the background that situates Vicent's sermon in the medieval exegetical tradition. Victor SAXER's, *Le culte de marie madeleine en occident des origines à la fin du moyen âge*, 2 vols, Cahiers d'archéologie, vol. 3, Paris, 1959, is still the most detailed and unsurpassed study on the proliferation of her cult in France. Several maps that mark the location of churches or shrines dedicated to Mary Magdalene from the eleventh to sixteenth century accompany the study. He also provides an exhaustive inventory of liturgical texts, pp. 363-427.

³SANT VICENT FERRER, *Sermons* (Josep SANCHIS SIVERA, ed.), Volum segon. Els Nostres Clàssics, Col·lecció B. Volums en quart, Barcelona, 1934, pp. 187-199. All scripture citations in English are from the NIV. I published an earlier article that explores his use of apocryphal material in, *Vicent Ferrer's Beati Petri Apostoli: Canonical and apocryphal sources in popular vernacular preaching*, "Harvard Theological Review", 91/1 (1998), pp. 41-57, 1 figure. The article is reproduced in *Simon Magus in Patristic, Medieval, and Early Modern Traditions*, (*Studies in the History of Christian Traditions*, vol. 125), Leiden, 2005, pp. 241-260. Also forthcoming by A. FERREIRO, *A Little More than the Angels: Anthropology and the Imitatio Christi in a Catalán Sermon by Vicent Ferrer on St. James the Greater*, in *On the Shoulders of Giants: Essays in Honor of Glenn Olsen*, Toronto (in press).

⁴*San Vicente Ferrer, vida y escritos*, Madrid, Edibesa, 2005. J.M^a. GARGANTA, *Biografía y Escritos de San Vicente Ferrer* (BAC, vol. 153, sección V, Historia y Hagiografía), Madrid, 1956.

⁵*El oficio de predicar, Los postulados teológicos de los sermones de San Vicente Ferrer* (Monumenta Histórica Iberoamericana de la Orden de Predicadores, vol. 30), Salamanca, 2007, pp. 63-86.

⁶*Vicente Ferrer on Mary Magdalene: A technique for hagiographic sermons*, "Hispanofila", 34 (1991), pp. 61-66.

major Church Fathers, makes frequent use of the *Golden Legend* and does not have recourse to philosophy and poets⁷.

Our present sermon forms part of the large corpus of Catalán sermons by Vicent Ferrer that were likely preached from 1412 to 1418⁸. This sermon is typical of Vincentian sermons as signaled by Esponera Cerdán, “*Emplea exempla, similitudines y hace aplicaciones a la vida práctica, en muchos casos comunes a otros oradores contemporáneos. Estas aplicaciones a cada uno de los diversos sectores de oyentes, nos muestran que se esforzaba para que su predicación tuviera una dimensión pastoral y práctica fundamentales*”⁹. Manuel Ambrosio Sánchez Sánchez has lucidly observed concerning the style of Vicent’s sermons, “Vicente Ferrer also had a good command of the sermon’s techniques as a dramatic performance: he not only uttered the text but also performed it before the public, combining voice and gesture... and that his sermons are “simple, without scholasticism or subtleties expressed”¹⁰. Vicent is always thematic in his approach to preaching and he practices *divisio* and focuses on *dilatatio* and appeals to *auctoritas* and more often than not they represent *exempla* sermons¹¹. Sánchez Sánchez, furthermore, discovered that the *reportatores* who reproduced the sermons tried to capture his emotional appeal directed at his audience¹². Our sermon contains these emotional outcries at various junctures. Vicent’s goal in his sermons is to call his listeners to penance and reform within an eschatological vision¹³. This sermon warns against vice which is consistent with the rest of his homilies as Sánchez Sánchez informs us, “Ferrer reprovved vices, contemporary depravity, and the corruption of behavior. He attacked usury, fashion and cosmetics among women and the general immorality of clergymen, whose most common sins were simony, covetousness and concubinage”¹⁴. Moreover, Vicent did not seek to convey any groundbreaking exegetical interpretations about Mary Magdalene, Esponera Cerdán sums up on this point, “Hay que señalar que el Maestro Vicente Ferrer no es original ni hace mayores aportaciones

⁷*El Método Teológico en los Sermones de San Vicente Ferrer*, in *El Método en Teología*, (= Actas del I Simposio de Teología Histórica, 23-31 mayo 1980), Valencia, 1981, pp. 143-156, at pp. 146-148.

⁸Manuel Ambrosio SÁNCHEZ SÁNCHEZ, *Vernacular Preaching in Spanish, Portuguese and Catalán*, in *The Sermon* (Beverly M. KIENZLE, ed. (“Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental”, vols. 81-83) Turnhout, 2000, pp. 794-795, provides a summary of the various Vincentian sermon collections.

⁹*El oficio de predicar*, pp. 228-229.

¹⁰SÁNCHEZ SÁNCHEZ, *Vernacular Preaching*, pp. 759-858, 807-808. For further insights into the genre of *exempla* sermons see, Jean-Claude SCHMITT, *Temps Liturgique et Temps des Exempla*, in Nicole BÉRIOU and Franco MORENZONI, *Prédication et Liturgie au Moyen Age* (“Bibliothèque d’Histoire Culturelle du Moyen Age”, vol. 5), Turnhout, 2008, pp. 223-236.

¹¹SÁNCHEZ SÁNCHEZ, *Vernacular Preaching*, pp. 805-806.

¹²*Vernacular Preaching*, p. 809. He provides further details about the *reportatores* who travelled with Vicent, pp. 829-834.

¹³*El oficio de predicar*, p. 230. Also relevant, J.M.^a GARGANTA, *San Vicente Ferrer, predicador de penitencia y de reforma*, in *Agiografía dell’Occidente Cristiano secoli XII-XV*, Roma, 1980, pp. 129-165.

¹⁴*Vernacular Preaching*, p. 807.

doctrinales”¹⁵. This in no way diminishes in the least Vicent’s immense influence through his preaching that we have yet to fully reconstruct and appreciate. My purpose is to unpack the biblical, typological, moral, and theological layers that enrich this sermon to arrive at an understanding of what it was Vicent wanted his audience to learn through the figure of Mary Magdalene.

As for the target audience of Vicent’s sermons, a number of scholars have weighed in on this question. Pedro Cátedra, although speaking mainly about the Castilian collection of Vicent’s sermons, notes that his sermons were intended to reach a broader audience, and, “son los laicos en su conjunto los principales destinatarios del apostolado”¹⁶. I fully concur with the observation that his sermons have more than one specific audience. While this sermon, however, does seem to have women as its main audience I do not believe it is exclusively so as Esponera Cerdán says, “Estos dos no son sermones dirigidos exclusivamente a las mujeres. Se dirigen a todos los fieles para despertarles de su sopor, para hacerles ruborizar de sus debilidades y superarlas”¹⁷. José M^a. de Garganta takes a different view on this question when he expresses the belief that Vicent’s use of the Bible was, “materia para los teólogos y no para los laicos,” a view that I do not share with the author, at least as it relates to this sermon¹⁸. Jansen has gathered crucial evidence from outside Iberia that is relevant to this question. She discovered that sermons on Mary Magdalene elicited admiration from a distance by men, whereas women saw her as a model to imitate¹⁹. For this sermon, we should state that we have no way of knowing how men or women received it. Sánchez Sánchez has summed up well regarding Vicent and his audience, “We know relatively well who the listeners of Vicente Ferrer were, thanks to indications such as frequent interpellations calling for the attention of the general public or of a specific group”²⁰, and we find such specificity at various points in this sermon on Mary Magdalene.

The rise of devotion to the cult of Mary Magdalene that made her second only to the Virgin Mary as the most popular woman in the Middle Ages was mainly the work of the Dominicans. Alfonso Esponera Cerdán has documented well the important role of the Dominicans including the Iberian Peninsula, an area that Jansen does not include in her magisterial study²¹.

¹⁵*El oficio de predicar*, p. 230 and SÁNCHEZ SÁNCHEZ, *Vernacular Preaching*, p. 807 expresses similar views.

¹⁶Pedro M. CÁTEDRA GARCÍA, *Sermón, sociedad y literatura en la Edad Media. San Vicente Ferrer en Castilla (1411-1412): estudio bibliográfico, literario y edición de los textos inéditos*, Junta de Castilla y León, 1994, pp. 225 and 230.

¹⁷*El oficio de predicar*, p. 85.

¹⁸*El Método Teológico*, p. 147.

¹⁹JANSEN, *The Making of the Magdalen*, p. 273.

²⁰*Vernacular Preaching*, p. 781.

²¹*Algunos materiales sobre la vinculación de los dominicos con Santa María Magdalena a lo largo de la Historia*, “Teología Espiritual”, 49 (2005), pp. 282-303. Also, J.M^a de GARGANTA, *Los Dominicos de la Provincia de Aragón en la Historia de la Espiritualidad (siglos XIV-XVII)*, “Teología Espiritual”, 1 (1957), pp. 100-121. Consult, B. MONTAGNES, *Marie-Madeleine et*

Jansen's study although hardly focusing on Iberia is a valuable study nevertheless to situate Vicent's sermon in the context of the late Middle Ages, as this study will note throughout. That Vicent devotes this sermon to her is not exceptional given the prominent role of the Dominicans. Among the Dominicans, the most significant role fell to Jacobus of Voragine through his *Golden Legend*, which became the principal source for late medieval sermons about Mary Magdalene. Jansen eloquently makes the point, "The *Golden Legend*, the most celebrated medieval collection of saints' lives, drew on these miracle stories as well as various legends to construct his own vita of Mary Magdalen.... The Magdalen of legend was thus widely disseminated through popular devotional literature and the sermons that drew upon it"²². Vicent's main source for his sermon is clearly the *Golden Legend*. Vicent Ferrer in this carefully crafted sermon made his own contribution to an already longstanding exegesis of Mary Magdalene. Because of Vicent's immense popularity in France and Spain, it was no small contribution. It is time now turn to the sermon.

Vicent opened his sermon by addressing the '*senyors*' to whom he was going to preach his sermon firstly concerning the thorny theological question as where souls who died in grace go before the Last Judgment. He pointed out that it was common knowledge in theology —another way of saying universally held— that after the Fall of Adam until the coming of Christ no soul could enter into Paradise (*depús que Adam pecquà, fins al adveniment de nostre senyor Jesuchrist, deguna ànima, per santa que fos, no podie entrar en parais*, p. 187). The question as to where souls went while awaiting the Last Great Judgment has occupied the attention of theologians especially beginning with Augustine in the West and in the Orthodox churches Origen, up to this day²³. The Transfiguration of Christ clearly demonstrated that souls were very much alive and well after death: where had Elijah and Moses been before they appeared with Jesus and where did they go back to after the Transfiguration? Moreover, Jesus' response to the Samaritans regarding the afterlife also pointed in that direction as he admonished them, "Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him" (Luke 20:18). Elijah's ascent into 'heaven' in a fiery chariot was then an eschatological sign, since he did not go into what was known as Third Heaven (where God is), nor for that matter Enoch if we adhere to Vicent's teaching. They typologically pointed to the One who ascended into heaven and opened up the gateway to Paradise; but

l'Ordre des Prêcheurs, "Mémoires Dominicaine", 8 (1996), pp. 87-100. For Vicent in the spiritual context of his era see, A. ESPONERA CERDÁN, *San Vicente Ferrer y las corrientes espirituales de su época. Estado de la cuestión*, "Anales Valentinios", 24 (1998), pp. 355-362 and by the same author, *El maestro Vicente Ferrer y las corrientes teológicas y espirituales de su época*, in *El oficio de predicar*, pp. 49-62.

²²JANSEN, *The Making of the Magdalen*, pp. 40-41.

²³Even as recently as two years ago the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith in consultation with the International Theological Commission had to address the question regarding 'limbo' in relation to what happens to the souls of children who die without baptism, especially those who are victims of abortion. On 19 April 2007, they issued the document, *The Hope of Salvation of Infants Who Die Without Being Baptized*.

they instead went to limbo. Vicent said that 5,000 years had passed wherein multitudes of holy people died, yet not one of them entered Paradise, instead they went to ‘hell-infern’ or what the holy Fathers called ‘limbo’ (*e, quan morien, deguna no n entrave en paradís, mas anaven a infern, e.l limbe dels sants pares*, p. 187). Vicent then asked, “Do you want to know the reason why they could not enter? (*¿voleu saber la rahó per què no y podien entrar?* p. 187), I will tell you he exclaimed”. Adam was a type of those who deviated from the ‘way’ and consequently people followed him in that path. If the first one [Adam] fell into error then all who imitate him end up with the same fate and that is what has happened to all of them. Since humanity then collectively is heir to Adam’s sin, therefore heaven is simply not possible for anyone without exception, even for all of the righteous dead before Christ. Vicent quoted David in Psalm 106 [107]: 4-5, “Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle. They were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away” (*Errauerunt in solitudine in [inaquoso; uiam ciuitatis habitaculi non inuenerunt, esurientes, et sicientes:] anima eorum in ipsis defecit*, p. 188).

Vicent paused in the sermon to provide a brief exegesis of this Psalm and specifically *Erraureunt in solitudine*. The world he said is called ‘solitude’ because Christ embodied the soul that lived in ‘solitude’ in relation to this world that is without an earthly home and that is why the world has become ‘solitude’ to such a person. This was another way of speaking of the ‘exile’ from Paradise humans live in this life because of the Fall of Adam. The expression ‘*in uiam inaquosam*’ he said refers to water which the world calls the ‘way without water’ (*Lo món appelle ‘via sens aygua’*, p. 188). Vicent rhetorically asked, ‘Was there no water then [in David’s time]; was there no ocean? Yes, of course there was water, then why this seeming enigmatic expression by the Psalmist?’ It is referring to the doctrine of Christ which no one was able to preach when humanity was enslaved by Original Sin (*car en aquell temps les gens no havien libres, ni preycadors qui’ls preycassen la doctrina*), as the scriptures teach (*Fons sapiencie uerbum Dei in excelsis* [Sirach 1:5], p. 188). This alludes to the water Jesus promised to give to the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4: 1-15). The psalmist when speaking of (*esurientes et sicientes in ipsis defecit*, p. 188) was identifying the holy people who although had died in grace; even so they were denied Paradise like Adam—who was expelled along with Eve—, and lived DCCCCXXX years and months. When his soul (*E quan la sua ànima fo exida de aquest món, stave guardan en loc cel si.y havie porta per hon porgués entrar, e no n’i véu deguna: hagué anar al limbe d’infern*, p. 188) exited this world he searched for the entrance to heaven, which he could not find. Instead, Adam went to limbo-hades. Divine Providence denied the entrance to Paradise to anyone: even Noah, John the Baptist, and the Holy Innocents killed by Herod without exception they all went to limbo-hades. Vicent did not make an exception of the Virgin Mary because the dogma of the Immaculate Conception remained

officially undefined; it was a doctrine in progress²⁴. Those who defended it would have stated that the Virgin Mary was the sole human exception to get into heaven before her Son had fulfilled the Paschal mystery. She stood alone in her unique conception even in comparison to Enoch and Elijah who were born with the stain of Original Sin.

All of this changed when Jesus Christ came: he ordained two paths. The first Vicent called 'pure innocence' and the second the 'life of penitence' (*E pus que Jesuchrist fo vengut, ell ordenà dos camins: lo primer és de pura innocència; lo segon de condigna penitència*, p. 188). What kind of person did Vicent define as '*pura innocència*'? It is the person who in heart, mouth, or deed never sinned, that is the pure innocence, and when such a person died they went to Paradise (*Ni de cor, ni de boqua, ni de obra, nunca féu degun peccat (de cor, mal pensant; de boqua, mal parlant; de obra, mal obrant*, pp. 188-189). The second is a life of penitence for a person who has sinned much, converts to God through penance and confession and performs good deeds. As penitents perform more good deeds and sin less, such persons when they die also go to Paradise (*en tant que tantes són les bones obres més que ls peccats, tal persona, quan mor, va tantost a paraís*, p. 189). Let us recall that according to the theology Christ's redemptive work made Paradise possible upon death. Vicent was commenting from that theological framework at this point in the sermon. Moreover, Vicent taught that God had proposed two women to imitate. The one is the path of 'innocence' exemplified by the Virgin Mary. Those who follow her example when they die the door to Paradise will open. Vicent cited Psalm 24:21 [25] as one of his authorities, "May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope is in you," (*Innocentes et recti adherunt michi, quia sustinui te*, p. 189). On the other hand, for the path of penitence Vicent pointed to the example of Mary Magdalene. Here Vicent cited a widely known chant dedicated to the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene (*Laudemus opus Dei in Marie Dei genitrice et Marie Magdalene; hec est exemplum penitencie*, p. 189). To begin his transition in the sermon to speak specifically about Mary Magdalene as the penitent *par excellence*, Vicent addressed her as the '*Ecce mulier*- Behold the woman' which echoed and complemented the *Ecce Homo* of John the Baptist [John 1: 29].

Vicent proposed that he had discovered five points (*yo he trobats V punts*) in the life of Mary Magdalene that he then expounded upon in the remainder of the sermon. They are: conversion from a sinful life (*conversació criminosa*), conversion to virtue (*conversió virtuosa*), gracious perfection (*perfectió graciosa*) [which he called later 'generous' perfection], fruitful preaching (*predicació fructuosa*), and glorious contemplation (*contemplació gloriosa*).

²⁴The scholastic theologians in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries were not in full agreement with each other, Aquinas and others having serious reservations while later Duns Scotus would passionately defend the emerging doctrine. Pope Pius IX defined the dogma on 8 December 1854.

The first virtue Vicent found in the life of Mary Magdalene was what he called a *'criminosa'* conversion, which was his way of referring to a 'radical' conversion. He said clearly that it was because she had sinned so much that she experienced a *criminosa* conversion (*Que de tants peccats que havie feyts, se convertí*, p. 189). Vicent to make the point turned his attention to various traditions —apocryphal stories loosely based on the New Testament— about her that he sought to correct and explain fully. He rejected those [he did not name them] who denied her scandalous sinful life before her conversion. Vicent then proceeded to relate a fascinating tradition, which has as its backdrop the wedding in Cana (John 2:1— *Nupcie facte sunt in Cana Galilee*, p. 189). This is an apocryphal tradition that attempted to fill in the background that is lacking in the Gospel of John: to identify mainly, who was getting married there. We find the main contours of this story in Jacobus of Voragine's *Golden Legend*²⁵. The story claims that it was allegedly the wedding of John and Mary Magdalene. Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and the other apostles were there as guests to celebrate the wedding. That day, however, when John and Mary were about to get married, Jesus appeared to him and said among other things, "John, come and follow me." Vicent related that some said that Jesus intervened because Mary Magdalene had been predestined to be a sinner (*E per ço lo tyrà Jesuchrist a ssi, que ella se ere donada a peccar*, p. 190), a view that Vicent rejected for two reasons. One, Mary Magdalene was a noble and rich woman while John was a son of a poor angler along with Andrew who had only a boat to their name. Secondly, Jesus being omniscient knew that John was destined to be married to someone else and Mary Magdalene eventually to a life of chastity. Before she reached that state of chastity, she had to pass through a phase of sin and dissipation a theme Vicent moved into next.

Vicent explained that the common tradition related she and her father were rich, she owned three baronages, among them one called Magdala, which she gained through her inheritance (*rerum affluentia uoluptas plerumque comes asequitur...uoluptatibus subtrahit*, he did not cite his source, p. 190). The second baronage was Bethany, which also proceeded from Martha. The third baronage was half of the city of Jerusalem that proceeded from Lazarus. Vicent exclaimed that this confirmed how rich she was in the things of this world. Moreover, since she was very beautiful many men desired her. Her parents in vain did everything they could to guard her from their advances. Men came to Magdala to flirt and dance with her. She fell into a romance with one of them and had sexual relations. This courtier then went and bragged to the other men that he had his way with her. One of the men exclaimed, "I am also going to have my pleasure with her" (*Oo, yo hi vull haver plaer també*, p. 191). Gradually she began to give herself to other men while keeping it a

²⁵I am using the edition by W.G. RYAN, trans, JACOBUS OF VORAGINE, *The Golden Legend. Readings on the Saints*, 2 vols, Princeton, 1993, 1: 374-383. A summary of the *Golden Legend* material in the sermon with limited commentary is in ESPONERA CERDAN, *El oficio de predicar*, pp. 63-86.

secret. Eventually everyone in the city became aware of her promiscuity. They gawked at her, “What a tramp” (*Oo, de la malastruga*, p. 191). Publicly she dressed with ornate hair to appear a virgin in an attempt to hide her identity but it fooled no one. Mary Magdalene ignored the insults and lashed back at them saying, “I am more beautiful than all of the others” (*Oo, yo só la plus bella de totes les altres*, p. 191)- Vicent added here that she exposed her *supèrbia* and also, when she gladly received jewels and ornaments from the men. Vicent explained it exposed her avarice (*E après, quan ere en casa ab los cavallers, volie joyells d’ells, e ornaments: veus ací avaricia*, p. 191). He then listed additional sins that Mary committed. They were voluptuousness (*plauer de volupta*), gluttony (*peccat de gola*), wrath (*peccat de ira*), and vengeance (*peccat de envega*) when she became jealous of other women. In the end, Vicent noted that they all numbered seven sins. Vicent pointed out this was why Luke and Mark in their gospels report that Jesus expelled seven demons from her (*Maria de qua Iesus eiecerat septem demonia*, p. 191).

Turning to the moral argument in the sermon, Vicent addressed women and parents. He admonished women not to kiss men (*ne besar los hòmens, mas guardau-vos d’ells*) and to remain on guard from them. Vicent compared women who kissed men too much to Herod when he ordered the decapitation of John the Baptist (*Fallax gracia [et uana est], pulchritudo: mulier timens Deum ipsa laudabitur*, Prov. 31:30, p. 191) —and that he was driven by lust. Vicent directed his words to parents whom he admonished to teach their children fidelity to God (*E per ço vosaltres, pares e mares, guardat vostres filles, erudit-les en lo serví de nostre senyor Déus*, pp. 191-192). He appealed to the Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians 6:4 (*Patres, nolite prouocare filios uestros et filias uestras, ad iracundiam Dei, set educate illos in doctrina, disciplina et correccione Domini*), p. 192). Vicent concluded that this was the first lesson learned from Mary Magdalene’s conversion from a sinful life.

The second lesson Vicent proposed from Mary Magdalene’s life was her conversion to a life of virtue, which he said was the fruit of Jesus’ sermons. According to Vicent, Jesus one day was preaching about the sin of fornication, which he warned that if a single person had sexual relations both the man and woman were in mortal sin. One day when Mary Magdalene came to hear Jesus preach, Vicent interjected one could imagine her bedecked with jewelry, her hair ornate, and with some of her lovers around her— so that her lovers would notice her (*Podeu pensar que ella vingué tota ornada en cabells, per tal que ls seus enamorats la vessen e la mirassen*, p. 192). When Jesus saw her, he knew what her intentions were with these men. Jesus proceeded to emphasize the gravity of the sin of promiscuity and how if not repented could lead to eternal damnation. Mary in such a state made herself a daughter of the devil (*filla del dyable*). Vicent interjected twice during the sermon that Mary Magdalene sat in a ‘high place’ in plain view of all (*Pensat que estave axí, ab lo cap alt*, p. 192). The ‘high place’ was intended to symbolize her pride and shamelessness of her scandalous way of life. Vicent for effect speculated that as Jesus preached Mary Magdalene began to be gradually

converted. She then stepped down from her ‘high place’ and came down to Jesus —one assumes at his feet— to implore him for mercy. Jesus then knew she converted. Her descent from the ‘high place’ down to Jesus’ feet symbolically showed outwardly the inner conversion that had transpired in her heart (*E veus que, axí com de primer estave axí ab lo cap alt, ella baxà lo cap axí, quasi sospirant, e començà a plorar*, p. 192). This last point Vicent made absolutely clear when he said that Mary no longer walked around with a prideful heart —no longer in ‘high places’— but instead walked with humility and remorseful of her sins (*Ja no anave axí ab lo cap alt, com solie, mas axí humilment, tota plorosa*, p. 192).

Vicent, borrowing from Jacobus of Voragine’s *Golden Legend* chapter 96 on Mary Magdalene, introduced Simon the Leper (Simon Lebrós), so-called because Jesus had healed him earlier of leprosy and after the healing Jesus went to his house to have dinner. Simon’s house, according to the story, was near to that of Mary Magdalene²⁶. All in Simon’s household had prepared everything for dinner and they even had a towel ready that Jesus had previously requested. Jesus waited for Mary Magdalene to arrive. When she arrived and saw Jesus she fell at his feet and “Cried and implored him, “Lord, have mercy on this lost sheep!” (*E meté lo cap entre los peus de Jesuchrist, cridant e plorant: ¡Senyor, hajes mercè d’esta ovella perduda!*, p. 193). She further asked Jesus not to reject her because she was a woman— sinful one. She reminded him that he had been born of a woman and because of that; he could not deny her forgiveness. She implored him so intensely that her profuse tears washed his feet. Tears in medieval preaching and in the penitential system were evidence of authentic sorrow. Jacobus of Voragine expressed the view in one his sermons that her tears acted as a purgation of all of her sins which led to a clean conscience²⁷. Vicent undoubtedly was sure to highlight her tears to make the same point. She kissed his feet unceasingly while he gently stroked her hair as a gesture to reassure her she had received forgiveness. Her intense loud cries for mercy even moved the apostles, so Vicent commented, to plea with him as well (*Que los peus de Jesuchrist llavà ab les làgrimes, e ls li torquà ab los seus cabells, e besave li los peus sovín, cridant: “Senyor misericòrdia!”*, en tant que yo pens que ls apòstols semblantment ploraven, p. 194). Mary Magdalene’s behavior embarrassed and scandalized Simon the Leper. He not only doubted her repentance, he judged her and even questioned why Jesus put up with this outrageous emotional display. Simon furthermore thought in his heart, “If Jesus was a prophet he would have known what kind of woman this was,” and presumably would have cast her out instead. Jesus, knowing his thoughts, corrected Simon by telling him that many sins had been forgiven of her because of her love for him. This reminded Simon that Jesus forgave him of much sin and that his healing from leprosy was the outward sign. Mary Magdalene upon hearing

²⁶RYAN, *The Golden Legend*, 1, pp. 375-376.

²⁷JANSEN, *The Making of the Magdalen*, pp. 207-212 discusses the significance of tears in preaching.

Jesus address her 'sins,' she realized she had not confessed all of them, she cried out, "Mercy, Lord, forgive me of all of my sins and all the punishments as well", (*E quant ella hoí 'molts peccats', e no dix tots los peccats, tornà a cridar: '¡Misericòrdia, Senyor; perdonau-los-me tots, e les penes també!* p. 194). Jesus told Mary that he forgave her of all of her sins (*Mulier, dimituntur tibi peccata tua*, p. 194). Mary Magdalene asked of Jesus one more thing, that he help her never to fall back into sin and to confirm her heart, to which Jesus replied, 'Go in Peace' (*Vade in pace*).

Vicent next turned his attention to Mary Magdalene as the model penitent. He loosely quoted Saint Pope Gregory the Great from one of his homilies who highlighted the penitence of Mary Magdalene²⁸. Pope Gregory the Great preached a homily in San Clemente church in Rome where he created a 'composite' portrait of Mary Magdalene that became the standard biblical exegetical portrait of her for the next 1400 years²⁹. If as Jansen observes, "So many Dominican sources might lead to the conclusion that the Order of Preachers was cultivating a special relationship with Mary Magdalen"³⁰, ironically another Dominican began in earnest the deconstruction of the 'composite' Mary Magdalene, "In 1517, Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples published a tract attacking Gregory the Great's Magdalen. A Dominican scholar trained in the new humanist techniques of textual criticism, Lefèvre brought these rigorous methods to bear on the tripartite Magdalen, arguing that there was no historical or scholarly basis for the Gregorian conflation of gospel figures"³¹. Vicent Ferrer, however, as everyone else in his time accepted without question the Mary Magdalene that Pope Gregory the Great created.

Vicent was now ready to expound on the moral meaning of this episode in the life of Mary Magdalene. He used this penitential scene to encourage confessing to a priest. He said that just as Mary Magdalene had prostrated herself at the feet of Jesus, so should sinners kneel before a confessor to confess. Vicent asked rhetorically, "What will I say about this dignified penitence? It is contrary [the enemy] to sin, and How?" (*Que sie per contrari al peccat. E com?*). He explained that initially Mary had been in high places—her prideful sinful heart—preparing to cavort with men by carefully preparing her hair to flirt with men [vanity]. After her conversion she veiled her head, threw herself in repentance to the ground at the feet of Jesus to beg forgiveness (*Ella, de primer, anave axí ab lo cap alt, guardan los hòmens, e*

²⁸Notandum iterum quod illi, qui volunt in medio mundi poenitentiam laudabilem facere, necessarium est ut deponant verecundiam humanam, ut non erubescant signa poenitentiae coram mundo, exemplo Magdalenae, de qua dicit Gregorius: "Super conuiuantes ingressa est, non iussa uenit, inter epulas lacrimas obtulit, Discite ergo quo dolore ardet, quae [flere et] inter [epulas] epulantes non erubescit". *Homily 33, Gregorius Magnus, Homiliae in Evangelia*. R. Etaix (ed). CCSL, CXL1. Turnhout: Brepols, 1999, pp. 287-298, at 288. For an in depth study on this topic see, R. GODDING, *Grégoire le Grand et Marie-Madeleine, in Memoriam sanctorum uerentates. Miscellanea in onore di Monsignor Victor Saxer*, Città del Vaticano, 1992, pp. 469-481.

²⁹A detailed discussion is in JANSEN, *The Making of the Magdalen*, pp. 33-38.

³⁰*The Making of the Magdalen*, p. 46.

³¹*The Making of the Magdalen*, p. 334.

en cabells; e après la conversió cobrí lo seu cap ab lo mantell, e llançà's en terra, entre les cames de Jesuchrist, p. 194). The mouth that once spoke many vulgar and vain words now kissed the feet of Jesus. Vicent quoted Saint Pope Gregory the Great again along these lines and the gospel passage which admonishes the display of the fruits of penance (*Facite ergo dignos fructus penitencie*, Luke 3:8 and Matthew 3:8, p. 195); with an added gloss that penance works against sins (*penitenciam per contrarium peccatis*, p. 195). He went on to say that, if one is prideful (*superbiós*) giving alms was not an adequate penance; rather what was needed was prayer and humility (*Si tu és superbiós e fas almoyna per penitència, no és condigna la penitència, car supèrbia vol oració e humilitat*, p. 195). If a person is full of avarice, fasting as a penance is not only not dignified or appropriate; it fails to make satisfaction for one's sin, so Vicent asked, 'What does God require?' He taught restitution to the victim. For the sin of greediness (*luxúria*) the proper penance is affliction, self denial, and chastity.

Vicent's sermon contributed to the trend that made Mary Magdalene the exemplar penitent. This yet another example of how this sermon is an *exempla* in genre since as Jansen observed, 'Medieval preachers were great proponents of teaching through *exempla*. Thus, what better *exemplum* of penance that a great sinner transformed through penitence into a great saint? Sinners were expected to identify with the Magdalen's sins and tears'³². As we noted earlier the Virgin Mary and Jesus could not fulfill this role given their exemption from sin, even though in the case of the Virgin Mary the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was still a work in progress.

The third lesson to be derived from Mary Magdalene was 'generous perfection'— (*perfectió generosa*), another way of saying her zeal to live a pure life after her conversion. Mary Magdalene achieved such a state of perfection and chastity that she resembled the Virgin Mary whom she also loved very much (*Vingué a perfectió de vida, que fon castíssima, en tant que, per la castedat que havie, plahye molt a la verge Maria, e amave-la molt*, p. 195). Again, the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary remained not officially defined as dogma. Still, Vicent was able to propose her as a model of holiness, but not facilitated by her being preserved from all Original Sin. Vicent then exclaimed that she lived an apostolic life which he said was reflected in her fasting (*Dejunava*) and her diet of vegetables (*menjave legums*), in short, a monastic life³³. Vicent departed from this subject to talk about Jesus' preaching and how he came to know Mary Magdalene.

When Jesus began to preach he did not stay in one place—as did John the Baptist— rather he wandered from town to town since most towns rejected him. The Jews refused to feed him and his disciples. Mary Magdalene

³²*The Making of the Magdalen*, p. 205, and as model of penance, pp. 202-212 and 256-257.

³³For a survey on monastic attitudes towards meat and vegetables see, A. FERREIRO, *De prohibitione carnis: Meat Abstinence and the Priscillianists*, "Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum" 11/3 (2007 [2008]), pp. 464-478.

happened to be at an inn where Jesus resided. Mary ordered the innkeeper to give Jesus something to eat and to charge it to her expense. This incident bears some resemblance to the Good Samaritan who did likewise for his 'neighbor.' [Luke 10: 25-37] Vicent commented that this was why the gospel reports that many women followed him and attended to Jesus' basic needs (*Sequebantur mulieres multe Iesum [que ministrabant ei de] facultatibus suis*, Luke 8:3, p. 195). After Jesus died, Mary resolved to sell all of her possessions and gave all of the proceeds to the poor (*Mas vendré u tot, e dar-oha als seus pobres*, pp. 195-196). She sold her large estate in Magdala (*E ella vené la baronia sua de Madalo*, p. 196) then took the money in a sack to St. Peter placing it at his feet, and she said, "Here are all my goods, do what you will with them" (*Veus aci tot lo meu bé, fet-ne a vostra voluntat*, p. 196). So having relinquished all of her worldly possessions, how then did she sustain herself, Vicent asked. Vicent reminded his audience that she lived in the modest dwelling of the Virgin Mary. She resolved to spend the rest of her life observing Matins, practicing contemplation, and going to Mass to hear the apostles preach and receive the Eucharist. She reflected for Vicent the virtuous woman as described in Proverbs 31:13. The moral message for Vicent was not to propose Mary Magdalene as an inaccessible saint whom no one could imitate but rather an attainable model. In fact, Vicent taught explicitly that all should attempt to imitate her in some way, such as her: humility, restitution of those wronged, chastity, and forgiving enemies (*Humiliem-nos, restituir, server castedat, perdonar als enemichs*, p. 196).

Mary Magdalene as preacher at times proved to be a challenge to theologians because it clearly seemed to give sanction to women preachers. Initially her preaching was a natural outgrowth of her announcing the resurrection to the apostles having been the first to have encountered the risen Christ, thus making her the *apostolorum apostola*. Jansen chronicles how with the emergence of the legendary stories about her preaching in Provence, the title of *apostolorum apostola* came to refer to her successful preaching mission in Provence³⁴. In the sermon Vicent Ferrer never uses *apostolorum apostola* to describe the preaching role of Mary Magdalene. Moreover, heterodox and semi-orthodox groups such as Lollards and Waldensians used this aspect of Mary Magdalene's hagiography to justify preaching by women³⁵. The most significant orthodox woman to imitate Mary Magdalene along these lines was Catherine of Siena³⁶. Vicent steered away from addressing this issue, neither approving nor censuring the practice, as many medieval commentators of this episode³⁷. Nevertheless, Vicent does give prominence to her preaching in his sermon as one of her great virtues. We can say that Vicent's approach to her preaching is in harmony with medieval exegetes whose, "depictions of Mary

³⁴*The Making of the Magdalen*, p. 270.

³⁵*The Making of the Magdalen*, pp. 273-277.

³⁶*The Making of the Magdalen*, pp. 276-277.

³⁷*The Making of the Magdalen*, p. 66.

Magdalen's apostolate in Provence were offered up by preachers, hagiographers, and shrine-keepers for admiration rather than imitation"³⁸. Those who saw Mary Magdalene to justify women preachers were the exception not the rule. Just the same, Vicent apparently believed that her preaching apostolate should inspire all Christians to share their faith.

The fourth lesson from Mary Magdalene is her fruitful preaching that led to the conversion of multitudes. Vicent asked, how did this happen? He said that some Church Fathers taught that because her lips initially kissed the feet of Jesus she received graces to convert many people (*Dien los doctors que per ço que ella havie besats los peus de Jesuchrist, axí com he dit, que en aquell besar rebé tanta de gràcia, que quan preycave, les gens se convertien*, p. 196). Of this David had prophesied, "and your lips have been anointed with grace, since God has blessed you forever," (*Difusa est gracia in labiis tuis, propterea benedicta te Deus in eternum*, Psalm [45] 44:3, p. 196). Because of her fruitful preaching that led to many conversions in Jerusalem, certain Jews resolved to kill her³⁹. Their plans were frustrated because of the respected family lineage that still gave her some protection. Instead, they kidnapped her and other Christian women, forced them into a dilapidated boat without a captain or oars and put them out to sea to die (*Mas prengueren-la, e les altres dones christianes, e meteren-les en una nau tota podrida sens govern e sens pa, e meteren-la ben a dins dintre mar, per tal que morissen aquí*, pp. 196-197). Mary Magdalene, unmoved by their evil machinations, implored Jesus to rescue them as he had done so with Noah's ark. Just then, in answer to her prayer angels came and navigated the boat. One of the angels assumed the role of captain, made the sign of the cross (*lo senyal de la creu*, p. 197), and they set sail in God's charity according to Vicent, and shortly arrived safely at Marseilles (Figure 1). This legend about Marseilles Vicent undoubtedly received from Jacobus of Voragine who popularized it in Western Europe through his *Golden Legend*⁴⁰. He also repeated it in chapter 105 on St. Martha with a few minor differences⁴¹. When the inhabitants saw the boat arriving without sail, they marveled since they could not see the angels that navigated the vessel. Mary Magdalene disembarked, climbed upon a rock to preach, and successfully converted most of the inhabitants including the ruler of Marseilles and his entire household (*E encara l'emperador de Marsella e tota la sua casa*, p. 197). The ruler converted on the condition that God restore to life his wife. Mary Magdalene did so at his request. She now had full reign in the region to preach so she set out to do just that. The result was the conversion of the peoples of Provence and Aix, and it was there that St. Maximin received his episcopal ordination. In the *Golden Legend*, it says that

³⁸The Making of the Magdalen, p. 273.

³⁹For Vicent and Jews consult, M.A. SÁNCHEZ SÁNCHEZ, *Predicación y antisemitismo: el caso de san Vicente Ferrer*, in *Proyección histórica de España en sus tres culturas: Castilla-León, América y el Mediterráneo*, vol. 3, Valladolid, 1993, pp. 195-203.

⁴⁰RYAN, *The Golden Legend*, chapter 96, 1: 374-383.

⁴¹RYAN, *The Golden Legend*, 2: 23.

he was one of the seventy-two disciples who were with the apostles⁴². In fact, he was among those exiled and placed in the boat with Mary Magdalene, Lazarus, Martha, Martilla —Martha's house cleaner, blessed Cedonius who had been entrusted by St. Peter to care for Mary Magdalene⁴³. Moving on, Vicent said that with this preaching mission she fulfilled what the Gospel of Mark had enjoined (*Illi autem predicauerunt ubique, Domino cooperante et sermonem confirmante, sequentibus signis*, Mark 16:17, p.197). In the *Golden Legend* Martha also preached to bring the inhabitants to conversion, which Vicent left out of the sermon⁴⁴. Vicent closed with an appeal to preachers, to live a good life like Mary Magdalene so they would have fruitful preaching, he cited St. Paul as his scripture authority from Romans 15:18 (*Non audeo aliquid loqui eorum que pro me non efficit Christus* — I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, p. 197).

Vicent arrived at the fifth lesson, which he referred to as her illuminated contemplation (*contemplació il·luminosa* [earlier he called it *gloriosa*]). After she had converted the province of Marseilles she remembered the words of Jesus to Martha her sister, “Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her (*Optimam partem elegit sibi Maria, que non auferetur ab ea*”, Luke 10:42, p. 197). She then implored Jesus to take her to any deserted place to meditate. Jesus sent some angels to fulfill her request. They placed her on a very large rock called ‘Balma’ where she lived for thirty-two years as a contemplative hermit. In Provence La Sainte-Baume became the traditional site where Mary Magdalene it was believed lived out her contemplative life. For this reason it became a major pilgrimage destination along with the church of Saint-Maximin, both in Provence⁴⁵. Jansen succinctly observes, “By the fifteenth century, the apostolic aspect of the saint was being packaged for consumption for faithful pilgrims who made the journey to Provence to worship at Saint-Maximin or La Sainte-Baume”⁴⁶. Moreover, it was the Dominicans in Saint-Maximin who vigorously promoted the cult of Mary Magdalene in Provence in order to rival Vézelay which claimed to have her relics and to bolster the house of Anjou⁴⁷. Again Jansen enlightens us, “the Dominicans of Provence constructed a Magdalen whose miracles at their shrine outshone all those in at Vézelay, and whose patronage had divinely established them as the new apostles of Christianity”⁴⁸ Related to this competition between Vézelay and Saint-Maximin, both communities claimed Mary Magdalene's relics to forge a ‘link to apostolic Christianity.’

⁴²RYAN, *The Golden Legend*, chapter 96, 1: 376, and chapter 105, 2: 23.

⁴³RYAN, *The Golden Legend*, chapter 96, 1:376. For background on Mary Magdalene and St. Maximin see, B. MONTAGNES, *La légende dominicaine de Marie-Madeleine à Saint-Maximin*, “Mémoires de l'Académie de Vaucluse”, 6 (1985), pp. 73-86.

⁴⁴RYAN, *The Golden Legend*, 2: 23.

⁴⁵See for details, V. SAXER, *Le culte et la tradition de Sainte Marie Madeleine en Provence*, “Mémoires de l'Académie de Vaucluse”, 6 (1985), pp. 41-51.

⁴⁶*The Making of the Magdalen*, pp. 272 and 277-284.

⁴⁷*The Making of the Magdalen*, p. 43.

⁴⁸*The Making of the Magdalen*, p. 45.

Similarly, around the same time Compostela claimed to have discovered the relics of St. James the Apostle⁴⁹. Vézelay and Saint-Maximin were bolstering their claims to apostolic origins through Mary Magdalene. Gregory of Tours had already done the same in the sixth century for the whole of Gaul in his *Libri historiarum decem*⁵⁰; what we have here is a dispute between two specific religious centers vying to have the stronger link to Mary Magdalene.

Returning to the Magdalene, her asceticism was so intense that she did not eat bread nor drink wine or water the entire time (*no menjà pa ne begué vi ne aygua*, p. 198)— living out what Jesus said to his disciples, that his food was to do the will of the Father [John 4: 34]. We learn she would spend seven hours daily immersed in contemplation. At the end of each session of meditation, the angels would take her up to show her the entire world and sing praises to God. When the middle of the night arrived she would get out of her bed that was made of a cold rock, as was her pillow, to meditate (*Seu llit la roqua freda*, p. 198). She recalled the suffering of Jesus who was bound, insulted and spat upon the face with mucous laden spit (*gargallos grossos*) by the Jews (*Ere pres a lligat, e los juheus lo vituperaven, escopint-li en la cara gargallos grossos*, p. 198). This horrific scene of suffering moved her to beg Jesus for mercy. When her heart began to fail her as she meditated on Jesus' intense suffering, the angels would come again, take her away to a high place, and sing her a song to relieve her anxiety and suffering. Vicent said they sang: "*Lauda Mater Ecclesia - lauda Christi clemencia, - qui septem purgat uicia, - per septiformem gratiam*" (p. 198). The seven vices is a reference to the seven demons (vices) that Jesus cast out of Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:2). This hymn was later adapted by Tomás Luis de Vitoria (c. 1548-1611), and entitled, *Lauda Mater Ecclesia de sancta Maria Magdalena*. After singing the hymn they would return her to her place [the large rock called Balma] where she would eat and drink until she was satisfied (*E açò li ere menjar e beure sadoll*, p. 198). Even though earlier it said that she did not drink or eat anything, apparently she did eat and drink in the last year of her life.

Vicent next described the various meditations that she practiced as she prayed the Divine Office. In the first hour, she contemplated when the Jews presented Jesus to Pontius Pilate, tied him, and mistreated him. When she could not longer stand contemplating such suffering the angels would come again and take her to a high place spiritually speaking and sang to her hymns and couplets to lift her spirit, such as (*Maria soror Lazari —que tot comisi crimina,— ab ipsa falsa tartari,— redit ad uita limina, Maria uenit ad paradise ianuam*, p. 198). At the third hour, the subject of contemplation focused on when Jesus was beaten so that his entire body was bloodied and was crowned with thorns (*Com Jesuchrist fo açotat, que tot lo seu cors corrie*

⁴⁹The Making of the Magdalen, p. 39. See V. SAXER, *Les ossements dits de sainte Marie-Madeleine conservés a Saint Maximin-la-Sainte-Baume*, "Provence Historique", 27 (1977), pp. 257-311.

⁵⁰See, A. FERREIRO, *Petrine Primacy and Gregory of Tours*, "Francia", 33/1 (2006), pp. 1-16.

sanch, e fo coronat de spines — Post fluxi sanguinis — scandala sic exhebetate fiala, — qui uos translata glorie —, sic uasa contumelie, p. 198). At the sixth hour, the Jews took Jesus to be crucified and he carried his cross to the hill [Golgotha]. His mother, Mary Magdalene [refers to herself in the first person] *E sa mare e yo e Johan isquem-li a carrera*, (p. 198) and the apostle John followed him along the way, and Mary Magdalene again implored the aid of the angels (*De uasa contumelie... — egra currit ad medicum — uas portans alabastrum*, p. 198). In the ninth hour as Jesus was being crucified and while suffering such pain he prayed to the Father but knowing nevertheless in advance that he would be victorious (*Abba Pater dimite [et dic omnia alia uerba que dixit in cruce et angeli], — surgentem cum uictoria — Iesum uidit preuia — ab inferis meretur gaudia — que plus gaudet ceteris*, p. 199). During Vespers Mary Magdalene contemplated when Jesus was brought down from the cross and his body was turned over to the Virgin Mary (*In thesauro reposita regis est drachma predita que mater [lucet inclita de luto luce redite]*, p. 199). At the end of the contemplation, she reflected on Jesus' body deposited in the tomb. The Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene pleaded, to the one true God of numerous graces who removes faults and rewards the faithful, (*Uni Deo sit gloria — per multiformis gracias — qui culpas ad suplicia — remittit et dat premia*, p. 199). Vicent observed that this was Mary Magdalene's way of life for thirty-three years, which incidentally is the same life span ascribed to Jesus.

On the day that God revealed to Mary Magdalene the time of her death, angels carried her to St. Maximin, who told her he would feed her (*per ço que la combregàs ans que morís, e axí s féu*, p. 199) before she died. This was the *viaticum*, which she received —*combregàs* means in this context to eat liturgically, the Eucharist. She then told the bishop that the manner in which she would go to Paradise was a gift from Jesus and so it happened. She prayed to Jesus with great devotion, 'Into your hands I commend my spirit,' (*In manus tuas commendo spiritum meum*, p. 199), then her soul was taken from her body after receiving communion (*E la ànima isqué del cors après la comunió*, p. 199). Thousands of angels carried her to Paradise (*E mil milia àngels dugueren-la a paraís*, p. 199). In this manner, Mary Magdalene ended her earthly sojourn.

We can conclude with the following observations regarding this splendid sermon by Vicent Ferrer. Vicent proposed Mary Magdalene as a model penitent for all to emulate even though women were the most likely intended audience. He deftly wove together canonical and Christian apocryphal material —especially through the *Golden Legend*— to create such a portrait. Once Mary Magdalene converted, Vicent presented her as a model missionary, modest, chaste, humble, and a contemplative *par excellence*. His portrait of Mary Magdalene is consistent with the various traditions that had emerged in France beginning in the ninth-century and which continued to develop long after Vicent's lifetime. He was one of a long line of Dominicans who was responsible for the wide dissemination of her cult in Europe. Vicent may not have broken significant doctrinal ground in this sermon but he did

contribute to the development of her image and cult in the late Middle Ages. For that reason, Vicent earns a rightful place in this particular Dominican Marian tradition as a significant voice though this typically eloquent sermon in Catalán.

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Figure 1: Giotto, Voyage to Marseille 1320's
(Magdalen Chapel, Lower Church, San Francesco, Assisi)

