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from the Late Middle Ages to Early Modernity

edited by

Marco Bellabarba / Hannes Obermair / Hitomi Sato

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Ritual Surveys

Conflict, Articulation, and Composition of Local Societies within the Sacred Sphere in the Lombardy Alps during the Late Middle Ages

by *Massimo Della Misericordia*

I. SACRALITY, UNITY, AND ARTICULATION OF LOCAL SOCIETIES

The present essay aims to bring together some elements regarding the role of local churches in the processes of perpetuation of rural societies, their cohesion, articulation, and hierarchy. Both the active symbols in this sphere and the available material resources are considered. During the debate that accompanied the development of this research project, the results of which are presented here, the author sustained the importance of accompanying the study of conflictuality with attention to the modes of its public mediation, in order to avoid limiting the study to a merely deconstructionist approach. While it is true that a disaggregating analysis of local contexts has served in recent times to overcome simplistic harmonic readings of Middle Age and proto-modern communities, today these appear outdated and poorly reflect the complex experience of relations in corporative societies. The author also sustained that the exploration of compositional mechanisms should extend into the sphere of sacrality.

Given these premises, one inescapably starts from the fascinating work of John Bossy, who elected the Late Middle Ages as the focus for his study and demonstrated the capacity of sacramental and religious life in general to reinforce family, friendship, and peaceful relations within the local parish¹. The most recent Italian research accentuates and even

Translation by Gavin Taylor

¹ J. BOSSY, *Christianity in the West, 1400-1700*, Oxford 1987; Italian translation *L'Occidente cristiano. 1400-1700*, Torino 1990; J. BOSSY, *Dalla comunità all'individuo. Per una storia sociale dei sacramenti nell'Europa moderna*, Torino 1998. For pointers for

exaggerates the importance of the social context of ritual (as favored by Bossy) rather than analyzing its code, demonstrating how fragmented and conflictual the sacred sphere really was. A place, therefore, not of cohesion but of symbolic competition between parish and community, confraternities, local chapels, the families of altar patrons of the church, and so on².

Bossy had already grasped the complexity of the corporative dialectic (one of the most powerful models through which people of the Late Middle Ages understood social relations) operating within the rite of the mass itself.

“I proceed by taking the distinction between sacrifice and sacrament in the mass of the waning middle ages to be equivalent to a distinction between the Christian community considered as an assembly of distinct parts and that community considered as a transcendent whole”³.

The present author does, however, feel bound to voice the impression that the social significance assumed by the sacraments in the Late Middle Ages are, in some cases, overestimated by this British historian, possibly influenced by more recent developments in theological thought. Certainly within the different fields of the official liturgy, worship, and theology, orientations were expressed that were not necessarily consistent, and that ought to be distinguished in a more analytic way than is possible in the present work. In any case, even within the more limited scope

reflection on the contributions of this author, see A. PROSPERI - A. TORRE, “*Christianity in the West*” di John Bossy, in “Quaderni storici”, 22, 1987, pp. 961-986; D. ZARDIN, *Riscrivere la tradizione. Il mondo delle confraternite nella cornice del rinnovamento cattolico cinque-seicentesco*, in M. GAZZINI (ed.), *Studi confraternali: orientamenti, problemi, testimonianze*, Firenze 2009, pp. 167-231; V. LAVENIA, *L'infamia e il perdono. Tributi, pene e confessione nella teologia morale della prima età moderna*, Bologna 2004, pp. 14 ff.; O. NICCOLI, *Postfazione*, in *La pace fra realtà e utopia*, Caselle di Sommacampagna 2005, pp. 283-291.

² See E. GRENDI, *Il Cervo e la repubblica. Il modello ligure di antico regime*, Torino 1993, pp. 41-76; A. TORRE, *Il consumo di devozioni. Religione e comunità nelle campagne dell'ancien régime*, Venezia 1995; A. TORRE, *Luoghi. La produzione di località in età moderna e contemporanea*, Roma 2011, pp. 73-101; L. GIANA, *Topografie dei diritti. Istituzioni e territorio nella repubblica di Genova*, Alessandria 2011, pp. 91-126; L. PROVERO, *Le parole dei sudditi. Azioni e scritture della politica contadina nel Duecento*, Spoleto 2012, pp. 339-366. A composite picture is painted in P. GUGLIELMOTTI, *Ricerche sull'organizzazione del territorio nella Liguria medievale*, Firenze 2005, pp. 112-128.

³ J. BOSSY, *Dalla comunità all'individuo*, p. 151 (quote from the original text).

of the aspects considered here, closer to the experience of the sacred, there is still a net impression of greater complexity.

Considering first of all the Mass, Bossy underlines the social and compositional significance of its central element, the Eucharistic Prayer. Instead, theologians, liturgists, and historians within the Catholic world have expressed different points of view, though in a critical light that sometimes appears evaluative and conditioned by personal commitment to the 1900s reform of rites⁴. They note how the notion of aggregated community in the body and blood of Christ, explicit in the most ancient formulas including Roman, and which survives in eastern churches, disappeared from the consecratory prayer of the western Catholic church during the Middle Ages and modern eras, being re-proposed again only in the *preces* elaborated in the 1960s. They identify an associated accentuated individualization of the relationship between believers and the Redeemer that emerged in Latin Christianity during those centuries. The main focus of the Eucharist was shifted to personal redemption, and only in recent times has this been extended again to include the community and eschatological context within which this can be achieved. Such a conception of the Mass is thought to have emphasized the power of the priest, diminishing the role of the assembly of believers⁵.

The attribution of “socially integrative powers” to the celebration of the “Corpus Domini as a ritual of Christian integration in the late medieval city”⁶ cannot but take into account that the *proprium* of the relative Mass emphasized the redeeming values of the identification of

⁴ See for example H. DE LUBAC, *Corpus mysticum. L'eucharistie et l'Église au moyen âge*, Paris 1949, Italian translation, *L'eucaristia e la Chiesa nel medioevo*, Milano 1982, p. 328 and *passim*; J.A. JUNGSMANN, *Missarum sollemnia. Eine genetische Erklärung der römischen Messe*, Wien 1949, Italian translation, *Missarum sollemnia. Origini, liturgia, storia e teologia della messa romana*, Milano 2004², vol. 1, pp. 89 ff.; M. RIGHETTI, *Manuale di storia liturgica*, Milano 1964, *passim*; F. RAINOLDI, *Traditio canendi. Appunti per una storia dei riti cristiani cantati*, Roma 2000, pp. 250 ff.; E. CATTANEO, *Il culto cristiano in Occidente. Note storiche*, Roma 2003, pp. 252-280.

⁵ E. CATTANEO, “*In unum congregans*”. *La supplica per il raduno della chiesa nelle preghiere eucaristiche*, in “*Rassegna di teologia*”, 27, 1987, pp. 345-373. Particular liturgical texts sometimes conserved these themes, like the preface to the Liturgy of St. Ambrose of the sixth Sunday after the Epiphany (*Missale ambrosianum Gasparis s. E. mediolanensis archiepiscopi iussu recognitum et editum*, Mediolani 1594, fol. 36r-v).

⁶ J. BOSSY, *Dalla comunità all'individuo*, p. 187 (quote from the original text).

believers in Christ, while the unity and peace of the Church, though invoked, remained somewhat in the background⁷.

Alongside this reflection within the Catholic world, it is interesting to compare the approach that underlined the aspects of self-identity that developed within the bounds of the orthodox tradition, claiming that the single Mass celebrated at a single altar in the Church had better conserved the cycle of positive interactivity within the parish. Both lines of analysis note, as a specific feature of Latin Christianity of the second millennium, a proliferation of oratories within the same parish territory, and of altars within individual churches, with a multiplication of masses, high and low, public and private⁸. In this perspective, the cohesive forces are not very evident. Instead, there was an isomorphic relationship between the divisions of Catholic liturgical space and the Late Middle Ages articulation of Western European society into a plurality of individual and collective subjects capable of acting concretely within the religious sphere through deeds of devotion, patronage, and so on. This relationship shaped religious experience in polycentric ways.

In the Late Middle Ages, undoubtedly the “sign of peace” developed and absorbed the social aspects of the practice of the communion, which had become sporadic⁹. The fact that peace tablets used for the purpose bore Eucharistic images, like the *Imago pietatis*, confirms the overlap of the two elements. A projection of the Eucharistic assembly outside the walls of the church can be identified in socialization in public squares, with both recreational aspects (games in the church square, the habit of meeting in the adjacent tavern), and political aspects (when the tradition of meeting was sometimes institutionalized into formally convened gatherings of family heads). The division of the consecrated lamb and distribution of wine at Easter in Bormio, the more regular sharing of bread and wine during the celebrations of patronal saints,

⁷ *Missalis romani editio princeps. Mediolani anno 1474 prelis mandata*, Roma 1996, pp. 215-217. These texts remained unchanged over the following centuries. See also *Missale ambrosianum*, fols 149r-150r.

⁸ For the liveliness of the discussion, see for example C. YANNARAS, *Ἐνάντια στή θρησκεία*, Ikaros 2006, Italian translation *Contro la religione*, Magnano 2012.

⁹ L. CABRINI CHIESA, *Gesti e formule di pace: note in margine all'età medievale*, in *La pace fra realtà e utopia*. On the relative social status see G. TODESCHINI, *Visibilmente crudeli. Malviventi, persone sospette e gente qualunque dal medioevo all'età moderna*, Bologna 2007, p. 107.

solemnities of the liturgical year, funereal commemorations in all the villages, and the distribution of alms at the doors of sacred places or in cemeteries, were all effectively para-Eucharistic rituals¹⁰. It is interesting to note that this reciprocal reflection between religion and social relations was disconcerting to bishops and priests with a Catholic Reformation background, who strived to distinguish moments of sacred celebration from the profane, in order to head off a cross-contamination that had long been the rule.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that the salvation offered by the rites of a commemorative Mass was for individual souls. The communities that united to pray for the dead (or did not even unite but entrusted to a priest the task of celebrating a private mass) presented marked variability and divisions: village, confraternity, family, or guild. The force of propitiation of the same Mass could be directed towards the benefit of an entire town, a single individual, a family, or a confraternity. At the end of life, burial privileged the same relations, from kinship to membership of a confraternity, underlining hierarchies of rank, the extraneousness of foreigners, and so on.

Moving on from the Eucharistic community to consider the baptismal community, the same questions can be posed. Without doubt, as will become clear, baptism was a rite dense with relational implications. However, it is important not to forget the transition that occurred in the countryside between the High and Late Middle Ages. Initially the sacrament was administered twice a year at the parish font during the collective rituals of the Easter Vigil and Pentecost. Later it involved individual new-born infants, their families, godmothers, and godfathers convened around fonts that were increasingly widespread among newly established parishes, but also in chapels with some aspirations towards exercising the care of souls, administered as soon as possible after birth, without any connection with the more generalized liturgical and community timeframe. Again, the accentuated concern for saving the individual soul, to be urgently protected against the risk of limbo, was decisive in transforming a celebration of the entire religious community

¹⁰ C. NUBOLA, *Chiese delle comunità. Diritti consuetudinari e pratiche religiose nella prima età moderna. Qualche spunto di ricerca*, in C. NUBOLA - A. TURCHINI (eds), *Fonti ecclesiastiche per la storia sociale e religiosa d'Europa: XV-XVIII secolo* (Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento. Quaderni, 50), Bologna 1999, pp. 441-464, here pp. 457-464.

into a ritual which, while not exactly private, was certainly restricted to a community of relatives, in-laws, and carefully selected friends.

As regards confession, Bossy himself considers numerous shades of difference. While the interiorization of penitence may have a modern origin, the individualization of the sacrament already existed in the Late Middle Ages. Furthermore, while the cycle of sin and penitence remained, in the latter period, intimately woven into a social relationship punctuated by offence and compensation, the growing importance of priestly absolution compared to public rituals of expiation shifted this experience towards privatization, with confession to a priest at the altar, or even in the priest's personal residence, or supplications dispatched to a distant office in Rome, like the Apostolic Penitentiary. The practice of frequent confession, promoted by preachers and required by the confraternities, weakened other links on a community level. These included the liturgical period of Lent (for penitence) and of Easter (for communion), instead establishing rhythms shared by more restricted groups of believers, or even deriving from personal conscience¹¹.

A final problematic point involves the internal composition of the parish community and the ties that held it together. Bossy gives priority to social relations, in particular those of friendship and family relations, rather than institutional bodies, a very contemporary perspective that today needs to be widened. The analysis of interpersonal ties should be extended on one hand to the biographies of the individuals that establish them, and on the other hand to the phenomenon of legal crystallization of certain networks into formalized units. In other words, rather than proposing yet again the eternal choice between mechanical

¹¹ The Low Middle Ages process of privatization has been object of particular attention: J. DELUMEAU, *Le péché et la peur. La culpabilisation en Occident, XIIIe-XVIIIe siècles*, Paris 1983; Italian translation *Il peccato e la paura. L'idea di colpa in Occidente dal XIII al XVIII secolo*, Bologna 1987; M.G. MUZZARELLI, *Penitenze nel medioevo. Uomini e modelli a confronto*, Bologna 1994; *Dalla penitenza all'ascolto delle confessioni: il ruolo dei frati mendicanti*, Spoleto 1996; A. PROSPERI, *Tribunali della coscienza. Inquisitori, confessori, missionari*, Torino 1996; P. PRODI, *Una storia della giustizia. Dal pluralismo dei fori al moderno dualismo tra coscienza e diritto*, Bologna 2000; E. BRAMBILLA, *Alle origini del Sant'Uffizio. Penitenza, confessione e giustizia spirituale dal medioevo al XVI secolo*, Bologna 2000, especially pp. 39-44; E. BRAMBILLA, *La giustizia intollerante. Inquisizione e tribunali confessionali in Europa (secolo IV-XVIII)*, Roma 2006; for the area under examination, P. OSTINELLI (ed.), *Penitenzieria apostolica. Le suppliche alla sacra Penitenzieria apostolica provenienti dalla diocesi di Como (1438-1484)*, Milano [2003].

models and organic models, the ultimate need is to concretely understand how during the Late Middle Ages processes of individualization and collectivization were able to develop simultaneously, in forms that were contrasting but not mutually exclusive.

In the following, the author will strive to measure the level of involvement, around the parish or chapel, of the various components of the community, those identified by the most traditional interpretation of rural stratification and those highlighted in modern social history: nobles and citizens, immigrants and emigrants, children, men, and women. The convergence of these towards unity will not be assumed *a priori* since the relationships between these groups in reality were sufficiently flexible to generate different alignments not only in time and space, but also in the same place, depending on the sphere of action. It is thus not given that, despite being in the same territorial ambit, these components would unite in religious life and, to the same extent and in the same forms, in political representation and enjoyment of collective property: the religious, political-institutional, economic, and legal communities did not necessarily match up. Nevertheless, the power of the aggregating forces will also be highlighted. During the period under study, the religious community was more often characterized by being more inclusive than the economic, political, and legal communities for immigrants, children, and women, but also for privileged figures excluded from village or town (“borgo”) communes¹².

In brief, the author does not intend to share reductionist readings that flatten the ritual into a mere instrument in the symbolic competition between individuals and groups, views that tend not to acknowledge the effectiveness attributed to the words and ceremonies by the women, men, and institutions of the period in question. On the other hand, it appears that, starting precisely from the intrinsic written and symbolic language of Middle Ages Catholicism, it is not possible to treat the community aggregated by religious manifestations as a statically

¹² Acting in this way was not only the ordinary religious force provided by the parish institutions, but also the extraordinary force ensured by miraculous events and sanctuaries, like the example of Tirano, the analysis of which should be developed along its own lines. See S. XERES (ed.), *Ubi steterunt pedes Mariae. L'apparizione mariana e il santuario di Tirano. 1504-2004*, Sondrio 2005; E. ZALA, *Da Santa Maria della Sanitate al ponte della Folla alla miracolosissima Madonna di Tirano. Origini e sviluppi del culto mariano valtelinesse fra XVI e XVII secolo*, Ph.D. thesis, Fribourg, 2012, part 2.

delimited and articulated unit of individuals and groups. Instead, it is more opportune to analytically trace out the ways in which the ambit of ritually sanctioned friendship might in each case extend or restrict this changeable combination.

In the more limited development of the present work, the author will try to reconstruct these processes of division and composition within local societies of the Central Alps in the Late Middle Ages, referring essentially to the diocese of Como, apart from a few comparisons with surrounding valleys¹³. For reasons of space, the following will be dedicated in particular to the internal articulation of the community into families, social classes, age groups, gender groups, postponing to a later date a reconsideration of the equally important issue of territorial disputes.

II. UNITY

Certain unitary symbols and some collective practices were profoundly linked to the local church, so much so that they became delimiting factors for the extension of the community. The classic theme of the relationship between the parish and the “origin” of the rural commune (well established in Italian historiography starting from the works of Arturo Palmieri, dating back to the end of the 1800s) could be reconsidered from this perspective, enhanced with the most recent analysis of the procedural nature of institutions. It would then be possible to consider the genesis of a community no longer as a specific moment limited by the appearance of new legal forms in the eleventh to twelfth centuries, but as an open process of continuous redesign and emerging from the combined experiences of organized cohabitation within a given territory¹⁴.

¹³ For a contextualization, see the latest work by E. CANOBBIO, *Strutture della cura animarum in diocesi di Como: pievi, parrocchie, comunità*, in S. BOSCANI LEONI - P. OSTINELLI (eds), *La chiesa “dal basso”. Organizzazioni, interazioni e pratiche nel contesto alpino alla fine del medioevo*, Milano 2012, pp. 69-102, with relative bibliography. A version of the present work with more wide-ranging documentary material is M. DELLA MISERICORDIA, *Commune ecclesie. Chiese e società locali in Valtellina e nelle Alpi lombarde nel tardo medioevo*, Sondrio 2015.

¹⁴ These perspectives are adopted in much of the cited literature; for a summary view, see for example M. AUBRUN, *La paroisse en France des origines au XVe siècle*, Paris 1986, pp. 150, 158 and *passim*.

1. *The collective initiative within the religious sphere*

Above all else, a rural commune and local territory were units of collective action acknowledged in the religious sphere. In order to elect a curate, intervene on a church building, sometimes to administer church property, reference was made to the normal decision making procedures in use in the economic, political, and legal fields. This involved convening men or councilors or when necessary the election of more limited committees, which in the eyes of the ecclesiastic authorities fully represented the *universitas* (union of citizens).

However, it was not necessarily the case that decisional unity of the community was effectively achieved. Often there was a division of supporters of opposing candidates for the role of curate, and this resulted in obvious manipulations with individual parties striving to accredit their own desire as that of the overall community, while the threat of violence fermented confrontation. It thus became necessary to resort to a language of a specifically political nature in order to deal analytically with the active subjects and distinguish the different “parties”¹⁵.

Furthermore, collective action, as in political and economic life, could occur outside of the formalized framework and mediation of bodies and offices authorized to act for the population, in favor of more direct and disruptive methods, which nevertheless aspired towards the integration of the community, like the expulsion “by public demand” of unsuitable priests.

The rhetoric of both local and central documentation insists on the participation of the totality of the population in the shared responsibilities and duties in the ecclesiastic field. Even the minutes of pastoral visits indicate a significant legitimization of community action, and the instructions of the delegates of the Bishop of Como in 1445, recorded by the Episcopal Chancellor, for the purchase of a silver cross for the church of S. Pietro di Berbenno, required the agreement of the whole community (“omnes dicte communitatis”)¹⁶.

¹⁵ See G. CHITTOLINI, *Elezioni di parroci a Milano nel tardo Quattrocento*, in D. BALESTRACCI et al. (eds), *Uomini, paesaggi, storie. Studi di storia medievale per Giovanni Cherubini*, Siena 2012, pp. 49-62.

¹⁶ E. CANOBBIO (ed.), *La visita pastorale di Gerardo Landriani alla diocesi di Como (1444-1445)*, Milano 2001, p. 146. See N. COULET, *Paroisse, oeuvre et communauté*

Sometimes this concourse was treated more analytically as an occasion for a sort of ritual survey. In 1518, for example, the People's Council of Bormio established that "quelibet persone de Burmio et in eo habitantes, habentes bona in extimo" should pay 3 Imperial coins for every 100 lire of property value, for the construction of the church of S. Barbara¹⁷. It was common that for the construction of a church for the community patron saint or for the home of a chaplain elected by the community, the commune would have the collaboration of all residents, who were required to provide manual labor for the project¹⁸. The constitution of a local parish involved a similar mobilization, sometimes with the assignment of public property, on other occasions individual gifts were solicited.

2. *Ambivalent symbols and aspects of public ceremonial life*

While collective initiative ran through the sacred sphere, on the other hand religious symbols and practices concurred to establish the ambit of social and institutional membership.

Church bells had a multifunctional role for religious services and civil life, given that very few communes in the area possessed their own bell tower. They rang to call the faithful to religious services and at the same time gave warning of the propagation of fires and other emergencies, they convened community meetings, announced the collection of taxes, and called the male population to arms in order to repress criminal activities. Bells guaranteed public announcements, which constituted one of the delicate stages in collective mobilization, political participation, and the distribution of local resources. For this reason, the definition of the interested parties when paying for a bell (an entire community, or a single parish when a civil circumscription was divided into two ecclesiastic units) involved the complex and at times problematic operation of establishing the confines of a community.

d'habitants en Provence (le diocèse d'Aix dans la première moitié du XIVe siècle), in La paroisse en Languedoc (XIIIe-XIVe s.), Toulouse 1990, pp. 215-237, here pp. 218-224.

¹⁷ Archivio Storico del Comune di Bormio (hereafter ASCB), *Quaterni consiliorum*, 7, 1518.06.04.

¹⁸ See G. SOLDI RONDININI, *Saggi di storia e storiografia visconteo-sforzesche*, Bologna 1984, pp. 57-58; G. PINTO, *Il lavoro, la povertà, l'assistenza. Ricerche sulla società medievale*, Roma 2008, p. 46.

In addition, there was a degree of overlap between an assembly of men and a Mass. The participation in a mass was one of the habits that revealed the presence, licit or illicit, of an individual in a given place, and the state authorities punished a community that, instead of sending away and reporting a banished person, accepted them and possibly even tolerated their presence in church¹⁹. Meetings of family heads were often held on Sundays, in the church or more frequently in the churchyard, cemetery, under the church porticoes, or in the public squares in front of the church. These are well known common practices²⁰ and so only a few more specific observations are offered here. First, it is notable that, while work on Sundays was forbidden in the statutes, it was admitted or even required to meet in order to decide community issues. In this way, meeting upon the sounding of the bell in the church square or inside the church, in the presence of the curate, acquired a significance in some way additional to the activities of everyday life, a celebration of political unity, or an aspired unity, that brought decisional deeds and the election of magistrates within the aura of the sacred.

A further aspect of note is that these habits did not fall within a logic of the timeless symbiosis between religious and public life. An analytic examination of the copious documentation as early as the 1300s regarding the lower Valtellina and the Valle del Bitto in fact make it possible to state that these habits consolidated between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It became more common to use church bells (rather than more primitive percussion instruments) to convene meetings, Sunday as the meeting day, and a consecrated venue for the meeting place, with the priest invited to take part as witness. This convergence dates to a specific period, when the process of establishment of parishes in the valleys advanced significantly, between the 1300s and 1400s, with a multiplication of parish churches, which up until that time either did not exist or were not endowed with equal attributes, and certainly before the renewal of controlling measures over local contexts from above, by the reformed Catholic hierarchy.

¹⁹ See F. DEL TREDICI, *Comunità, nobili e gentiluomini nel contado di Milano del Quattrocento*, Milano 2013, pp. 125, 167-168; G. CAMINITI, *La vicinia di S. Pancrazio a Bergamo. Un microcosmo di vita politico-sociale (1283-1318)*, Bergamo 1999, pp. 146-151.

²⁰ See the recent A. FIORE, *Signori e sudditi. Strutture e pratiche del potere signorile in area umbro-marchigiana (secoli XI-XIII)*, Spoleto 2010, pp. 404-405, 408.

It was not uncommon for a section of the community archives to be conserved at the local parish church, which thus also became the custodian of the memory of decisions reached at meetings, the administration of public property, and relations between the community and individual inhabitants.

Church doors and cemeteries were venues for the *pro anima* distribution of wine and food by those preparing for death, to the benefit of the poor or all local residents, with powerful effects in terms of social integration, and which again became progressively established as a social practice between the 1300s and 1400s. In Bormio on Maundy Thursday and Easter Sunday there was the distribution of *post cho-municbas* wine to the poor and local residents. Wine was denied to the faithful in the Latin rituals, but in this way, it was given to them by the commune on the same occasion and closely associated with the Eucharist. Furthermore, in the town suburbs and surrounding villages Easter was celebrated by calling all the local people for a banquet of a lamb offered by the neighborhood.

The commune was aggregated not only around Eucharistic or para-Eucharistic celebrations, but also around the ritual of Easter which traditionally also involved baptism. The commune of Bormio, for example, procured the candle “in die Sabbati sancti ad fontem baptismi”²¹. In a society with no other registry procedures, baptism was the rite of initiation into the Christian and political communities, family and friendship circles, establishing relations of compatibility and hierarchy between these different groupings, also through a multiplication of godfathers and godmothers.

The ritual was conducted at a font, which could depict the relevant public and private relations, within which the new member of society was received. The font in S. Lorenzo di Chiavenna, the parish center, dating back to 1156, on a site and from a period in which the ritual still had a very marked public nature, depicts the entire baptismal community. The work was commissioned jointly by the towns of Chiavenna and Piuro,

²¹ Regarding the ritual calendar of Bormio, see L. MARTINELLI - S. ROVARIS (eds), *Statuta seu leges municipales communitatis Bormii tam civiles quam criminales*, [Sondrio 1984], pp. 96-97, chap. 63, pp. 168-169, chap. 158, pp. 170-171, chap. 159, the council minutes and register of council expenses, in ASCB, as well as Archivio di Stato di Sondrio (hereafter ASSo), Archivio Notarile (hereafter AN), 956, ff. 375r-377r, 1545.05.16.

as testified in an inscription that records the names of the officials, the institutions of which were temporarily united after extended disputes, a political settlement that was powerfully expressed as unity at the font. The basin bore a bass-relief depiction of the ritual of Holy Saturday, including the baptism of a baby, held by the godfather. Attending the welcome ceremony for the newly arrived were the archetypal figures of all the components of the local society, clerical and lay, divided into the social orders of nobles, burgers, and artisans²².

A unique testimony for the area under study is provided by the family journals of the Bormio Notaries, Lazzaro Marioli and his son Gian Battista, revealing how between the 1400s and 1500s the framework of memberships became increasingly complex, without failing to be shaped by the overall community structure, emphasizing the importance above all of relationships of family, affinity, and friendship within an individual's social class. The Mariolis meticulously recorded the names, surnames, and degrees of familial relationship of the godfathers and godmothers of sons and daughters, on five occasions. As the position of the two Notaries strengthened over time this circle extended with an almost mathematical progression (from 6 components in 1452 to 15 in 1511). It included other Mariolis, high ranking families of the town (the Sermondi, Grassoni, Alberti, Fiorini, and Fogliani families), and a group of emerging figures that included the Bruni family, while the presence of social ranks lower than the Mariolis themselves is marginal. Recurrence to the same godfathers and godmothers is indicative of the importance attributed to these relationships. In addition to these, there was also the doctor, the "podestà" (mayor), the dean, and other members of the local clergy²³.

²² F. RAINOLDI, *Vita di un fonte, fonte di vita. Riflessioni sul fonte battesimale romanico di Chiavenna*, in "Clavenna", 45, 2006, pp. 9-32.

²³ E. BESTA, *Bormio antica e medioevale e le sue relazioni con le potenze finitime*, Milano 1945, p. 236, §§ 2-3, p. 238, § 10, p. 241, §§ 29, 30. See G. ALFANI, *Padri, padrini, patroni. La parentela spirituale nella storia*, Venezia 2006, as well as W.J. CONNELL, *Il cittadino umanista come ufficiale nel territorio: una rilettura di Giannozzo Manetti*, in A. ZORZI - W.J. CONNELL (eds), *Lo stato territoriale fiorentino (secoli XIV-XV). Ricerche, linguaggi, confronti*, San Miniato 2001, pp. 359-383, p. 368 for the case of a community-godmother, a practice that was supposed to help personify the body; C. KLAPISCH-ZUBER, *La maison et le nom. Stratégies et rituels dans l'Italie de la Renaissance*, Paris 1990, pp. 126-127 on the role of godfather assumed by public entities.

III. FAMILIES

1. *Homesteads and community*

Often economic, political, and even ritual discourses present an image of a community not so much as a union of individuals (as might have seemed more marked in the previous discussion) but rather as a hierarchical set of domestic units. The convergence of families into a community was thus not a process that could be taken for granted, with textual and ceremonial elaborations serving to express and resolve the active competition for identity between community and family, proposing an idealized model of a village comprising individual houses and a commune composed of individual homesteads capable of cohabiting harmoniously.

The institution of a benefice, in the forms described above, might require the express agreement of the families. There was the generalized tithe and first fruits contributions due to the clergy *pro quolibet focho*. The same basis was applied for the collection of money and to ensure the supply of wood for curates and cereals for custodians²⁴. Masonry work, or financial support for the same, could also be requested not from individuals but from homesteads.

One integrating ritual was the visit of the priest on Christmas Eve to each family: the rector of Rasura had to “ire in vigilia Nativitatis d. nostri Iesu Christi ad dandum aquam sanctam et incensum pro qualibet domo seu focho Rasure”²⁵.

The family also extended to deceased members. The property on which the bequests to the church were established, for the specific purpose of perpetuating the commitments of the ancestors, contributed to maintaining the family history. It has become clear that in the Late Middle Ages salvation involved not only individual action, with instead

²⁴ R. GERMAIN, *Revenus et actions pastorales des prêtres paroissiaux dans la diocèse de Clermont*, in *Le clerc séculier au moyen âge*, Paris 1993, pp. 101-119, here p. 103; P. OSTINELLI, *Il governo delle anime. Strutture ecclesiastiche nel Bellinzonese e nelle Valli ambrosiane (XIV-XV secolo)*, Locarno 1998, p. 261; I. SAULLE HIPPENMEYER, *Il comune e la chiesa. Forme di controllo “dal basso” del patrimonio ecclesiastico nelle comunità grigionesi del tardo medioevo*, in S. BOSCANI LEONI - P. OSTINELLI (eds), *La chiesa “dal basso”*, pp. 123-135, here p. 126.

²⁵ ASSO, AN, 344, ff. 18r-19v, 1465.05.24; P. OSTINELLI, *Il governo delle anime*, p. 97.

a whole group operating in support of the deceased: the relatives who arranged celebration of the memorial Masses, the elected community of the confraternity, since a believer might fear leaving no earthly heirs who would dedicate themselves to praying for their soul²⁶.

However, this does not imply that relations between living and dead, nor between the living who had to fulfil the desires of the dead, were always peaceful. Furthermore, the institutions responsible for implementing the dispositions of the dead had overlapping tasks and competed with each other. The commune, in a sense replacing relatives and confraternities, assumed numerous roles in this respect, ensuring the execution of bequests, managing property committed to charity, and memorial Masses, having been designated in the will to arrange celebration of the rites of suffrage. Sometimes the agreements that the community established with the curate prescribed the commemoration of particular figures. In addition, the community mediated conflicts between individuals and family groups, as well as inter-generational disputes regarding interests not only of a material nature, obliging heirs, who might be more concerned for the integrity of the inheritance rather than the salvation of the deceased, to fulfil the bequests of the will.

Finally, families instituted relations with each other through marriage. Before the Catholic Reformation regulation of the sacrament, one of the important responsibilities of curators was the *benedictio sponse*, a duty required at the time of institution of new parishes and also useful to underline the role and territorial competence of the clergyman. The intention was to create a relationship that would instate solidarity, but presumably, there would also have been moments of contrast, for various reasons, like the payment of dowries or the return of the same upon death of a husband, or safeguarding the property of wards.

2. Household heads, women, and children

The family was articulated into roles and relations, with an internal hierarchy. Different ceremonial behaviors, or at least their prescription, combined to define the identities of age and gender.

²⁶ J. CHIFFOLEAU, *La comptabilité de l'Au-delà. Les hommes, la mort et la religion dans la région d'Avignon à la fin du moyen âge (vers 1320 - vers 1480)*, Roma 1980; J. LE GOFF, *La naissance du Purgatoire*, Paris 1981; Italian translation *La nascita del Purgatorio*, Torino 1982.

Pastoral care extended to the inhabitants of both sexes, and the female testaments prove a very widespread identification of women with the churches of the communes they referred to for spiritual care²⁷.

However, on an institutional level there were numerous limitations. The right of patronage was explicitly conceived as only exercisable by men. Only in special circumstances could community decisions regarding the church and curate include women. Not unusually, however, the parish was seen to be more inclusive than the commune. In 1514 Asparino de Pianto, a resident in the settlement of Bioggio, was accepted among the neighbors of the commune of Mello and the parishioners of S. Fedele di Mello. The beneficiaries of the ruling, though occurring on the same day and included in a single notarial deed, differed significantly: the priest of S. Fedele accepted under his jurisdiction and guaranteed sacramental service to Asparino, his children, his wife, to other members of his family and descendants. The representatives of the local council accepted as *vicinus* and *socius* Asparino himself, his children, the other members of his family and descendants, but not his wife²⁸. The infant population certainly enjoyed a low ceremonial status: according to the statutes of Sonvico children of less than two years could not even be taken into the church²⁹. This status could also take the form of immunity and the statutes often spared minors of under fourteen years from the punishments foreseen for the disfigurement of sacred images, for throwing stones at the church, portico, and bell tower, or for other “dishonesty” committed against sacred buildings, gestures thus declassified, until a certain age, as childish pranks³⁰.

²⁷ See M. BOURIN, *De la communauté paroissiale à l'“universitas castri”*, in *La paroisse en Languedoc (XIIIe-XIVe s.)*, Toulouse 1990, pp. 199-214, here p. 210.

²⁸ ASSO, AN, 648, ff. 289r-290r, 1514.08.17. See F. DEL TREDICI, *Il posto del prete. Sacerdoti, parrocchie e comunità locali nelle campagne milanesi del Quattrocento*, in A. ROCCA - P. VISMARA (eds), *Prima di Carlo Borromeo. Istituzioni, religione e società a Milano agli inizi del Cinquecento*, Roma - Milano 2012, pp. 243-268, here pp. 257 ff. No regulation was found for the area under examination resembling those described by G. CHERUBINI, *Fra Tevere, Arno e Appennino. Valli, comunità, signori*, Firenze 1993, p. 160, so that “only in church ... could women be interrogated by the official as witnesses”, which thus made it the place of excellence for the production of the normally uncertain public female credibility.

²⁹ G. ROVELLI, *La castellanza di Sonvico*, Massagno 1927, p. 196, chap. 33.

³⁰ D. ZOIA (ed.), *Teglio: terra dell'arcivescovo. Statuti ed ordini della castellanza e del comune di Teglio* [Villa di Tirano 1996], p. 100, chap. 39; *Li statuti, le ordinationi et*

However, in other cases the ritual surveys already mentioned were more open to the presence of infants. The duty to support the rector was sometimes more inclusive than the liturgy: the priest of S. Giacomo di Rasura was due one coin *pro singulla persona* under his care, *tam infantes, puberi et maiores*. For this purpose, the decision was made to draft a special (and extremely rare) systematic record, care of the family heads:

“omnes persone capitum familiarum dictorum communis et hominum patronorum ut supra teneantur portare dicto d. presbitero Antonio numerum quarumcumque personarum de eorum familia et omnia capita familiarum et focularia in scriptis”³¹.

IV. THE COMMUNITY AND GROUPS

1. *Mobile individuals*

Foreigners and immigrants were often excluded or marginalized from political decisions and from the systems of redistribution the community provided for available resources. Once again, ceremonial participation provided a point of entry, albeit uncertain, for enhanced opportunities.

Foreigners were coercively bound by the calendar of celebrations observed in each locality, which had validity on a territorial level (in force in a commune or parish) rather than personal (observed by a group of faithful of a parish or those living in a commune). Tributes were also required from immigrants, but these expenses were not without benefits since the services of the curate were also extended to them.

On an institutional level, as already observed, admission into a neighborhood could be accompanied by a deed of inclusion into the parish. Since an individual's position inside, on the margins, or outside the ambit of a community was often controversial, the definition of parish rights was an occasion for negotiating this. For example, in 1488 an inhabitant of Ronco, Agostino de Putteo de Degio, son of Uguccio, appealed against his neighbors of Altanca, Cresta, and Ronco. The latter contested the legitimacy of the neighborhood rights acquired by

leggi municipali de la terra et territorio di Poschiavo, Poschiavo 1550, f. 19v., chap. 1; B. NOGARA - R. CESSI - G. BONELLI (eds), *Statuti rurali bresciani del secolo XIV (Bovegno, Cimmo ed Orzinuovi)*, Milano 1927, p. 71, chap. 155.

³¹ ASSo, AN, 344, ff. 307v-308v, 1471.06.04.

his father and inherited by him, and he objected the exercise of mountain grazing on Ritòm by his herdsmen, their election to public office and, “nomine dicti Uguzi”, to the council of elders of S. Cornelio di Altanca, these effectively being the administrators of the local church. The court of Val Leventina ruled in his favor³².

Immigrants in turn expressed their integration in more personal gestures. In their wills, by establishing alms or bequests to the church, foreigners positioned themselves between the memory of their place of origin and identification with their place of arrival, expressed in relation to the respective devotional centers (the church and the cemetery). Sometimes they considered only the former, sometimes both, and not unusually only the second.

Women were particularly mobile by marrying away from their birthplace, and many widows, after the death of their husbands, remained in their new home and were generous towards the local church, in some cases exclusively, in others also supporting the church of their original home.

Conversely, those who left the village sometimes renounced all rights within the parish, along with the associated burdens and benefits, like the distribution of alms at church doors. In some cases, the church was an important intermediary for individuals and groups with their place of origin. The bequests of the will, as already mentioned, were one way to maintain this link. Furthermore, at least from the sixteenth century, groups of immigrants sometimes reserved an altar in the local church, possibly with tombs, which established them as a constant presence within the local ritual context. In 1514, for example, the representative of the *societas* of builders working in Viterbo requested the vicariate of S. Maria della Misericordia di Ascona for authorization to construct two sepulchral chambers reserved to them in front of the altar of the Madonna della Quercia³³.

Finally, animal herders experienced a particular form of mobility. Both full-time transhumants arriving from outside, and members of the local

³² L. BRENTANI, *Codice diplomatico ticinese. Documenti e registi*, vol. 3, Lugano 1943, pp. 203-205, doc. 80.

³³ R. DA BEDANO, *Pergamene dell'archivio comunale di Ascona*, in “Archivio storico ticinese”, 21, 1980, pp. 49-69, here p. 56, doc. 17.

community committed, perhaps on behalf of their neighbors, to the custody of local livestock were effectively relegated for a number of months each year to a physically and culturally marginal space. As a consequence they came to be included among the stereotyped figures of wildness and deviance³⁴. Nevertheless, the sacred sphere did offer possibilities to maintain links, as in the case of high mountain churches where a community would celebrate periodic masses. For example the S. Benedetto church in Val di Ron, located, according to the records of a visit in 1589, in “a vicus pro pastoribus” inhabited only in summer, where a Chaplain operated, unusual in being jointly nominated by the communes of Tresivio and Montagna³⁵.

2. *Citizens and nobles*

In many parts of the diocese of Como, alongside the commune of residents, separate and variably durable groups developed of citizens resident *in loco* but endowed with the privilege of *civilitas*, and of nobles, with highly differentiated powers and wealth. The ecclesiastical and religious sphere expressed distinctions and disagreement, but also provided opportunities for encounter³⁶. For example, when in Morbegno in 1376 the commune had to maintain the integrity of the pastoral care headed by S. Martino di Morbegno, three men defected because they did not want to share the initiative with the local residents and cover the relative expenses: two citizens and one noble³⁷. Conversely, the local church was also a place of shared responsibility. A city statute as early as 1258 imposed on local nobles and Como citizens resident in the country, together with the neighboring residents (effectively the

³⁴ See C. GINZBURG, *Folklore, magia, religione*, in R. ROMANO - C. VIVANTI (eds), *Storia d'Italia*, 1: *I caratteri originali*, Torino 1972, pp. 601-676, here p. 658; R. GERMAIN, *Revenus et actions pastorales*, pp. 107-108; N. CARRIER - F. MOUTHON, *Paysans des Alpes. Les communautés montagnardes au moyen âge*, Rennes 2010, pp. 153-155.

³⁵ S. MONTI (ed.), *Atti della visita pastorale diocesana di F. Feliciano Ninguarda vescovo di Como (1589-1593)*, Como 1903, vol. 1, p. 316.

³⁶ See M. BOURIN, *De la communauté paroissiale*, p. 210; M. BOURIN - R. DURAND, *Vivre au village au moyen âge. Les solidarités paysannes du XIe au XIIIe siècles*, Paris 1984, pp. 81-82.

³⁷ ASSo, AN, 25, ff. 236r-237v, 1376.05.11.

rural commune), the obligation to contribute towards the expenses for sacred buildings and their bells³⁸.

Once again, the bequests to the parish, connected to the memorial masses they wanted celebrated, expressed the links of local citizens and nobles with their places of residence.

Patronage came to express the different economic conditions in material form, making certain sectors of the church recognizable with individual or family attributions (aristocratic chapels, privileged entrances over which a family coat of arms was displayed, or even a fresco commissioned by an individual believer), but always within a shared space.

In some cases, and in particular in S. Giorgio di Grosio, it is possible to clearly identify within the parish a displacement of the most powerful families towards the practices and symbols of the local inhabitants, rather than the opposite, a process characterizing even powerful feudal figures of external origin.

Obviously, it was frequent for nobles to institute family patronage, providing a church or an altar under the condition that the priest was one of their descendants or at least chosen by their heirs. Other benefactors of non noble extraction sometimes also chose to assign their assets in this way³⁹. However, many such chapels passed under community control between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, confirming a prevalence within the area for integration of sacred space rather than segmentation.

V. MEDIATING CONFLICTS AND SETTLING DISPUTES

It was a proverbial cultural concept that living peaceful relations was an essential premise for salvation. The Bormio notary, Giacomo Fogliani, for example, established a link of certainty between the two things, annotating at the end of his notebook: “defunctus est ser Iacobus die

³⁸ A. CERUTI (ed.), *Liber statutorum consulum cumanorum iusticiae et negotiatorum*, Torino 1876, coll. 209-211, cap. CCCXXI. In particular this was already assessed by G.P. BOGNETTI, *Studi sulle origini del comune rurale*, Milano 1978, p. 143, no. 130, p. 273.

³⁹ See F. DEL TREDICI, *I benefici della parentela. Famiglie, istituzioni ecclesiastiche e spazi sacri nel contado di Milano (XIV-XV secolo)*, in L. ARCANGELI et al. (eds), *Famiglie e spazi sacri nella Lombardia del Rinascimento*, Milano 2015, pp. 308-343.

lune penultimo iulii 1520, anima cuius requiescat in pace, et credo firmiter eam bene requiescere quia erat bone fame et sine discordia”⁴⁰. For this reason, the practical and symbolic reintegration into the community of those who had broken the rules of peaceful cohabitation was often mediated by the sacred. The “lites, questiones, differentie, discordie, controversie” were resolved in church or its surroundings with a ritual of pacification, compromise, or arbitration⁴¹. In 1433 an arbitration ruling between the commune of Olivone, and the commune of Ponto Valentino, Castro, and Marolta, contesting pasturing rights and wood cutting, was issued “ad crucem prope ecclesiam S. Antonii” in a territory external to that of the disputing parties⁴².

The communes assigned at least a proportion of the incomes deriving from judicial rulings to the church (for building and lighting). This was according to a simple logic of proportionality between the offence and the compensation due, as provided for in statutes that applied within the religious sphere. Significantly, however, other more general infringements of interpersonal relations that required respect within the guidelines of “accepted” habits (regarding commons, borders, limitations imposed by the community on the circulation of goods) were also punished with pecuniary sanctions subsequently devolved to the church⁴³. These sanctions maintained limits for woodcutting and wood export for each family, and protected the local agriculture and hygiene of wells. All the regulations introduced in 1470 by the commune of Campovico (a prohibition for grazing the livestock of outsiders, the protection of vines, common meadows, community willow trees, and the calendar of the internal transhumance) foresaw sanctions destined one third to the church of S. Maria⁴⁴. Certain rulings specifically repressed public

⁴⁰ ASSo, AN, 570, f. 367v, n.d. See O. NICCOLI, *Perdonare. Idee pratiche, rituali in Italia tra Cinque e Seicento*, Roma - Bari 2007, chap. IV. On hostility and exclusion from communion, see also D. ZARDIN, *Riforma cattolica e resistenze nobiliari nella diocesi di Carlo Borromeo*, Milano 1984, pp. 66, 101.

⁴¹ For a recent detailed study of ceremony, see S. LEPRAI, *Il governo del disordine ai confini di uno stato. Borgotaro e gli Sforza (1467-1488)*, Bologna 2011, pp. 171 ff.

⁴² M. FRAPOLLI et al. (eds), *Materiali e documenti ticinesi*, III: *Blenio*, fasc. 27 (1431-1433), Bellinzona 2000, p. 1294, doc. 542.

⁴³ See M. BOURIN - R. DURAND, *Vivre au village*, p. 64.

⁴⁴ ASSo, AN, 144, f. 336r-v, 1470.03.12.

behaviors considered harmful, for example in Costa Volpino (in the diocese of Brescia) the behavior of officials who had utilized incomes derived by the commune from licensing the exploitation of the forest for other things than the purchase of material property⁴⁵. The council rulings implemented in everyday life the statutory regulations and thus the logic of an ideal ecological and social equilibrium of the commune, entrusted to a supernatural protection, the infractions of which were compensated, symbolically and materially, through the intermediation of the parish or confraternity.

VI. THE ECONOMIC CYCLE

1. *Land holdings*

A portion of the inhabitants of many settlements were obliged to pay the parish a land rent since they had received terrain on lease, or because their forefathers had instituted a bond on certain lands in order to secure the celebration of memorial masses, and this obliged the heirs to pay a certain sum of money or provide a set quantity of goods. The most striking characteristic of this system was the number of people involved⁴⁶. In Grosio, for example, among 336 property estimates in 1526, it is possible to identify 92 concessionaries of goods of the local churches. These do not include any of the foreigners assessed, and so this represents a system exclusively contained within the community, in which there is a degree of equilibrium between those assessed as richer, and contributing most, and the poorer residents, who were not excluded from participation.

The integration achieved in this way could be the result of a more or less conscious design by the community, intended to buffer social tensions. In 1491, the Grosio commune and the rector, Ambrogio Rumoni, contested a bitter dispute. The latter called for the “administratio” of the church assets comprising the benefice to be due exclusively to him. The commune authorities, in turn, intended to limit the chaplain’s access

⁴⁵ O. BELOTTI - P. OSCAR (eds), *Statuto di Costa Volpino. 1488*, Bergamo 1994, p. 12, chap. 9.

⁴⁶ See P. DUBUIS, *Une économie alpine à la fin du moyen âge. Orsières, l’Entremont et les régions voisines. 1250-1500*, Sion 1990, vol. 1, p. 108.

to these resources, which were seen as the property of the community and not of the priest. The clergyman, in their view, was not entitled to replace the paid up land tenants, nor increase their rents. Furthermore, he was not entitled to make any concessions of land, unless in the presence of two or three of the oldest and most authoritative male elders of the commune, nor to expect any concession fees for such assignments⁴⁷.

2. *Credit relations*

The relationship between individuals, the local community, and church also constituted a credit system. On the strength of their role as property owners, the churches and confraternities lent money against land security or guaranteed the liquidity of those in need, acquiring land and sometimes re-leasing it to the seller at favorable rates. In the 1400s, these institutions effectively assumed the role of providers of credit, not only in marginal contexts but also in villages close to lively commercial centers and in the more prosperous Lombardy valleys. In the Bormio area, for example, in 1486 the elders of the church of S. Maria di Cepina, elected by the local men, bought a field from a local inhabitant for 22 Imperial lire, immediately assigning it under lease to the same for 22 imperial coins per year, an operation of loan against land with interest of 5%⁴⁸.

However, it should not be overlooked that these investments fueled tensions that even such a generally accommodating policy could not resolve, as demonstrated by an episode in which a loan was not agreed within a strictly local context. In 1453 Giovanni Grande from Castello di Giornico, insolvent in relation to the church of S. Lorenzo di Rossura, was called to appear before the court of Val Leventina. He complained of the unfair ratio between the amount received as a loan (not specified) and the annual rent set at 20 bushels of rye and millet

⁴⁷ Archivio storico del comune di Grosio, *Estimi e taglie*, 37, fasc. 6, 1526; *Pergamene*, 224, 1491.11.30.

⁴⁸ ASSo, AN, 251, ff. 16v.-18r., 1486.01.24. See SAULLE HIPPENMEYER, *Il comune e la chiesa*, pp. 130, 133. However, to date the commitment of ecclesiastical institutions on another level has attracted greater interest: M.P. ALBERZONI, *L'esperienza caritativa presso gli Umiliati: il caso di Brera (secolo XIII)*, in M.P. ALBERZONI - O. GRASSI (eds), *La carità a Milano nei secoli XII-XV*, Milano 1989, pp. 201-223, here pp. 205-208.

("nymis est respectu pretii"), which for two years he had no longer been able to pay. He expressed himself very clearly: "dicente ecclesia non deberet in se habere tantam uxuram". The judges awarded him a postponement of two months after which the church elders would be entitled to claim against his assets⁴⁹.

Finally, the ecclesiastic institutions, in addition to the private sphere, also sustained public debt. In the emergency of the tribute imposed by the Tre Leghe at the time of conquest of Valtellina, more than one commune had to seek assistance from the churches. It is interesting to note that sometimes this was not even based on strictly local connections: at the beginning of 1513 Bormio received 200 Rhine florins from the wealthy institution of S. Maria di Tirano, presumably because the large sanctuary founded a few years previously was among the few bodies in the valley capable of ensuring the immediate availability of such a sum, paid back in instalments over the following eighteen months⁵⁰.

⁴⁹ P. OSTINELLI, *Il governo delle anime*, pp. 246-247 (with reference to the published document).

⁵⁰ ASCB, *Quaterni consiliorum*, 6, 1513.01.20; 1514.01.05; *Quaterni datorum*, 1514 summer session.