

S A I N T S & S I N N E R S
C A R A V A G G I O
& THE BAROQUE IMAGE



Edited by Franco Mormando

McMULLEN MUSEUM OF ART, BOSTON COLLEGE

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FRONT COVER:

The Taking of Christ, 1602

MICHELANGELO MERISI DA CARAVAGGIO
oil on canvas
53 x 67 in.
Society of Jesus, Ireland, on loan to the National Gallery of Ireland

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TEACHING THE FAITHFUL TO FLY: MARY MAGDALENE AND PETER IN BAROQUE ITALY FRANCO MORMANDO

Later that night, I dreamed about two persons flying and I didn't see their wings, but I saw they came from the sky and wanted to pick me up, and I was trying to think who they were, and I seemed to hear that both had come to teach me to fly and that they were St. Catherine of Siena and St. Mary Magdalen. I told them not to take me with them because I was afraid they might drop me along the way, and then grabbing onto them I would bring them down. They put me between them and took me flying, and when I was in mid-air, they wanted to let me go, and I held on to them, and laughing they embraced me and led me into a place of great sweetness. . . . Many times they took me flying until they finally taught me to fly by myself.

CATERINA PALUZZI (1573–1645), *Autobiography*¹

TO AN extent unimaginable to us today, the saints were an intimate part of the daily lives of early modern Italian Catholics—their conscious, public lives and, as the Dominican mystic Caterina Paluzzi's *Autobiography* reveals, their subconscious, private lives as well. Among the hundreds of saints enrolled in the rosters of official Catholic sanctity, two of the most popular in Italy (as elsewhere) were Mary Magdalene and Peter the Apostle. The popularity of Mary and Peter was due not only to their privileged role in the New Testament salvation drama of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection, but also to their appealing accessibility as role models. Saints who had sinned, gravely and dramatically, Mary and Peter were two readily recognizable, utterly fallible human beings with whom the Christian, lay or cleric, could easily identify.² By imitating the well-publicized examples of the lives of Mary and Peter, ordinary Christians could learn to "fly" spiritually, that is, to overcome the limitations of their fractured humanity, reach heaven, and become saints themselves. (I leave the psycho-sexual implications of Paluzzi's dream for others to decipher.) In addition to their status as exemplars relevant to all Christians, male and female, Mary and Peter also served more specific functions: the former as role model for women, the latter as symbol of the papacy. We shall see them in these roles later in this study.

The examples of Mary's and Peter's lives were ever present to early modern Italians; they heard about them in Sunday, Lenten, and other public sermons; they read of them in their chapbooks, catechisms, and other devotional-didactic literature; and, above all, they feasted their eyes on the painted and sculpted images of Mary and Peter that populated their landscape at every corner, ecclesiastical and civil, public and private, institutional and domestic. Indeed, these sacred images were a "*muta praedicatio*," a silent form of preaching, as Saint Gregory the Great had described them, echoing the sentiments of Saint Basil who declared, "Artists do as much for religion with their pictures as the orators do with their eloquence."³ The present exhibition allows the viewer to examine and contemplate—to use a favorite term of early modern spiritual literature—Mary Magdalene and the apostle Peter in a few of the significant moments in their gradual ascent from sin to sanctity.

In commenting upon these paintings, the present essay seeks to contribute to the further understanding of these works by answering certain questions regarding meaning and reception: How might have the original "consumers" of these paintings interpreted or otherwise responded to them? What significance—spiritual, doctrinal, social, and moral—did these scenes and figures have for their original audiences? What meaning (literal or symbolic), what associations, what questions and what answers did these scenes conjure up, provide, or otherwise suggest to the early modern viewer? In other words, in the pages that follow, we will seek to re-create the original religious context in which these paintings were born and functioned as objects of public or private devotion.

The answers to such questions are, to a great extent, knowable by turning to a body of texts too often ignored—until fairly recently—by art historians, traditionally more occupied with matters of style, composition, and patronage, rather than meaning and reception. These texts represent the literature that early modern Italian Catholics read, heard, or otherwise "consumed," whether in the

form of sermons, devotional manuals, biblical commentary, or, as made popular by the great scholar Cardinal Baronius (1538–1607), ecclesiastical history.⁴ Two works in particular stand out in this mass of material, both “best sellers” in early modern Catholicism and thereafter: the multi-volumed devotional manual, the *Vita Jesu Christi* by Dominican-turned-Carthusian Ludolphus of Saxony (d.1377) and the great *Commentary on Sacred Scripture (Commentaria in Scripturam Sacram)* by Jesuit exegete Cornelius a Lapide (1567–1637). As for the first of these two works, though a product of the later Middle Ages, Ludolphus’s *Vita Jesu Christi* went through nearly ninety editions in the first two hundred years after its composition; having played a role in the conversion of Ignatius of Loyola, it was prescribed by Teresa of Avila as required reading in every Carmelite house.⁵ The second book, instead, is contemporary with many of the paintings in this exhibition. The labor of a Louvain scholar who taught at the Collegio Romano for the last twenty years of his life, Lapide’s *Commentary* is a monumental work of vast erudition composed for the practical use of popular preachers, summarizing centuries of patristic and medieval thought, as well as the latest historical findings (e.g., Baronius) and polemical disputation (Luther and Calvin are regularly cited and refuted). It thus encapsulates the spirit of its age, while being a reliable treasure of the most popularly heeded, tradition-sanctioned opinions of the Church Fathers and the influential medieval *magistri*.⁶

The rest of the literature consulted for this essay shall be identified as the discussion unfolds, but let me preface my remarks with two disclaimers. First, no apodeictic claims are here made for the original intentions of either the artist or the patrons of the paintings in question. For none of the Peter and Magdalene paintings included in our exhibition do we possess a record of the discussions and thought-processes that resulted in the final painted product. However, at the same time, given the great circulation of certain fundamental notions and *topoi* of Catholic theology, history, biblical exegesis, and spirituality in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy, among all levels of the population, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, we can reasonably conjecture what the artist or patron would have known about the subject matter in question. To be sure, Catholic doctrine and, consequently, Catholic iconography in the Post-Tridentine period were, in reality, much more pluralistic in their content than scholars

may have previously assumed; nonetheless, reading the most popular devotional literature of the day, we find that certain notions and certain motifs enjoyed wide currency among Roman Catholics. Thus, a fairly reliable—though still conjectural—reconstruction of the, or rather, a typical Baroque interpretation of any given painted Gospel scene or figure in art can be achieved. Second, the present essay represents only a partial reconstruction of the Italian Baroque Magdalene and Peter and does not attempt to summarize the vast amount of available material surrounding these two figures in the form of works of art, primary written sources, and secondary scholarly criticism. What I offer is simply a reading of certain prominent features of the early modern image and reputation of Peter and Mary as illustrated by the specific paintings in the present exhibition. Again, these features will be read from the eyes of an early modern Italian viewer, based upon several popular texts or ideas which he or she is likely to have encountered repeatedly in the course of daily life.⁷

MARY MAGDALENE

AS LAPIDE reports in his *Commentary*, Christ revealed to the fourteenth-century visionary Saint Bridget of Sweden, that “there were three saints specially pleasing to Him: the Blessed Virgin, John the Baptist, and Mary Magdalene.” The conversion of the Magdalene, Christ further revealed to Bridget, was a cause of great despair to the devils, who complained: “How shall we gain power over her again, for we have lost a goodly prey? We cannot look at her because of her tears; so covered and protected is she by good works, that no spot or soil of sin can stain her soul; so holy is her life, so fervent her love for God, that we dare not draw nigh her.”⁸

Despite her divinely conferred “most favored status,” there was a great deal of theological controversy in Caravaggio’s Italy surrounding the figure of Mary Magdalene, a controversy mirrored—self-defensively so—in the Catholic literature, both popular and learned, in the early modern period.⁹ I refer not to the well-known dispute between Protestants and Catholics over the sacrament of penance and the issue of salvation through good works, of which the penitent, weeping Mary and Peter both became eloquent defenders in Catholic art. I refer instead to the debate that had erupted in the early sixteenth

century—first among Catholics, then between Catholic and Protestants—over her very Scriptural identity. The question was, to cite the title of Cardinal Baronius's long apologetic disquisition in the *Annales*, "*Una an plures Magdalene fuerint?*" ("Was there one or more than one Magdalene?")¹⁰ Traditionally, following the teaching of Pope Saint Gregory the Great (d. 604), theologians, exegetes, and preachers had tranquilly conflated into one person the three separate figures of Mary of Magdala, Luke's unnamed "woman in the city who was a sinner" (Luke 7:37, the scene depicted in Francesco Vanni's painting, Pl. 5), and Mary of Bethany (i.e., sister of Lazarus and Martha). Modern biblical scholars have long since recognized this conflation as an exegetical mistake. However, during Caravaggio's lifetime and for years to come, Catholic apologists still adamantly defended the traditional teaching in the face of Protestant critique of this and other exegetical-hagiographical-doctrinal matters.

The debate had been set into motion by Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples's controversial treatise of 1517, "*De Maria Magdalena et triduo Christi disceptatio*," the fruit of Renaissance humanist critical scholarship applied to biblical exegesis. The treatise ultimately caused the French scholar to be accused of heresy and occasioned in 1521 a solemn censure of such questioning of Church teaching by the Theology Faculty of the University of Paris, a censure which years later the Bollandists deemed still necessary to reprint as a warning in the *Acta sanctorum*.¹¹ As Haskins points out, despite the abundant evidence to the contrary, the Catholic Church could not change its traditional teaching on the Magdalene: to have done so would have been to admit to Protestants and Catholics alike that it had indeed been guilty—for centuries—of Scriptural error, while at the same time, losing a most useful and popular saintly exemplar.¹² Hence, in viewing Baroque images of the Magdalene, we must keep in mind this ever-present theological "static" that inevitably accompanied her wherever she was depicted.

THE CONVERSION OF MARY MAGDALENE

This necessary piece of historical-theological background in place, we can proceed to our "contemplation" of the story of Mary Magdalene and of her gradual ascent to saintly greatness as illustrated by our exhibition. The story begins, traditionally, with the scene of her con-

version. Yet, here again, we immediately find ourselves, as did early modern Catholics, in the midst of another debate: exactly when and how did the Magdalene convert? The answer, at least according to Caravaggio's painting on the subject now in the Detroit Institute of Arts (Pl. 4), was that Mary converted as a result of the admonitions of her pious sister Martha, already a devoted disciple of Christ. In Caravaggio's beautiful canvas we witness the very moment in which Mary—surrounded by the symbols of her vain, lascivious life, the mirror,¹³ the fancy dress, the comb—experiences the very first life-transforming infusion of divine illumination, the very moment in which divine grace pierces her once-hardened heart and opens her once-blinded eyes to the truth about herself and the spiritual life. "So great a miracle of God [it was]" exclaimed popular Franciscan preacher of the sixteenth-century Cornelio Musso, "that the Magdalene, having lived twelve years in such sordid ways in one instant became so holy!"¹⁴ All of this Caravaggio communicates in the motionless, but deeply pensive expression of Mary's face and the revealing quickening of her eyes. Though in the shadows in the painting, Martha played an important role in this miraculous occurrence. Again, according to Caravaggio, she was the very vehicle of her sister's conversion, thanks to her assiduous admonishments and her careful, logical disputations. These disputations are here symbolized by the didactic gesture of her prominently positioned hands known as the *comput digitalis*, a visual feature of public rhetorical practice, recommended by Leonardo da Vinci in his advice to painters and which we see also in Salvator Rosa's *St. John the Baptist Preaching* (Pl. 15).¹⁵

According to Maurizio Calvesi, the message of Caravaggio's *Conversion of Mary Magdalene* is quintessentially Tridentine, if perhaps a bit too subtle for the ordinary, less learned viewer: "No one accedes to grace spontaneously (this is one of the fundamental articles of the polemic against the Protestants, underlined in San Luigi de' Francesi), but through a process of awareness and therefore reflection."¹⁶ Whether or not Caravaggio had this or some similar doctrinal lesson in mind when painting this scene, his depiction of the Magdalene's conversion does inevitably call attention to the role of human intermediaries in the process of conversion and spiritual ascent. As we know, this issue represented a major point of contention between Catholics and Protestants. Intended or

not, such a message about the role of intermediaries comes forward all the more noticeably when we contrast Caravaggio's account of Mary's conversion with what had traditionally and, for all intents and purposes, unanimously been considered the manner and locus of that event, the dinner party given by Simon the Pharisee which Mary "crashed" in order to beg forgiveness of her sins from Jesus, Simon's guest. This is the scene depicted in Francesco Vanni's *Christ in the House of Simon the Pharisee* (Pl. 5), corresponding to the Gospel passage of Luke 7:36–50. Despite the Christocentric title of Vanni's painting, in the Catholic tradition this Lucan pericope usually bears the name, "The Conversion of Mary Magdalene," as we see, for instance, most conspicuously, in Baronius's *Annales*,¹⁷ it also represents the Gospel reading for the feast of Mary Magdalene, July 22, even though her name appears nowhere in Luke's story (the woman in question is identified simply as "a sinner in the city").

Neither Luke nor any of the other New Testament authors describes the process that led to Mary's bold, dramatic invasion of Simon's dinner party, and very few of the written sources I have consulted even broach the topic. Nonetheless, according to the traditional hypothesis, Mary's conversion was understood as a direct result of her encounter with the charismatic person and preaching of Jesus, no intermediary being involved in her transformation from harlot to holy one. As we read under the rubric "The Conversion of Mary Magdalene" in the best-selling *Meditations on the Life of Christ (Meditationes Vitae Christi)*, a work of medieval origin, yet of perennial popularity long attributed to Saint Bonaventure:

Hearing that He was at the house of this Simon, the Magdalene, who perhaps had heard Him preach a few times and loved him ardently, although she had not yet revealed it, but was touched to the heart with pain at her sins and inflamed by the fire of her love for Him, believing that she could have no well-being without Him and unable to delay any longer, went to the place of the dinner with bowed head.¹⁸

Ludolphus of Saxony, in his *Vita Jesu Christi*, echoes Pseudo-Bonaventure's explanation:

Hearing [that Jesus was in the home of Simon the Pharisee], the Magdalene who had perhaps already heard him preaching, having been touched by grief for her sins in the innermost core of her heart, and full of perfect contrition for them, and inflamed with love for him, hurried to the place of the banquet with her alabaster jar of ointment.¹⁹

However vague and tentative in their re-creations of the steps of Mary's conversion, again, none of the contemporary sources here in question—with just two exceptions, as we shall see—assign a role to Martha. The most popular legends of both Mary and Martha, such as those contained in the *Legenda aurea* and in Pseudo-Rabanus's widely read *The Life of Saint Mary Magdalene and of Her Sister, Saint Martha*,²⁰ as in Baronius's *Annales* and *Martryologium*, make no mention at all of Martha as catalyst for the conversion of her sister. Closer to Caravaggio's lifetime, Gabriele Fiamma (d.1585), bishop of Chioggia and "one of the most famous preachers of his time," took up the subject of Mary's conversion in one of his popular moral-didactic sonnets, *Le rime spirituali*, written, he says, because Scripture is silent on the topic. Though it was Martha whose constant admonishing had finally convinced Mary to attend one of Jesus's sermons, it was Jesus himself who, "wounding her with divine love," brought about her "marvelous," instantaneous conversion, as she declares in Fiamma's sonnet: "His sacred presence and his comely, holy manner, his clear light free of all arrogance, his voice and lively and impassioned words, sweeter than any celestial song completely shattered the hard encasement [of my heart]."²¹

Thus, as beautiful and as moving a dramatization of conversion as it is, Caravaggio's scene represents a decided anomaly within the prevailing ecclesiastical tradition, both written and visual, and unfortunately we know nothing about the origins of the painting that might illuminate the artist's idiosyncratic interpretation. There is certainly no equivalent depiction in the art of any of the artist's predecessors. After Caravaggio, instead, thanks to the popularity of his canvas, many painters, Caravaggeschi and non-Caravaggeschi alike, would try their hands at the subject, among them Orazio Gentileschi, Carlo Saraceni, Simon Vouet, Valentin de Boulogne, and Antiveduto della Grammatica—if indeed one is truly justified in entitling any and every depiction of Martha admonishing her sister as "The Conversion of Mary Magdalene."²² Even the Detroit painting should be more properly—albeit more clumsily—entitled "The *Beginning* of the Conversion of the Magdalene," since Mary had not yet had her fateful encounter with Jesus *chez* Simon. As for Caravaggio's decision to show Mary's conversion in this fashion, the text usually cited as basis for such a depiction is an anonymous popular and fanciful *vita*—in effect, "a devotional romance"—of the Magdalene in vernacular prose dating

from the fourteenth century, included in some editions of Domenico Cavalca's "early well-known charming translations of Saint Jerome's *Lives of the Saints*."²³ This is one of the two above-mentioned exceptions in the Magdalene literature, positing some direct role to Martha in the conversion of her sister. Yet, according to this Trecento *vita*, the words of Martha that stirred the Magdalene's heart were not didactic discourses, punctuated by a *comput digitalis*, but rather merely her breathless, wonder-filled description of her own miraculous healing by Jesus after a long, intractable illness and of his other miracles and good deeds:

And thus stupefied, the Magdalen seemed scarcely able to speak to her sister, but she gazed at her, and saw a new splendour in Martha's face, which awoke a great wonderment in her, and such a pleasure in good . . . And though Martha was preaching and discoursing of the miracles of this blessed Master and of His goodness, which she had seen and heard tell of, nonetheless she looked in Mary Magdalen's face, and saw the change upon her countenance, whereon already she discerned a glory. And the gaiety which was usually on her face vanished, and she was transformed . . . And I think to myself that the Magdalen was beginning to enter into the light of faith, whence she perceived in her heart that she was yielding love to the goodness she heard related of Him . . .²⁴

The second exception in the Magdalene literature mentioned above is a sermon by popular sixteenth-century itinerant Capuchin preacher Girolamo Finucci da Piŕtoia (d.1570). In his sermon entitled "On conversion, in which Martha dialogues with the Magdalene about making haste to convert and give one's heart to God," Martha's conversation with her sister is, above all, a rational discourse on the topic of death, the kind of punctilious logical argumentation that might indeed accompany Caravaggio's *comput digitalis*.²⁵ Time and space preclude a summary of the two sisters' debate; suffice it to say that in the end Martha wins over her sister Mary. Mary, however, experiences no great heart-stirring moment of epiphany, but simply a desire to attend one of Jesus's sermons. It is there that her transformation occurs, initiated by Jesus: "Christ therefore takes the bow of his love and aims his arrows, full of love, at Mary's heart . . ."²⁶

JESUS IN THE HOUSE OF SIMON THE PHARISEE

According to Girolamo's reconstruction of the sequence of events, shortly after her life-transforming experience at the sermon, Mary decides to accept what the Capuchin refers to as her previously received invitation to dinner

at the home of Simon the Pharisee, evidently a person of her acquaintance.²⁷ (Lapide says explicitly that Mary was a friend of Simon's, a claim that Simon's hostile, disdainful reference to the intruding woman, in Luke 7, seems to contradict.)²⁸ This brings us back to the scene in Francesco Vanni's painting now at the Snite Museum at the University of Notre Dame (Pl. 5). Vanni depicts the moment in which the contrite Mary is at Jesus's feet, anointing them with her ointment. Jesus, gesturing approvingly toward the opulently garbed yet humbly prostrate woman, gently reproaches Simon who had dared to think, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner" (Luke 7:39). The real "sinner" in the scene is Simon, a member of that self-righteous, legalistic Pharisee party—or so the New Testament portrays it—which was always trying to trap Jesus in some violation of the letter of Mosaic Law. Accordingly, Vanni has outfitted Simon in sartorial finery whose lively, though "vain," colors nearly eclipse those of the Magdalene. Yet, he, unlike her, shows no sign of contrition or humility and thus Jesus scolds him:

Do you see this woman? When I entered your house, you did not give me water for my feet, but she bathed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but she has not ceased kissing my feet since the time I entered. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she anointed my feet with ointment. (Luke 7:44–46)

As Richard Spear points out, Mary's bold act of kissing and washing Jesus's feet, despite its spiritual intention, is, nonetheless, erotically charged, "as hair caressing bare feet washed with tears inevitably must" be.²⁹ Yet in this canvas Vanni has chosen to depict the scene as chastely as possible. Mary is shown simply and tenderly holding, not kissing, Jesus's unshod foot, her hair undone but not touching his flesh. The modesty of this depiction may be due to the fact that the original painting (of which the Notre Dame canvas represents a smaller autograph variant) was executed as a public altarpiece for the Church of San Francesco in Siena, a venue for which blatantly sensual art was simply inappropriate, at least in Post-Tridentine Italy.³⁰ I will have more to say about the Magdalene and sensuality later when discussing Badalocchio's *Penitent Magdalene*.

Sensual as it may be, Mary's act of anointing carried with it rich spiritual meaning, located in the symbols of

the alabaster jar, the precious ointment, and the kiss. The alabaster jar, says Ludolphus, “we can understand to represent the hidden retreat of [Mary’s] breast and heart full of faith and charity,” whereas, according to Lapide, who cites Peter Damian, the ointment represents Mary herself: “for [Mary], mixed and macerated in the mortar of repentance, sprinkled with the oil of discernment, and softened in the caldron of discipline by the fires of remorse, is applied a precious and acceptable ointment to the Saviour’s feet.”³¹ Baronius, by the way, points out that, inasmuch as anointing the feet was a custom unheard of among the Jews and not practiced even by the luxury-loving Romans, Mary’s gesture would have been all the more shocking.³²

Mary’s anointment ritual included the copious kissing of Jesus’s feet—recall Jesus’s words to Simon, “she has not ceased kissing my feet since the time I entered.” Though not portrayed in Vanni’s painting, the kiss was, nonetheless, very much a part of this well-known Gospel episode and would have been taken for granted by the viewer as such. I will reserve my discussion of the significance of the kiss for my later examination of the scene of the betrayal of Christ (see my other essay in this catalogue, “Just as your lips approach the lips of your brothers”), but let me here point out that, at least for the better-informed seventeenth-century Catholic viewers, the kiss carried with it rich historical, spiritual, and liturgical associations. Even the less-informed Catholic would have known, for it is mentioned in such popular works as Pseudo-Bonaventure’s *Meditations on the Life of Christ* and Ludolphus’s *Vita Jesu Christi*, that the kiss was an important and distinctive custom of Jesus and his followers, one that ultimately became institutionalized as the rite of peace of the Mass. The kiss also connects this Gospel scene (Luke 7) with that of the later betrayal of Christ, the two kisses—that of the loving and faithful Magdalene and that of the evil, treacherous Judas being explicitly juxtaposed, as we shall see, in sermons and Christian devotional literature.

Catholic viewers, therefore, understood the scene of Vanni’s painting as the moment of the Magdalene’s conversion—or its culmination, if we grant with Caravaggio that the process began previously in the interaction between the two sisters. In addition, they also understood that it illustrated the sacramental act of penance, the recovery of God’s love and hope for salvation through the public confession of one’s sin. As is well known, Mary was

one of the Church’s premier penitential icons. She was the consummate model of contrition and repentance meant to inspire sinful or lukewarm Catholics to do likewise and to avail themselves of the sacrament of confession. Introducing his commentary on Luke 7, Lapide proclaims, “Behold a wonderful thing, and a wonderful example of penitence. A woman called Mary Magdalene.”³³ As the scroll often accompanying medieval depictions of the Magdalene counsels, “There is no need to despair, even for you who have lingered in sin; ready yourselves anew for God.”³⁴ This was the hope, the promise, the ultimate moral message exemplified by the penitent Magdalene, a message extended to all who made recourse to the Church’s sacrament.

Encouraging the faithful to confess their sins to their priests—as was their annual obligation since the Fourth Lateran Council (1215)—Catholic theologians and spiritual writers emphasized that Mary’s many and great carnal sins, once repented, were no handicap to her access to divine love. In fact, as Lapide reports, citing the fifth-century Palladius of Helenopolis, “a certain virgin who had fallen into sin ‘was more pleasing to God in her penitence than in her former purity’” (though the Jesuit exegete assuredly did not mean to suggest that his virgin readers shed their virginity as a way of ultimately gaining a greater share of divine love).³⁵ Moreover, the Magdalene’s example, and Peter’s, let us note, stood in direct and inevitable contrast with that of Judas the betrayer of Christ. As Baronius points out, Judas was indeed “led by repentance” (*ductus poenitentia*) to give back to the high priest his ill-gotten money, “detesting the great crime that was being perpetrated [against Jesus].” However, in the end, he despaired of the mercy of God and hanged himself.³⁶ As Ludolphus, citing the authority of Jerome, points out, Judas’s suicide, a result of despair, was a greater sin than his betrayal of Christ.³⁷

As we know, in the face of Protestant rejection of the sacrament of penance, the Catholic Church responded with a proliferation of literature and images defending and publicizing its scriptural validity and spiritual importance—though, to be sure, not every Baroque image of a penitential saint is to be read merely as a response to the Protestants. Again, sinful and lukewarm Catholics had to be catechized as well regarding the necessity of repentance. In any case, our two “saints who sinned,” Mary Magdalene and Peter the Apostle, were the most important icons of this campaign, and the specific scene

depicted in Francesco Vanni's painting—a scene that concludes with Jesus's words of absolution, "Go, your sins are forgiven" (Luke 7:48)—would have been a key element therein. Accordingly, in the *Vita Jesu Christi*, Ludolphus entitles this Gospel episode "The Penance of Mary Magdalene" ("De poenitentia Mariae Magdalene"), while the great fifteenth-century mystic-theologian Denis the Carthusian (d. 1471) was even of the opinion that the sacrament of penance itself had its origins in this interaction between Mary and Jesus.³⁸ Instead, the Council of Trent, whose decree on penance defined official Catholic doctrine on the subject for centuries to come, found the institution of the sacrament in the pronouncement of the resurrected Jesus to his Apostles in John 20:22–23: "Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."³⁹

THE LAMENTATION

Be that as it may, beginning with her dramatic act of penance in the home of Simon the Pharisee, Mary Magdalene became one of the closest and most conspicuous disciples of Jesus, her name usually having pride of place in New Testament lists of the female followers of Christ, such as that of Luke 8:1. Even though traditional scriptural commentary, written by largely "patriarchal" and, at times, misogynistic hands has overlooked or underestimated their importance, Mary, together with the other female members of Christ's retinue, played a significant role in Christ's official public ministry, a significance whose dimensions are only now beginning to be appreciated with the advent of feminist biblical scholarship.⁴⁰ However, even traditional, "patriarchal" scriptural commentary acknowledged—and celebrated—that it was Mary and the other female, not male, disciples of Jesus who remained faithful to the very hour of his death, as we see in Scipione Pulzone's altarpiece, *The Lamentation*, commissioned for the Jesuit motherchurch of the Gesù in Rome (Pl. 1).⁴¹ Whereas Peter, for example, for all his boisterous protestations of fidelity (Matthew 26:35 and parallels), ignominiously abandoned Jesus in his hour of need (see Francesco Bassano's *Agony in the Garden*, Pl. 9) and ultimately denied him, Mary instead remained faithful. In a sermon preached to an audience of women, renowned Jesuit theologian and controversialist Roberto Bellarmino (1542–1621) had these words of praise for the female sex:

God has given to women a certain instinctive tendency towards devotion, that he has not given to men. . . . We read in the Gospel that women showed greater devotion toward Christ during his lifetime, in his death and after his death, than did men. We read of no woman ever offending him, as did many men. On the contrary, in fact, when the Scribes and the Pharisees were cursing him, it was a holy woman who stood up amidst the crowd and said: "Blessed be the womb that bore you." And how much honor was granted to the devotion of the Magdalene? At the cross, out of all the men there was only John, whereas there were many women present. The next day the first to go to the tomb and to see him resurrected were women.⁴²

Similarly, glossing Matthew 27:55 ("There were many women there . . ."), Lapide underscores the greater spiritual depth and courage of women:

S. Matthew says this to set forth how much greater faith, constancy, and affection for Jesus these women had than men. "See how things were reversed," says Euthymius, "the disciples had fled, but the women remained." For women are commonly more holy than men, and hence the Church prays "for the devout sex of women." It was also to point out that they, as grave and pious matrons, were reliable witnesses of what had taken place, and moreover that they had carefully provided for His burial. It was also to show that they had been so drawn to Him by His patience and holiness, that they could not be torn away, either by fear, or by the threats of the Jews, from wondering, gazing, and meditating on Him.⁴³

Hence, although, as Mary Garrard points out, there may be much "ambivalence"⁴⁴ in the Magdalene as an image of and a role model for women, she does represent an affirmation of women. Especially when we take into consideration her final, serene, spiritually triumphant years in the desert (as depicted in Badalocchio's and Reni's paintings in the present exhibition, Pls. 7 and 8), the Magdalene's "sanctioned, transforming meditation could be seen to carry women to an intellectual and spiritual plane normally occupied only by men."⁴⁵ Some people in early modern Italy, men included, already understood this. In his *Libro del Cortegiano*, one of the best known and most influential works produced by Renaissance Italy, Baldassare Castiglione defends women's equality with men, as far as the highest achievements of love and mysticism are concerned:

Here Giuliano the Magnificent replied: "Women will not be surpassed at all by men in this [*love and mysticism*], because, as Socrates himself confesses, all of the mysteries of love which he knew had been revealed to him by a woman, that is, Diotima; and the angel who with a flame of fire marked

St. Francis with the stigmata has likewise considered certain women of our time worthy of the same distinction. I must also remind you that Mary Magdalene's many sins were forgiven because she loved much, and perhaps as a result of a no less a gift of grace than that of St. Paul, she was many times seized by angelic love and raised to the third heaven; and the same can be said of many other women . . . 46

In the Pulzone altarpiece, we see Mary in her traditional, humble, yet nonetheless physically intimate position at Jesus's feet; she rests there "with the instinctivity of a domesticated feline,"⁴⁷ as one critic has somewhat saucily described her, tenderly caressing their bare flesh, as in Francesco Vanni's canvas. Here, as in other depictions of the Crucifixion and its aftermath, Mary's role is "to enhance the drama of the Passion and to act as a transmitter of emotions."⁴⁸ Yet in Pulzone's work, as befits a Post-Tridentine public altarpiece, Mary's emotion, though deeply felt and movingly communicated, is decorously restrained: no gushes of tears, no wild flaying of arms, no swooning. Nonetheless, Pulzone's Mary retains a certain sensuality. Her long, silken blond hair flows smoothly and freely, ready perhaps to be used, as in Luke 7, as a towel for Jesus's flesh. Mary's luxuriant and cascading hair, in fact, represents somewhat of a contradiction of the image of the reformed, respectable woman she presumably had become. Social custom, in ancient Judaea as in early modern Italy, required "respectable" women to keep their hair bound and covered. If not a traditional iconographic reminder to the viewer of Mary's identity, her undone hair may have been intended as an exterior sign of her "undone," that is, completely distraught emotional state at the death of her beloved Jesus. Though he lets Mary's hair flow freely, at the same time, from what we can see of Mary's attire, Pulzone avoids the "error" and "abuse" criticized by Gilio and Paleotti of protraying the Magdalene at the Passion dressed "to the nines" as if she were still a prostitute.⁴⁹

Scripture itself tells us nothing explicit of Mary's emotional response to Jesus's Crucifixion; yet Catholic writers and artists had always depicted it as one of intense pain and sorrow. Although Scripture was silent on the issue, in early modern Italy, Jesus Christ was not—at least according to the Franciscan mystic Battista da Varano (d.1524; beatified 1843) who claims, in *The Mental Sorrows of Christ in His Passion*, to have been commissioned by Jesus himself to copy down and disseminate the description of the Passion she records therein. Through Suor Battista, Jesus tells us this of the Magdalene:

Now can you imagine how great was the sorrow I bore for the pain and affliction of my beloved and blessed disciple, Mary Magdalen? But neither you nor any other person could grasp it, since from her and from me all holy and spiritual loves had and will have their origin and foundation. . . . [A]fter my beloved mother no one grieved more over my death than Magdalen. . . . When she saw me lifeless, she thought that both the heaven and earth had been lost to her, for in me was all her hope, all her love, peace and consolation.⁵⁰

NOLI ME TANGERE

After the burial of Jesus, Mary remained in a state of emotional distress and confusion. Ludolphus reports: "[S]he was rendered lifeless and numb. . . . For as Origen says, Mary's spirit was more in the body of her Master than in her own."⁵¹ Nonetheless, fearless and determined, she goes off early Sunday morning to anoint the body of Jesus again and, not finding it, boldly demands it from the young men (angels) she finds at the tomb: "O the marvelous boldness of that woman! O woman, more than a woman!"⁵² With this, we arrive at Lelio Orsi's *Noli me tangere* (Pl. 6), which depicts that first emotionally charged moment of surprise encounter between Mary and the resurrected Jesus, that moment in which Mary's eyes, in a burst of dramatic recognition, are opened to the true identity of the man before her. She precipitates forward to embrace her beloved, only to be barred with the words, "Do not touch me."

"[O]ne of the strangest protagonists of late Mannerism," known for his predilection for somewhat fantastic representations of traditional scenes and an urgent, "restless formal dynamism," Orsi has captured the electric frisson of the moment in this painting now at Hartford's Wadsworth Atheneum.⁵³ The whole canvas appears to flutter and quiver in a burst of excitement, while an almost eerie dawn breaks forth in the distance, illuminating the lush, rocky landscape, and reminding us that with the resurrection of Jesus, a new age has indeed dawned on the earth. True, Orsi's Mary lacks the facial beauty and slender bodily elegance that we see in her other contemporary images. We see that beauty and elegance here, instead, in the glorified body of the statuesque and muscular Jesus, a figure that combines the lessons of delicate grace and solid monumentality that the artist absorbed from Correggio and Michelangelo, respectively.⁵⁴

In her grief-induced stupor, Mary at first did not recognize Jesus, thinking him instead the gardener. This is why Orsi, as do many other artists, depicts Jesus with

a gardening tool in hand, here specifically a hoe. For Ludolphus, Lapide, and other commentators of the scene, Mary's initial identification of Jesus was no mere coincidence. Jesus is indeed a gardener, a spiritual gardener; he weeds out the evil, noxious vegetation present "in the garden of [our] soul." Orsi's emphatically rocky, intense landscape can perhaps be seen as symbolic of the wild, vice-ridden terrain of the human soul—where Jesus sows the seeds of virtue.⁵⁵ Be that as it may, Mary is soon disabused of her error of identity, when Jesus calls out to her by name, "Mary" (John 20:16). The result is instant ecstasy, as Lapide reports:

But when she heard Jesus addressing her by name, and recognized His voice, she was enraptured with joy, and at once looked straight towards Him. The voice of the Shepherd, reaching the ears of the lamb, at once opened her eyes, and soothed all her senses with its secret power and wondrous sweetness; and so carried her away out of herself, that she at once was carried away with unhopèd-for and inexplicable joy . . .⁵⁶

However, Mary's joy and her love-driven, forward movement come to a crashing halt when Jesus unexpectedly repels her, ordering her, "Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father" (John 20:17). This is the precise moment depicted in Orsi's painting in which we see Jesus's raised arm imparting its startling imperative, while the body of poor, perplexed Mary is caught frozen in an awkward, twisting pose of simultaneous forward and backward motion. We now know that the traditional Vulgate translation of Jesus's words ("Noli me tangere," Do not touch me) is incorrect; the original Greek in fact represents "a present imperative with a particular form of the negative . . . [that] indicates that an action already in progress is to be stopped."⁵⁷ Hence, a precise and less perplexing translation would be "Cease from clinging to me" or "Stop holding onto me." The second portion of the verse, "for I have not yet ascended to my Father," remains puzzling as an explanation of this initial imperative; but this much is clear: Jesus was not really forbidding Mary from physically touching him (in fact, as we read in the Gospels [Matthew 28:9; Luke 24:39; John 20:27], others will touch or be invited by him to touch the resurrected Jesus): Jesus was simply announcing a new phase in their relationship.

However, medieval and early modern commentators, unaware of this error of translation, had to determine how to interpret Jesus's mystifying, almost shocking rejection

of Mary's love. Pseudo-Bonaventure refuses to take the words literally:

Although it seemed at first that the Lord held back from her, I can hardly believe that she did not touch Him familiarly before He departed, kissing His feet and His hands. But He acted thus . . . because He wished to elevate her soul to the things of heaven . . . Mysteriously, not pertinaciously, He spoke those words; for the most benign Lord is not pertinacious or harsh, especially to those who love him.⁵⁸

Ludolphus sees in Christ's words, instead, a rebuke of Mary for not believing in his resurrection and for looking for him among the dead; in other words, "she was prohibited [from touching him] because she was unworthy, inasmuch as her faith was defective."⁵⁹ According to popular preacher Cornelio Musso, Christ's rebuff was meant as a lesson in epistemological humility and therefore blind faith for all of us: "The Lord does not wish for us to see all things clearly and openly while we are in this life, for we are in his grace . . . We must remain suspended, just as Christ on the cross, between earth and heaven, between hope and fear."⁶⁰ Admitting that the verse (John 20:17) is "a difficult passage and the connection between the two parts is even more difficult," the conscientious and encyclopedic scholar, Lapide, instead, supplies and critiques a list of differing opinions culled from the Church Fathers and other authoritative sources in the tradition. One of these opinions states "that Christ did not wish to be touched by any woman, except in the presence of others; an example followed by SS. Augustine and Ambrose, S. Martin, S. Chrysostom, S. Charles Borromeo and others." However, "the best explanation," he declares, is supplied by his contemporary, Jesuit theologian Francisco Suarez (d.1617), who paraphrases Jesus's imperative thus: "Do not waste any more time in thus touching Me. Go and bear the glad tidings of My Resurrection to My disciples at once. I do not just yet ascend into heaven. You will have ample time before then to touch and converse with Me."⁶¹ Whether the imperative is given a completely benign or, as in Ludolphus, a punitive or admonitory interpretation, the commentators agree that Jesus's choice of the Magdalene as the first witness⁶² of the Resurrection and his mandate to her to announce the good news to the Apostles represent a privilege and an honor bestowed upon no other female disciple. In so bestowing, Jesus rewarded Mary's great love and perseverance, and, in effect, made her "the apostle of the apostles" (*apostola apostolorum*),

a traditional title of the Magdalene first documented in the writings of bishop Hippolytus of Rome (ca. 170–ca. 235).⁶³ Thus, Mary redresses an old evil, as Ludolphus declares, citing Gregory the Great who applies to the Magdalene a traditional Marian *topos* (“death through a woman, Eve; new life through a woman, Mary the mother of the Savior”): “Woman, who had been the gate of death, is the first to preach the resurrection and show the way to the gate of life.”⁶⁴ However, explicitly refuting Martin Luther, Lapidé points out that Mary’s role as “*apostola apostolorum*” did not grant her the power to preach, for Christ had simply told her to tell the disciples to preach the good news, not to do such preaching herself.⁶⁵ Yet, later Lapidé contradicts himself, telling us that “Mary thus became an apostle and evangelist to the Apostles, and accordingly, when she was driven into exile by the Jews and arrived in Marseilles, she preached the gospel to the people there. And she fully deserved this honor, by her glowing love to Christ, her faith, and constancy.”⁶⁶

THE PENITENT MAGDALENE

Lapidé’s mention of Marseilles in the passage just quoted brings us to the final period of the Magdalene’s life in Southern France, a sojourn lasting more than thirty years. Lapidé, together with Baronius,⁶⁷ accepts the medieval legend, recounted most famously in the *Legenda aurea*, whereby in the first-century diaspora of Christ’s persecuted disciples after his departure from this world, following a series of vicissitudes that need not detain us here, Mary (along with her sister Martha and other Christians) supposedly landed in her pilotless, rudderless ship of exile in the southern French port of Marseilles. After preaching to and converting the local pagans, destroying their temples, and building Christian churches in that port city, she retreated to the rocky wilderness of Sainte Baume, near Aix-en-Provence, where she spent thirty years in the most rigorous asceticism and solitude. At her death, Saint Maximin, bishop of Aix, had her body interred in his church from which it was later “translated” (i.e., stolen away) to the Burgundian abbey of Vézelay, whose patron she had been since the middle of the eleventh century. In 1279, however, the Benedictines of St. Maximin in the archbishopric of Aix-en-Provence announced that they had discovered the Magdalene’s “real” body—the Burgundians had stolen a mere decoy—and eventually defeated Vézelay in the ensuing wars of relics.⁶⁸ The grotto at Ste.

Baume and the basilica of St. Maximin remained popular pilgrimage destinations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Famous visitors included Isabella d’Este and François I and Louis XIII, the French kings considering St. Maximin a locus of cult of especial importance to their monarchy.⁶⁹

“The seventeenth century might be called the Magdalene’s century,” among all the scenes from her life, be they scriptural or legendary, the most popular subject in seventeenth-century representations of the saint was undoubtedly the penitent Magdalene.⁷⁰ The present exhibition includes two such representations, that of Siſto Badalocchio, dating from circa 1620, from the Harris Collection in New York City (Pl. 7) and that of Guido Reni, circa 1630, from the Walters Art Gallery (Pl. 8), yet another variation upon one of Reni’s favorite and oft-repeated single-female “portrait” compositions. The two paintings are similar in presenting images of an extremely beautiful woman at peace with the world, her self, and her Maker, completely unmarked by the rigors of her penitential practices (which would have included fasting and self-flagellation) and of life in her harsh wilderness, unprotected from the elements. Baroque aesthetic and spiritual sensitivities could simply not countenance, for example, Donatello’s shockingly blunt, realistic depiction of an emaciated penitent Magdalene (Florence, Museo dell’Opera del Duomo) produced in the mid-fifteenth century. Nonetheless, the two paintings are not only of different artistic style, but they also represent two very different Magdalenes: the Badalocchio, earthly sensual; the Reni, chastely ethereal.

For its basic composition and image of the Magdalene, the Harris Badalocchio is yet another echo of a famous prototype by Correggio, that of his *Mary Magdalene Reading in a Landscape* (ca. 1522), formerly in Dresden.⁷¹ Badalocchio, who “revived in a fully Baroque idiom much of the delicacy and charm of Correggio,” may have also had in mind another Correggesque canvas on the same theme done for the Medici family by his old friend and *compaesano* from Parma, Giovanni Lanfranco. (Badalocchio, we might note, worked with Lanfranco on a fresco in the Roman residence of Caravaggio’s patrons, the Mattei).⁷² We know nothing of the original provenance of Badalocchio’s *Penitent Magdalene*, but given its small scale and refined, decorative quality, it may well have been executed, as were Correggio’s Magdalenes, for a courtly client and used as ornamentation of a private

living space (such as a bedroom) or for private “devotion” in a small family chapel.⁷³ In the light of descriptions and discussions of the penitent Magdalene to be found in contemporary sources, I would like to comment briefly on three elements of the Badalocchio canvas: Mary’s nudity, her book, and her jar of ointment.

Badalocchio’s Magdalene is, to use Kenneth Clark’s valid and serviceable distinction, “nude,” not “naked.”⁷⁴ Hers is a beautiful, well-formed, prosperous, and proud body, not the scourged, mortified, decidedly unglorious, and repressed flesh of the medieval penitent Magdalenes. The ascetic Magdalene of the Middle Ages has given way to the Venus-like image of idealized womanhood of the early modern period; the Baroque Magdalene has become “the goddess of love,” the “Venus of Divine Love,” this transmutation having taken place, according to Haskins, in Italy in the early sixteenth century.⁷⁵ Yet, this transformation, inasmuch as it brought with it the bold uncovering of the Magdalene’s flesh did not occur without controversy: we know well that the issue of nudity in sacred art was very much a *quaestio vexata* of Post-Tridentine Catholicism, extremely concerned with decorum and chastity in art and ritual. Though the third book of Cardinal Paleotti’s treatise, which was to be devoted to the question of modesty and nudity was never written, we still possess a fair amount of contemporary written discourse and other documentary evidence revealing the age’s mind on the matter.⁷⁶ However, while theorists debated, some churchmen took action: to cite just one example in Rome, as a result of official apostolic visitation, the naked angels of the Chapel of St. Mary Magdalene in the Church of San Giovanni dei Fiorentini were ordered clothed by Urban VIII, “in application of the norms of the Council of Trent.”⁷⁷

This, however, as we know, is not to say that bare flesh was always and automatically equated with profanity or indecency in the Post-Tridentine Church. According to Church tradition, the unclothed body could be seen in certain contexts as an acceptable symbol of the return to pre-lapsarian innocence, of utter poverty, of humility, and of complete surrender to and dependence on God. Christians, as Jerome’s well-known dictum proclaimed, were to “naked, follow the naked Christ” (*nudus nudum Christum sequi*).⁷⁸ Federico Borromeo, cardinal of Milan, owned a copy of Titian’s celebrated unclad, sensual *Penitent Magdalene*, and praised the artist for having depicted her with decency and decorum, despite her want

of clothes.⁷⁹ Of the same or some similar *Penitent Magdalene* by Titian, Giorgio Vasari had declared that, “although very beautiful, it moves not to lust but to compassion.”⁸⁰ According to Hart and Stevenson, it is precisely the Magdalene’s bare flesh (they speak specifically of her “paradisial bosoms”) that represents the conduit to spiritual ascent—at least, it behooves us to qualify, for that portion of the population who would find the unclothed female body an object of erotic attraction:

Before her penitence, [Mary’s] huge, tense breasts had been both the advertisement of her trade and her weapon of seduction. Their immediate appeal to the male viewer now offers a first sensory step on his pathway towards salvation: they still catch his attention, but with fresh implications. Theologians frequently treated Mary Magdalen as a bridge between Eve and the Blessed Virgin, a bridge which common humanity could cross. The combined appeal of earthy sexuality and spiritual salvation, coupled with the sustenance of the body by angelic food, helps to build that bridge.⁸¹

Hart and Stevenson refer specifically to Felice Ficherelli’s *Penitent Magdalene* of the mid-seventeenth century (Dublin, National Gallery of Ireland), but theoretically we could say the same of Badalocchio’s *Magdalene* in the Harris Collection. However, Giorgio Vasari’s protestations notwithstanding, one wonders how many—if any—viewers really responded in such a spiritually edifying fashion to the naked flesh of a sensually painted saint, male or female, as Hart and Stevenson so eloquently but unconvincingly assert. Certainly from what we read in contemporary ecclesiastical literature, the assumption by the Church authorities tended more in the very opposite direction: namely, that the sight of the naked, or better, the nude, human body would provide too much *diletto*, delight, and draw the viewer from, not toward, God, devotion, and the concerns of the spirit. Hence, in his *De pictura sacra* (1614), Federico Borromeo “explicitly rejects inclusion of nude figures, unless strictly demanded by the subject of the painting,” while Paleotti warns of artists who “foment the lascivious desires” of viewers, especially the younger ones, by the representation of “immodest images.”⁸² In his treatise *De inspirationibus* (on the topic of discerning evil desires from good), reprinted in 1591 (Venice), 1635 (Paris), and 1650 (Lyons), famed fifteenth-century preacher and reformer Saint Bernardino of Siena, is more explicit. Warning of the effects of the sight of human flesh in sacred art, even that of Jesus Christ, he reports, “I know of a person who, while contemplating the humanity of

Christ on the cross—it is shameful to say and horrendous just to imagine—sensually and foully polluted and defiled himself (herself).⁸³

Furthermore, there was no genuine justification in the ecclesiastical tradition for showing the Magdalene bare-breasted, and most certainly not in the sensual fashion of Badalocchio. As the hagiographic sources consistently taught, Mary, in her grotto in Southern France was, technically, not naked, much less “nude” according to Kenneth Clark’s definition; rather, she was amply and chaste covered by her prodigiously long hair.⁸⁴ This is indeed how artists had usually and decorously depicted her since the times of the earliest medieval art. So why is she so seductively bare-breasted, her lower body clothed in a fine garment of patrician scarlet, in Badalocchio’s rendition? Given its size and style, as previously mentioned, the Badalocchio canvas was probably done for a wealthy private collector to hang in his personal residence: Did he buy it for his private spiritual “devotion”? Or was the penitent Magdalene, along with Bathsheba, Susanna, and Potiphar’s wife (Pl. 25), a convenient pretext for owning and feasting his eyes on a piece of “pious pornography”?⁸⁵

Finally, a word is in order about two further elements in Badalocchio’s painting that may normally be taken for granted: the jar of ointment in the lower left hand corner and the book that the Magdalene is so intently reading. The jar, at first glance, seems strangely inappropriate in the context: What need would the Magdalene possibly have of such a decidedly un-penitential luxury item in her wilderness setting? Did the artist place the jar there simply as an expeditious iconographic device from tradition to clue the viewer as to the identity of the woman? This could well be the entire explanation; however, if Badalocchio were aware of the details of Mary’s life at Sainte Baume he would have known that she had indeed such a jar with her in France. The penitent Mary’s jar was, in effect, a reliquary; she kept “embalmed” in her ointment some earth containing drops of Jesus’s blood that she had collected at the Crucifixion. This would have been a fairly well-known “fact” in Baroque Italy, publicized by the extremely popular *Aurea rosa*, a best-selling commentary on the Gospels of the Lectionary by Dominican theologian Sylvester Prierias, whose pages on the Magdalene were included by Surius in his equally popular collection of saints’ lives, *De probatis sanctorum historiis* (1st ed., Cologne, 1570–75). His “information” on the Magdalene, Prierias says, in turn derives from the

direct revelations of the saint herself to Charles II, King of Sicily and Duke of Provence, in 1279, and hence the authority of Prierias’s account.⁸⁶ The Franciscans of the Venetian Church of the Frari could even boast of having a sample of this same blood-and-earth ointment, brought from Constantinople in 1479.⁸⁷

My next and final observation about Badalocchio’s *Penitent Magdalene* concerns her book. What exactly is Mary reading?⁸⁸ The average seventeenth-century Catholic would, I believe, have known the answer to this as well: Mary spent her years at Sainte Baume meditating specifically on the Passion of Jesus. As Lapide tells us: “Withdrawing into the desert, she gave herself up to the contemplation of His life, His passion, and His resurrection.”⁸⁹ Sixteenth-century Capuchin preacher Bernardino Ochino, in a sermon on the Magdalene (delivered before his apostasy), tells us more specifically that Mary meditated on Christ’s passion, station by station, at each of the seven canonical hours of the day, beginning with the scene of his capture, the subject of the Dublin Caravaggio in the present exhibition (Pl. 30).⁹⁰ Pseudo-Bonaventure had already recommended to all Christians in the Middle Ages a similar program of station-by-station meditation on the Passion at each of the canonical hours.⁹¹ In the sixteenth century, in his *Invito spirituale alla pietosa meditazione della Passione di Gesù Salvatore nostro* (first published in 1562 with many subsequent editions), the Capuchin friar Battista da Faenza tells his readers:

[A]s Saint Augustine tells us, a day must never pass in which the Christian does not do some reading in his book of the Passion of the Redeemer; especially since there sinners learn how to flee from those sins with which they newly crucify Christ. Moreover, as was revealed by the blessed virgin Saint Bridget, there is no sinner at all, petty or great, who, putting his whole heart to meditate on the Passion of Christ, does not receive the gift of tears and an appetite for penance.⁹²

Hence, the significance of the book in Badalocchio’s and many other painted depictions of the penitent Magdalene. However, according to the legend passed on, again, by the *Aurea rosa*, Mary contemplated the Passion of Jesus by means, not of a book, but rather of a cross (brought to her by Michael the Archangel),⁹³ as we see in Guido Reni’s *Penitent Magdalene* (Pl. 8) and in other contemporary depictions of penitent saints. In his *Arca santa della vita e passione di Cristo Signor Noŝtro* (first edition, 1622), Fra Alessio Segala da Salò tells his audience of the arrival of Mary’s gift from Michael:

The author of the *Aurea rosa* reports about Mary Magdalene that, after the Ascension of Christ the Redeemer, having retired to a bitter desert, in which she remained for the space of thirty-two years, the Lord wished to teach her in which practice she had to conduct herself in that solitude, in which [practice] she would be pleasing to him. And therefore he sent to her at the beginning of her stay the archangel Saint Michael with a beautiful cross in hand, which he placed at the opening of her grotto, in order that, keeping it ever before her, without taking her eyes from it, the saint would not lose sight of the sacred mysteries which it represented which through it had been brought to pass.⁹⁴

Whether by means of a book or a cross, Mary's assiduous and heart-engaging contemplation of the Passion produced in her neither sorrow nor depression nor any other cheerless state of emotion. Instead, despite the rigors of her penitence, Mary lived in a constant state of tranquillity and emotional-spiritual plenitude, in constant, intimate union with God. This was true even outside her episodes of ecstatic rapture in which hosts of angels transported her to the highest of heavens, as depicted, for example, by Lanfranco (Capodimonte, Naples) and Domenichino (Hermitage, St. Petersburg). Mary's deep, abiding sense of serenity, happiness, and spiritual fulfillment is a recurrent motif of the Magdalene sermons and other related devotional discourse and clearly informs Guido Reni's exquisite *Penitent Magdalene* in the Walters Art Gallery (Pl. 8). Despite the penitential symbols of the skull and the cross in this painting, it almost seems more appropriate to call Reni's composition *Mary in Ecstasy*. Though, to be sure, she is not in the violent throes of rapture, as is the Saint Teresa of Gian Lorenzo Bernini (Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome), Reni's Mary betrays not the least trace of heavy penitential emotion. Swathed in the flowing pink mantle of divine love, she is completely suffused with its gentle, warm light; her entire attention, her entire being, is focused on heaven, the source of that light. The heaven-fixed gaze, the celestial light flooding down from above, the loose, flowing forms and the "silvery diaphanous tonalities"⁹⁵ of the painting all suggest a woman who is no longer of this earth. Ecstasy can also come in such a quiet, subdued, serene fashion. The emotion of Reni's Magdalene may be outwardly restrained, but it is nonetheless deeply felt.

Quoting Bernard of Clairvaux, Lapide describes for us the state of Mary's soul from the moment that Christ pronounced those final words to her at Simon's banquet, "Go in peace for your sins are forgiven:"

The joy which a perfect heart looks for from an untroubled conscience is a lasting happiness. For the heart which is cleansed from this world's corruptions, and whose desires are fixed on God, joys only in the Lord, and rejoices only in God its Savior. The soul of such a one despises the threats of the enemy, casts away fear, is not a prey to false hopes, but, secure against all evil, rests in perfect peace.⁹⁶

This was Mary's habitual state even in her Provençal grotto home, as we hear in Pseudo-Rabanus's description: "Although in the flesh, she still walked in this earthly pilgrimage, she was nonetheless permitted to walk in spirit amid the delights of Paradise, on whose ineffable sweetness she feasted as much as is possible for a mortal."⁹⁷ According to Bernardino of Siena, Mary lived her last desert years in a state of suspended animation, all "the senses of her soul" having gone to sleep.⁹⁸ But what of the copious tears Mary shed in her wilderness, so widely depicted in ecclesiastical art (as in Reni's portrait)? These tears, as Bernardino Ochino has the Magdalene explain in one of his (again, pre-apostasy) sermons, were, in reality, the joyous tears of grateful love, not the painful tears of bitter compunction.⁹⁹

As Emile Mâle has pointed out, in the Post-Tridentine Church we witness a remarkable proliferation of images of saints caught in moments of supernatural vision, mystical union, and divine ecstasy.¹⁰⁰ How was the average Catholic viewer meant to respond to these saintly exemplars? On the one hand, Catholic spiritual masters were cautious in suggesting that the ordinary faithful imitate the saints in attempts to reach such an extreme state of spiritual achievement, especially by inordinate means of lengthy fasting, self-flagellation, and other penitential discipline. In some activities, the saints were not to be imitated, only admired as illustrations of the wonders of God's grace. Nonetheless, on the other hand, theologians and other ecclesiastical teachers did not exclude in theory that such a state of mystical union with God was within the realm of the possible for all those who applied themselves assiduously to the practice of spiritual perfection. Hear, for example, the exhortation of friar Michelangelo da Venezia (d. 1611), another of the many prodigious popular Capuchin preachers who combed the Italian peninsula in the early modern period:

Who will ever be able to express fully the happiness of that soul which, imitating the glorious Magdalene, gives itself to the contemplative life and with a burning spirit, through

its practice of elevated contemplation procures and desires for itself union with its sweet and beloved Jesus? . . . The force and celestial power of divine love which is found in a pure and contemplative soul surpasses all stimulus of the human intellect, because it activates and produces ineffable effects in such a soul, consuming with the fire of divine love every natural imperfection and by the power of divine love, that soul becomes utterly transparent and resplendent and ready to receive in itself every grace and gift.¹⁰¹

These infinite graces and gifts, this mystical or near mystical union with Jesus, represent the ultimate heights to which Mary Magdalene, through the powerful visual medium of sacred art, taught the seventeenth-century Catholic to fly.

PETER THE APOSTLE

Peter is called the first of the Apostles: not in age, for Andrew was older than he, as Epiphanius testifies (*Haeres. 51*); not in vocation, for Andrew was called before him (*S. John 1: 41*); not in love, for Christ loved S. John above all the rest, and therefore, he leaned upon His breast at His Last Supper. It remains, therefore, that Peter was the first of the Apostles in excellence and authority, being, indeed, their head and ruler.¹⁰²

The primacy of Peter the Apostle occupied a great deal of space in Catholic literature of the age of Caravaggio. Cornelius a Lapide's defense, quoted above, of Peter's pride of place in the hierarchy of the apostles finds its counterpart in many a writer of the period—Cardinal Baronius prominent among them—for in proving and defending Peter's primacy, one was at the same time defending the Roman institution of the monarchical papacy, the object of great attack from Protestant Europe.¹⁰³ However, as is clear in the popular devotional literature of the age, to the Christian laity, Peter was not simply a symbol of an institution, the papacy. Like the Magdalene, he too was a "saint who sinned" and as such was a compelling mirror of the laity's struggles against "the world, the flesh, and the devil."

Indeed, Christians may have been able to identify even more with Peter inasmuch as Mary, once converted, never erred again, whereas Peter's life was a continuous series of, if not, sin, then certainly error borne of his utterly human fallibility. This is true even after the miraculous burst of illumination and zeal from the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13), as we see in the great controversy between

Peter and Paul over the question of Gentile converts to Christianity and Mosaic law, eventually resolved at the so-called "Council of Jerusalem." As Paul testifies, "when Kephias (*i.e., Peter*) came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he clearly was wrong . . . And the rest of the Jews also acted hypocritically along with him" (Galatians 2:11, 13). As we will later hear Pseudo-Chrysostom complain (apropos of the scene depicted in Lanfranco's *Liberation of St. Peter*), even in the presence of an heavenly angel sent to rescue him, Peter is surprisingly uncomprehending and doubtful of God's providence. Nonetheless, Peter overcame his sins and weaknesses, giving the ultimate demonstration of his faith as a glorious martyr. Thus he, like the Magdalene, could teach the faithful "to fly" from abject sin to heroic sanctity.

THE TRUE LIKENESS OF PETER?

Before we look at some of the key moments in Peter's ascent to sanctity as interpreted by the paintings in our exhibition, a word is in order about the question of Peter's portrait in art. Among the many re-discovered or re-publicized facts of early church history that Cardinal Baronius brought to the attention of Christians in the age of Caravaggio was that of the existence of a "true likeness" of Peter. The finding was not simply an item of curiosity or mere archeological interest; instead, it represented an important part of the cardinal's defense of the cult of images in the Catholic Church (against Protestant rejection of that cult). The existence of these ancient prototypes was valuable evidence that from the very birth of the Church, the use of sacred art in worship and devotion had somehow received divine approbation.¹⁰⁴ As Baronius reports in the *Annales*, portraits from life (*viventibus illis, effigiatis coloribus*) were painted not only of Peter and Paul, but also of Christ himself. The source of Baronius's information is Eusebius of Caesarea (*Historia ecclesiastica*, 7.18) who declared to have seen the portraits with his own eyes, without telling us, however, at what point in Peter's life the supposed portrait had been created.¹⁰⁵ Baronius raises the subject of the ancient prototypes twice in volume one of the *Annales*. On the second occasion he not only repeats the citation from Eusebius, but adds further confirmation from Augustine and quotes verbatim a description of Peter's appearance given in the *Ecclesiastica historia* of Nicephorus

Callistus Xanthopulus (ca. 1256–ca. 1335), who in turn is presumably quoting an older author who had seen the ancient prototype:

Peter was indeed not at all stocky in stature but was, rather, somewhat erect; his face was somewhat pale and very white; the hair of both his head and beard was curly and dense, but not very long; his eyes were black and blood-shot; his eyebrows were nearly plucked out;¹⁰⁶ his nose rather long; however, it was very flat and snub at the end, not pointed.¹⁰⁷

Baronius concludes his excerpt from Nicephorus with a statement beginning with an initial “But” that seems to call into doubt the reliability of the description: “End of quotation from Nicephorus. But what he says of the blood-shot eyes, do accept, for it is said that Peter cried very often.” Not knowing the source of the medieval Greek historian’s portrait, Baronius would have had reason to question its authority. Whatever Baronius’s true mind on the matter, Nicephorus’s description by no means became the uniform, canonical “look” of Peter in Italian Baroque art after the publication of volume one of the *Annales*. Certainly the various Peters in Caravaggio’s oeuvre—*The Crucifixion of Peter* (Cerasi Chapel, Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome), *Christ on the Mount of Olives* (attributed; formerly Berlin, now destroyed), and *The Denial of Peter* (Metropolitan Museum of Art) do not conform to it. For example, they are all bald-headed, a feature not mentioned by Nicephorus. Indeed one cannot even say with certainty that they represent the same face.

We in fact encounter a wide variety of facial types among all Italian Baroque depictions of Peter’s likeness. To be sure, most Baroque artists attempt to convey the image of a mature (if not old) man of authority, wisdom, and great physical and psychic strength—in the same cast as an Old Testament patriarch or God the Father himself. However, in no way can one speak of their having been guided by a specific, unique prototype—a very general stereotypical paradigm, perhaps, but not a consistently struck portrait from life. (They seem also to have ignored Gilio’s complaint about the error of depicting Peter as an old man at the time of Christ’s Passion, since the apostle is known to have lived thirty-seven years thereafter, a fact recorded by Ludolphus as well.)¹⁰⁸ There were several ancient representations of Peter in Rome at the time, but no one of them seems to have been universally accepted as the most authentic. Federico

Borromeo’s experience in the matter is instructive: as Pamela Jones reports, when Borromeo was seeking in Rome a portrait of Peter to reproduce for his famous collection of saintly portraits, he rejected the one, described by Baronius as authentic, included in the Lateran Triclinium mosaic of Pope Sylvester’s display of the icon of Saints Peter and Paul to the Emperor Constantine. (The icon is supposed to have contributed to the conversion of the emperor Constantine.) The Lateran mosaic, Borromeo knew, had been executed centuries after the apostle’s death (ca. 795–800); so the Milanese cardinal eventually settled on an image from the catacombs of Saint Calixtus.¹⁰⁹

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN

In Christian history and art, the betrayer par excellence was indisputably Judas Iscariot (see Pls. 28, 29, 30 and my other essay in the present catalogue). Yet, as Hyman Maccoby points out, “a certain air of betrayal hangs over all the twelve disciples, not only over Judas Iscariot. Peter, the greatest of the Twelve, chosen by Jesus to be the Rock of his kingdom, has the greatest mark against him.”¹¹⁰ In a scene poignantly depicted by Caravaggio (Metropolitan Museum of Art) and many artists before and after him, Peter’s great act of betrayal occurred after Jesus’s arrest when Peter three times denied before the servant girl¹¹¹ that he was one of Jesus’s disciples or that he even knew the man (Matthew 27: 69–75 and parallels).

Yet, as Ludolphus points out—“quia dormitio erat quasi praefiguratio negationis et fugae”—Peter’s betrayal of and flight from Jesus was foreshadowed earlier that evening in the Garden of Gethsemane, in the scene Francesco Bassano depicted in one of the popular Bassano family nocturnes (Pl. 9).¹¹² In agony over his imminent arrest and death—in the distance we can see the approaching Judas and Roman soldiers—Jesus seeks the consolation of his closest companions, Peter among them. Yet, only hours after having vociferously protested his undying fidelity (Matthew 26: 35 and parallels), Peter falls asleep on the suffering, lonely Jesus. In gentle reproach, Jesus addresses Peter: “So you could not keep watch with me for one hour?” (Matthew 26: 40). Elaborating on Jesus’s remark, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26: 41), Lapidé explains to his audience (in Jesus’s voice): “By the flesh is meant our natural

feelings, which shrink from suffering and death. Pray, therefore, that your weak flesh may not enfeeble your spirit and compel it to deny Me; but may God by His grace so strengthen both your spirit and your flesh, that you may not only be ready, but strong to overcome all adversities, so that for My sake you may eagerly wish for death, and bravely endure it."¹¹³ Lapide thus turns Jesus's general statement into an exhortation specifically to martyrdom, a most timely message in view of the great numbers of Catholics then being martyred for the faith, whether in Protestant Europe or in the foreign missions.¹¹⁴

THE TAKING OF CHRIST

Roused from his sleep, Peter rises temporarily to the occasion once the soldiers come forward to arrest Jesus: taking his sword, he cuts off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest, as we see in *The Taking of Christ* by the Anonymous Flemish Caravaggesco in Boston's Museum of Fine Arts (Pl. 29, lower right corner).¹¹⁵ Describing Peter's behavior in this scene, ecclesiastical commentators, Ludolphus, Baronius, Lapide, and Pseudo-Chrysostom, speak of it as revelatory of his virtue: in reacting so, Peter gives further demonstration of his great "passion," "ardor of faith," "generous burning love," and "resoluteness," all qualities he possessed in greater measure than did the other Apostles.¹¹⁶ Peter, indeed, was known for his somewhat hot-headed zeal; as Pseudo-Bonaventure (with Augustine as his authority) tells us, had Jesus told Peter the identity of his betrayer at the Last Supper, "[Peter] would have rent him with his teeth."¹¹⁷ In this, Peter was similar to Moses, in whose hoary patriarchal guise he frequently appears in Baroque art (see Roncalli's *Death of Ananias and Sapphira*, Pl. 12). As we read in Lapide's Commentary, "S. Augustine (*Contr. Faust.* xxii. 70) remarks that Moses, after he had smitten the Egyptian [Genesis 2:11-12], was made the head of the Synagogue. S. Peter, after mutilating Malchus, was made the head of the Church. Both of them went beyond bounds, not from hateful cruelty, but from blameless impetuosity. For Peter sinned through rashness, for it was without knowledge . . . that he drew his sword."¹¹⁸

Hence, in Peter's response to the arrest of Christ, Catholics were taught to see, simultaneously and hence contradictorily, both virtue (passion, love, zeal) and vice (sinful rashness). Be it virtue or vice, Peter's mutilation of Malchus was contrary to the will of Jesus, who immediately heals the servant's ear. Once again, the bumbling,

"clueless" Peter simply had not understood; he had understood neither Jesus's constant pacifist message nor his prediction about his fore-ordained death. Therefore, Jesus rebukes Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot call upon my Father and he will not provide me at this moment with more than twelve legions of angels? But then would the scriptures be fulfilled which say that it must come to pass in this way?" (Matthew 26: 52-54).

In giving the moral to this story, Ludolphus reiterates Jesus's message of pacifism and patient suffering, adding that the Lord's counter-response to Peter's violent act was meant to teach "that the clergy is not to presume to fight with arms. As Ambrose says: 'My armaments are tears and prayers; I can do, nor should I do nothing else, to resist.'"¹¹⁹ Yet, unlike Ludolphus, Lapide qualifies Jesus's warning about the sword with the addition of the brief but significant phrase, "without proper authority." According to Lapide, "[t]o take the sword by public authority to punish the guilty, or in a just war, is lawful and honest."¹²⁰ The qualification is, again, timely. As we shall mention again in our discussion of Roncalli's *Death of Ananias and Sapphira* (Pl. 12), the papacy itself faced the question of "taking the sword" against Christians during the clamorous Venetian Interdict crisis of 1606 in which dwelt the real possibility of armed war between the papacy and the republic of Venice.¹²¹ Lapide compiled his *Commentary* in Rome just a few years after that crisis: its memory may not have been far from his mind when he interpreted in "just war" terms Jesus's unqualifiedly pacifist pronouncement of Matthew 26:52. Lapide, in effect, conceded to the papacy the right to bear material arms against its enemies, and not simply "turn the other cheek."

Before we leave the scene of Peter's mutilation of Malchus, we would be remiss if we did not mention that, among the hundreds of early Christian relics on display in the churches of Italy, there was as well the very sword used by Peter to sever Malchus's ear. The putative relic was in Venice in the Church of the Redeemer,¹²² transported there from Constantinople where Pseudo-Chrysostom tells us he saw it in the imperial palace.¹²³ Pseudo-Chrysostom's description of the sword matches in a general way the modest, almost knife-like instrument we see in Peter's hand in the anonymous Flemish *Taking of Christ*, which leads one to suspect that the artist had perhaps seen or been told of the original. Pseudo-Chrysostom's description comes in his sermon, "In honorem venerabili-

um catenarum et gladii S. Petri apostolorum principis” — on the relics of Peter’s chains and sword; this sermon, in turn, was popularized by Surius who included it in his anthology of saints’ lives, *De probatis sanctorum historiis*, under the feast of the Liberation of Saint Peter, August 1. (We shall have more to say about Surius and the sermon in discussing Lanfranco’s depiction of that episode from Acts 12 (Pl. 11).¹²⁴ As the sermon exhorts, “Although the sword appears short and not very refined in shape (*informis*), it should not be held in derision. It contains in itself the miraculous energy and power of the Apostle.” Elsewhere Pseudo-Chrysostom reminds his audience, “since [the sword] had been held by the hand of the Apostle himself, it drew unto itself all of the grace and riches of the Holy Spirit,”¹²⁵ and in speaking thus, provided the Post-Tridentine Church with another authoritative defense of the legitimacy and efficacy of relics in Christian devotion.

THE PENITENT PETER

In Italian Baroque art Saint Peter appears in many guises and many roles, fulfilling a wide variety of doctrinal, visual, and emotional functions. Perhaps the most characteristic representation of Peter in this period, however, is that of the weeping penitent, of which we have a splendid example in the present exhibition (Pl. 10).¹²⁶ The Smith College *Penitent Peter* shows a very Post-Tridentine, i.e., lachrymose, suppliant, and melodramatically wrought, Peter undergoing the heart-wrenching emotional and spiritual rigors of penitence for having thrice denied Christ. The actual moment captured in the painting is not necessarily that immediately following the denial. As Ludolphus, Lapide, and others point out, Peter made a life-long habit of rising each night at the sound of the cock’s crow to cry bitter tears for his sins.¹²⁷ This is why his eyes were constantly blood-shot (as in Nicephorus’s description quoted above) and swollen and his face lined with wrinkles, as in the Cantarini portrait. Peter cried so much and so bitterly, Fra Alessio Segala tells us, “that the tears burned his face and made channels in his cheeks.”¹²⁸ Cantarini’s white-bearded Peter is a man well advanced in years, which suggests that the artist meant to portray Peter very late in life. However, as we see in both art and literature — again, despite Gilio’s denunciation of this error — Peter is often depicted as an old man at the time of the Passion. Indeed in his famous epic poem on the tears of Peter, *Le lagrime di San Pietro*, to cite one well-known literary

source of the period, Luigi Tansillo refers to Peter at the moment of denial as “il miserabile vecchio,” the wretched old man.¹²⁹

Peter’s denial, though committed out of simple fear, was, nonetheless, a mortal sin, causing him to lose the grace and love of God. However, he “mentally retained his faith, which moved him to repentance and tears.”¹³⁰ In this he, like the Magdalene, is in direct contrast to Judas Iscariot who despaired of divine love: “Oh, was not Judas foolish to think that his iniquity was greater than God’s mercy? The Lord in a single glance pardoned and converted Peter and made him head of the Church; he would have done the same to Judas had he grieved and repented for his sin.”¹³¹ In Cantarini’s painting, as in many of the portraits of saints in Cardinal Federico Borromeo’s famous collection, the utterly human and realistically depicted Peter is shown praying and in extreme proximity to the viewer. As Pamela Jones points out, the immediacy and sensual realism of such devout compositions were intended to emphasize “the direct, intimate connection between saints and sinners,” to remove the otherwise “formidable psychological barrier between saint and sinner” and to bluntly confront the viewer with a saintly exemplar to be imitated.¹³² What artists suggested in paint, preachers exhorted in words: “Awakening during the night, immediately recall to mind your Lord, and in particular, grieve for your sins in imitation of Saint Peter who, at the crowing of the cock used to always awake to cry bitter tears for his sin.”¹³³ On the subject of tears and prayer, Bellarmino tells us in one of his sermons that we must ask God to grant us, first and above all, heart-felt sorrow for our sins. He also tells us that the shedding of tears is the surest signs that we have reached our goal:

The souls of the wicked are sterile, just as a land without water; nothing grows there except thorns and nettles. But where these frequent rainfalls [of tears] fall on the sons and daughters of the Lord, there germinate the living plants of good thoughts, the flowers of holy desires and the fruits of good works. The tears of the Magdalene, how much fruit did they produce! Likewise the tears of Saint Peter . . .¹³⁴

Just as the faithful were to take example from Peter’s penitence and consolation from his forgiveness, so too were they to take warning from the very fact that Peter, who until that moment had appeared so loving of Jesus, so zealous for the faith, and so magnanimous in all his deeds, could actually sin so egregiously by denying his beloved Jesus and his faith. The principal moral message to be

drawn from this episode, say contemporary sources, is a warning against foolish self-reliance, against a vain, presumptuous confidence in one's own powers, and a dangerous disregard for the "*imbecillitatem carnis*," that is, for the weakness of human flesh.¹³⁵ However, as already mentioned, in addition to being a "mirror" of the ordinary Christian, Peter was also symbol of the papacy. Hence, the weighty question facing preachers and other ecclesiastical commentators of Scripture was: Why did God permit the very head of his church to fall so totally and so ignominiously? The answer given by both Ludolphus and Lapidus: because God wanted to impart an important, challenging pastoral message to Peter as future head of the Church and to his successors, the popes. The popes—and indeed all other prelates in charge of souls—were expected to have great compassion for human frailty and fallibility; they were to empathize with the sinner and act accordingly in their response to him or her.¹³⁶

THE LIBERATION OF PETER

In proceeding to the next scene from the life of Peter included in our exhibition, we skip over many years of the apostle's career and arrive at the episode of his miraculous liberation from prison in Jerusalem (Pl. 11). The episode, recounted in Acts 12, is here depicted in an unfinished painting of circa 1614–15 from the Richard Feigen collection by Giovanni Lanfranco of Parma, a student of Annibale Carracci working in Rome. (Together with Badalocchio, Giovanni worked in Rome on both the Galleria Farnese and the Palazzo Mattei.) In mid-career—beginning in 1614—Lanfranco's work was characterized by a "delicate, elegant and refined style," "subtle silhouette effects" and "a magical chiaroscuro atmosphere,"¹³⁷ all qualities readily seen in the Feigen *Liberation of Saint Peter*, despite its unfinished state and its pentimenti. The present canvas represents, we might mention, an earlier, somewhat different version of the painting that Lanfranco executed in 1620 for the Benediction Loggia in Saint Peter's Basilica, now known only from an engraving by Pietro Santo Bartoli of 1665.¹³⁸

As for the event depicted in the painting, Scripture tells us that in his persecution of the new Christian sect, King Herod began arresting its leaders; having arrested and killed James, the brother of John, "and when he saw that this was pleasing to the Jews" (Acts 12:3), the king

seized Peter as well. However, since it was the feast of Passover—as it was at the time of Jesus's capture—Herod held Peter temporarily in prison. Meanwhile, "prayer by the church was fervently being made to God on his behalf" (Acts 12:5). That prayer was efficacious, and soon after there unfolded the scene that Lanfranco, with literal accuracy and dramatic chiaroscuro, sets before us:

On the very night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter, secured by double chains, was sleeping between two soldiers, while outside the door guards kept watch on the prison. Suddenly the angel of the Lord stood by him and a light shone in the cell. He tapped Peter on the side and awakened him, saying "get up quickly." The chains fell from his wrists. (Acts 12:6–7)

This providential deliverance of Peter was considered a momentous event in the life of the apostle and in the history of the early Church—a great sign, as we will hear Baronius say, of God's special love and ever-vigilant protection, not only of Peter, but also of his successors and of the Church itself. Accordingly, a separate feast was created in the Church's universal calendar to commemorate the event: August 1, the Feast of St. Peter in Chains—even though, as Jacopo da Voragine says, it should be more accurately called "Saint Peter out of Chains."¹³⁹ The early history of both the feast and the celebrated Roman church bearing that name is not completely clear; what is known is that August 1 had been the pagan feast of the Roman Emperors; and according to the *Catholic Encyclopedia* (1911) the new feast was "originally the dedication feast of the Church of the Apostles, erected on the Esquiline Hill in the fourth century."¹⁴⁰ The present sixteenth-century Church of St. Peter in Chains (San Pietro in Vincoli) stands on the site of this paleochristian Church of the Apostles, which in the fifth century had been rebuilt at the expense of Eudoxia, daughter of the wife of Emperor Theodosius II, whose name was also Eudoxia, and who had brought to Rome the chains used to bind Peter in Jerusalem.¹⁴¹ However, the set of chains on display in Lanfranco's time—still to be seen today—represented a melding of those from Peter's Jerusalem imprisonment with those from his later (but entirely legendary) imprisonment in Rome's Mamertine Prison, as recounted in the apocryphal *Acts of Peter* of the late second century.¹⁴²

Pseudo-Chrysostom, Baronius, and Lapidus devote much attention to the chains, lavishing abundant praise on them as precious relics of the greatest thaumaturgic

powers. In Baronius and Lapidé, no doubt, the contemporary polemic with the Protestants over the subject of relics accounts for some of the intensity of their adulation. As Pseudo-Chrysostom exclaims in his already-cited sermon on the “venerable chains and sword of Peter, prince of the Apostles,”

These precious chains, I say, [are] so entirely worthy of veneration, these chains which had bound those miracle-working hands, drawing divine grace from them, so that now miracles gush forward from them, liberating the sick from their illness and making holy all those who approach them with faith . . . Even though they might be made of [mere] iron, they, however, are filled with divine grace and power . . . It is fitting, most certainly, it is fitting that not only these chains which had bound those hands be greatly venerated, but also all articles which have touched the limbs of the Apostle must be each embraced and revered.¹⁴³

Underscoring their historical and spiritual legitimacy, Baronius reiterates that the chains have been kept in the perpetual memory of the Church “as the glorious trophy of this most noble victory” and have been “celebrated by almost all the Fathers of the Church in outstanding speeches of praise.”¹⁴⁴ There follows a long excerpt from one such speech of praise, from Augustine: “O happy chains which adhered to the naked bones [of Peter] . . . O happy fetters.” Augustine speaks also of the great miracle-working power of the chains: if the mere shadow of Peter could cure the sick (Acts 5:15), all the more so these chains, which had absorbed his very blood and sweat!¹⁴⁵ The chains, says Baronius, are, furthermore, signs of the worldwide imperium of Peter, that is, the papacy. He explains, “it is no mystery that both East and West solemnly celebrate the feast of the chains of Peter, as they do with those of no other Apostle for it is only fitting that the chains of he whose power to bind and loose is so great in the Church should be held in honor by all the faithful.”¹⁴⁶

In view of Protestant attack on the institution of the papacy, this emphasis in contemporary biblical commentary and catechetical instruction on Peter as symbol of the papacy, especially in such a scene of divine favor and Petrine triumph, comes as no surprise. Like Roncalli’s *Death of Ananias and Sapphira* (Pl. 12), *The Liberation of Peter*, whether by Lanfranco or others—recall Raphael’s splendid fresco in the Borgia apartments commissioned by Leo X—could be and was indeed exploited for its great propaganda value in the papacy’s campaign to assert its scriptural and

historical legitimacy. In effect, therefore, the success of papal restoration in the seventeenth century represents not only the triumph of the institution but also the triumph of art and the power of the image.

This propaganda value was not lost on the staunchly and devoutly pro-papal Baronius, whose commentary on this scene in his *Annales* is calculated at every step to emphasize Petrine/papal importance and triumph. The arrest of Peter, the cardinal says, was a devastating “earthquake” for the Church thus deprived of its very foundation. The effortless way in which the angel of the Lord—some say it was Saint Michael himself, Lapidé reports—overcame the guards and broke through the chains shows “how very foolish” it was for Herod—or anyone—to try to thwart the plans and wisdom of God. The implication was that those who attempt to do harm to the papacy will be similarly defeated, for in the end, “the angel led Peter out of prison, not as if he were fleeing but rather as if he were processing in triumph.”¹⁴⁷ Intensifying this image of miraculous victory was a further element that, although not mentioned by Baronius, is likely to have impressed the imagination of the viewer of Lanfranco’s depiction of Peter’s liberation: seeing the overcome guards, the great burst of light, and the young male angel—all traditional components of the scene of the Resurrection of Christ—the Catholic viewer might have made, if only unconsciously, a connection between Peter’s delivery from his prison-tomb and the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead, thereby reinforcing in his or her mind the identity among Jesus, Peter, and the pope, the vicar of Christ on earth and successor of Peter.¹⁴⁸

However, to focus a moment on Peter himself and his demeanor in Herod’s prison, we find that, although it is somewhat strange, in our sources, the apostle is both praised and blamed. On the one hand, as Lapidé tells us, Peter slept soundly, for he trusted fully in the Lord; the apostle’s faith only grew during his imprisonment, and, to the “confusion” of his guards, he remained “happy and of secure cheerfulness.”¹⁴⁹ On the other hand, Peter’s puzzled reaction to the intervention of the angel—only after it was all over does he realize that it had all been the work of the Lord (Acts 12:9)—is the occasion for reproach, at least in the eyes of Pseudo-Chrysostom. For a moment the old, “clueless,” doubting Peter returns to the fore: “What are you saying, o prince of the Apostles? Only now you say that you know what it has all been about? Only

now do you believe? Only now you can enjoy the miracle? Where did that old fervor of yours go? To where did that secure hope of yours fly? To where did that impassioned confession of faith of yours disappear?"¹⁵⁰ Therefore, even such a scene of Petrine/papal triumph contained the inconvenient reminder that, pro-papal propaganda notwithstanding, Peter was, to the end, very much susceptible to the weaknesses and fallibility of his human flesh.

There was, finally, a more personal message that the ordinary Christian was meant to derive from contemplation of painted depictions of the liberation of Peter. As they were with every scriptural pericope, ordinary Christians were to apply the New Testament story to their own personal lives and find their own experiences reflected somehow in Peter's. In his didactic sonnet on this episode, Bishop Gabriele Fiamma explains the connection: the prison represents the habit of sin; the four soldiers are the four ways of sinning (ignorance, negligence, malice, and omission); Peter's somnolence represents "the sinner who is incapable of waking himself up and doing what needs to be done" to escape sin, whereas the two chains represent the two forms of *cupiditas*, covetousness, that of the mind and that of the flesh.¹⁵¹ The only escape is recourse to God's help. Inspired by Peter's liberation, Catholics, therefore, were to raise this traditional prayer from the Mass in honor of the feast of Saint Peter in Chains: "O God who allowed Saint Peter, bound by his chains, to leave his prison untouched by harm, release us, we beseech you, from the fetters of sin and remove from us the snares of all evil."¹⁵²

THE DEATH OF ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA

All that we have said about papal inviolability and triumphalism and their artistic expression with respect to Lanfranco's *Liberation of St. Peter* applies as well to our final painting, *The Death of Ananias and Sapphira* (Pl. 12) by Cristofano Roncalli (also known as "Pomarancio"). Indeed, in view of the provenance of this canvas (also in the Feigen collection), those remarks are even more relevant: the Feigen Roncalli (1599–1604) represents one of the preparatory *modelli* executed by the artist *en grisaille* in creating his monumental altarpiece—the largest of his career—for the newly reconstructed St. Peter's Basilica.

The history of the Roncalli painting, and of its place in the Petrine cycle planned by Clement VIII for the small naves of the basilica, has been publicized by

Chappell and Kirwin in their lengthy study, "A Petrine Triumph: The Decoration of the Navi Piccole in San Pietro under Clement VIII," and needs no repeating here.¹⁵³ Let us simply recall that Roncalli was granted the superintendency of the Petrine cycle project—the apogee of his career—probably through the graces of Cardinal Baronius. As one of the principal advisors to Pope Clement and cardinal-overseers of the decoration of the basilica, Baronius probably had much to say about the iconographical contents of the cycle.¹⁵⁴ Having also worked for Caravaggio's patrons, the Mattei (he frescoed one of the Mattei chapels in the Aracoeli as well as portions of the Palazzo Mattei), Roncalli was honored with the distinction of "Cavaliere di Cristo" for the success of this altarpiece. Let us further recall that, like all the other components of Clement's grand decoration scheme, Roncalli's gigantic altarpiece was meant to awe and inspire the thousands of pilgrims who would be flooding the richly and programmatically ornamented basilica, especially during Jubilee Years, with visions of the historical legitimacy, majestic power—both spiritual and temporal—and glorious triumph of the papacy.¹⁵⁵

The episode depicted in Roncalli's altarpiece again comes from the Acts of the Apostles (5:1–11): Ananias and Sapphira, husband and wife, were members of the early Christian community; selling their land for purposes of communal benefaction, they attempted to deceive Peter by retaining a portion of the proceeds for themselves. Instead, in an act of divinely inspired omniscience—Lapide calls it the apostle's "spirit of prophecy"¹⁵⁶—Peter exposed their fraud, severely remonstrating first Ananias and then Sapphira, both of whom dropped dead immediately upon hearing Peter's terrible words. The scriptural account concludes, "And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things" (Acts 5:11). In Roncalli's *grisaille*, we see in the distance the already-dead Ananias being carried off, while Sapphira—partially naked here, for this is how the artist prepared the anatomical modelling of his figures¹⁵⁷—is in her death throes at the feet of the apostle. Before Roncalli, the scene had been rendered in art most notably by Masaccio in his fresco cycle in the Brancacci Chapel (Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence) and by Raphael in one of the famous Vatican tapestries commissioned by Leo X.¹⁵⁸ The differences among the three are quite revealing. Although Raphael's Peter has indeed far more grace, nobility, and dignity than Masaccio's utterly humble, decidedly

undramatic, near rustic counterpart, neither approaches the awe-inspiring *terribilità*, *gravitas*, and grandeur of Roncalli's mighty Peter. The monumental presence of Peter—whose facial type and demeanor explicitly recall Moses, the patriarchal law-giver and judge—is, in turn, emphasized and heightened by the majestic architectural setting of the scene.¹⁵⁹ It is, as Kirwin notes, a “frightening depiction,”¹⁶⁰ calculated to place the fear of God—and of the pope—in those who view it.

Somewhat surprisingly, neither Baronius nor Lapse makes any explicit mention of the papacy and its divinely guaranteed inviolability in his commentary upon this episode; that is clearly the principal message of Roncalli's altarpiece, one that likely overwhelmed all others in the mind of the seventeenth-century viewer. For Lapse the episode was about avarice, serving, above all, as a warning to those who steal from the Church; among such thieves are those religious who violate their vow of poverty—a sub-topic that the Jesuit covers at great length.¹⁶¹ Indeed, Ananias's wife, Sapphira, who figures prominently in Roncalli's painting, was a traditional exemplar of the sin of avarice. Having been “canonized” in this distinction by Dante's *Divine Comedy* (Purgatory 20:112), she is also portrayed in this role, for example, in the *Allegory of Avarice* by Jacopo Ligozzi (1547–1626) in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In Ripa's *Iconologia* (first edition, 1593), instead, Sapphira and her husband represent the personification of *mendacium*, lying.

In his discussion of the episode in the *Annales*, Baronius's main concern is, above all, the question of Peter's alleged “cruelty” and whether the punishment fit the crime, two topics covered by Lapse as well.¹⁶² The charge against Peter was ancient—Porphyrius had accused him of “savagely slaughter”¹⁶³—and both the cardinal-historian and the Jesuit exegete do their best to exonerate the apostle. As Jerome points out, the actual killing was an act of God; Peter's voice was simply the “occasion” and the moral, not material, instrument of the execution.¹⁶⁴ Lapse asserts that such a harsh punishment was, in fact, necessary to instill terror in the new Church, which was in need of object lessons of discipline in a time of great expansion. Baronius on this matter quotes Origen, who claims somewhat sophistically that, by castigating the couple right before death, “so that they left this world cleaner,” Peter saved them from damnation. Since they were believers, they will one day be saved.¹⁶⁵ Baronius also sees justification for Peter's

behavior in Mosaic law, which punishes severely those who merely collect wood on the Sabbath. What is licit for Moses, he implies, is licit for his successor as supreme lawmaker and judge, Peter.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, we are meant to understand, what is licit for Peter—namely, the severe punishment of sinners even by death—is licit for his successors, the popes.

This debate, concerning the punitive authority of the head of the church, was not restricted to the personal history of the apostle Peter, but rather the papacy faced it repeatedly in its own history as well. In the early modern period, a time of many “wars of religion,” large and small, between Catholics and Protestants or Catholics and the papacy, the issue was of especially burning relevance. In early seventeenth-century Italy the most clamorous and controversial case was, as mentioned during our discussion of Peter's mutilation of Malchus at the arrest of Jesus, the Venetian Interdict crisis of 1606. In this crisis, Baronius adamantly contended that the pope should strike hard against the recalcitrant Venetians, even if that meant sanctioning slaughter. In a speech to the papal consistory, citing John 21:15 (“Feed my lambs”) and Acts 10:13 (“Kill and eat”), Baronius declared that “Peter's ministry is to feed and to kill, as the Lord commanded him;” in other words, the Petrine functions included both spiritual feeding and temporal killing.¹⁶⁷ Commissioned through the agency of the same Cardinal Baronius just a short while before the Venetian crisis, Roncalli's *Death of Ananias and Sapphira* is completely in keeping with such a vision of the papacy. Thus, in effect, the ultimate message that Peter, in such a fearful Mosaic guise, communicated to the Catholic faithful was a warning: they could indeed, like Caterina Paluzzi, learn to fly on their own to great spiritual heights, but let them be mindful that any flights they might undertake were ever under the watchful, policing eye of the supreme pilot of the universal Church, the pope.

1 Excerpted in Dooley, 543. For Paluzzi's biography, see Dooley's introduction, 538–39. A protégée of Federico Borromeo, Caterina helped Cardinal Sfondrati locate the body of Saint Cecilia, as she relates in her *Autobiography*. For the Baroque cult and iconography of Cecilia, see Josephine von Henneberg's essay in the present catalogue.

2 Jones, 129.

3 Augustine, quoted by Delenda, 178; Basil, quoted by Hibbard, 29.

- 4 For Baronius, see Josephine von Henneberg's essay in the present catalogue.
- 5 See Shore, 2–7; and *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Ludolph of Saxony," 8:1063–64.
- 6 For Lapide's career, see *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Lapide, Cornelius a," 8:384; Galdos; Poncelet, 494–95; and the *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, s.v. "Lapide (Cornelius a Lapide)," 9:253–55.
- 7 Of course, what any given viewer saw in and understood of a painting depended on his or her education and experience of life; see Pamela Jones's distinction between the "informed" and "uninformed" viewer in her essay in the present catalogue. In my essay, I focus above all on those ideas and *topoi* that I believe were the common religious and cultural property of both groups of viewers. For the image of Mary Magdalene in the sermons of great Observant Franciscan preacher, Bernardino of Siena whose cult experienced a great reflowering in Post-Tridentine Italy and whose *opera omnia* were published in three separate editions in the early modern period (Venice 1591, Paris 1635, and Lyons 1650), see Mormando. For the study of Mary Magdalene in art and literature, Haskins's vast study is indispensable; for Mary in Italian literature of the early modern period, see Ussia; for the medieval period, Garth.
- 8 Lapide, 4:205.
- 9 The controversy is explicitly discussed or mentioned, e.g., by Baronius, Lapide (4:196–97), and Bishop Gabriele Fiamma in his didactic moral sonnets meant for a popular audience (for Fiamma, see n. 21 below).
- 10 *Annales*, an. 32, c. 17, 87. Baronius's discussion extends from pp. 87 to 92, covering cc. 17–30.
- 11 For the text of the censure, see *Acta sanctorum* (Venice, 1748), July 22nd, 189.
- 12 Haskins, 246. For Jacques, see the *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, 2:415–16; and Olin, 107–10.
- 13 Yet, as Cummings points out, the mirror here functions simultaneously as a symbol of prudence or self-examination. Cummings's article remains the best discussion of the meaning of the painting; but see also Calvesi, 1985 and 1986, as well as the essays by Pamela Jones and John Varriano in the present catalogue.
- 14 Musso, "Predica del mistero della vigna," 128. However, Musso does not say this instantaneous transformation came through the mediation of Martha, as is suggested in Caravaggio's painting.
- 15 Mosco, 155; and Calvesi, 1986, 149; see Leonardo da Vinci, 2:229, "Precepts of the Painters." The use of the *comput digitalis* appears in an earlier depiction of the disputation between Martha and Mary by Leonardo's follower, Bernardino Luini. Caravaggio was likely to have seen this painting (then attributed to Leonardo himself) in the Roman home of Cardinal del Monte (Mosco, 155–57; *Age of Caravaggio*, 250; see n. 22 below).
- 16 Calvesi, 1986, 149.
- 17 *Annales*, an. 32, c. 17, 87. For other references to this scene as "The Conversion of Mary Magdalene," see, e.g., Pseudo-Bonaventure, 169 and fig. 153; Lawrence of Brindisi, "Dies Sanctae Mariae Magdaleneae," 89; and Michelangelo da Venezia, 1341.
- 18 Pseudo-Bonaventure, 170. The *Legenda aurea* is extremely vague, not to say illogical, concerning the process of Mary's conversion, attributing it simply to "divine inspiration." "As rich as Mary was, she was no less beautiful; and so entirely had she abandoned her body to pleasure that she was no longer called by any other name than 'the sinner.' But when Jesus was journeying about the country preaching, she learned one day, by divine inspiration, that He sat at meat in the house of Simon the Leper. Thither she ran at once, but, not daring to mingle with His disciples, she stayed apart. And she washed the Lord's feet with her tears . . . (Jacopo da Voragine, 356).
- 19 Ludolphus, 2:108. This is the explanation given as well by Bernardino of Siena, "De Maria Magdalena, et de bonis et malis mulieribus," 270a.
- 20 Ed. David Mycoff, Kalamazoo, 1989. Nor does Giles Constable's lengthy study of the primary source literature on Martha and Mary record any mention of Martha as catalyst for her sister's conversion, although, starting in the late fifteenth century, she does begin to appear in the guise of Mary's admonitor; see Constable, esp. 128–29.
- 21 Sonnet 94, 320. Even Fiamma, by the way, feels the need to interrupt his exposition of the sonnet to address the issue of the identity of the Magdalene—is she one or three?—and affirm his adherence to official Church teaching (321). For Fiamma's biography and importance, see the *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, 5:293–95, whence the quotation in the preceding sentence.
- 22 *Age of Caravaggio*, 251. In his multi-volume inventory of the iconography of the saints in Italian painting, Kaftal lists no scene of the conversion of Mary that includes Martha and only one depiction of Martha as she admonishes Mary this from a late 14th-century frescoed cycle of the Magdalene's life in Bolzano (Kaftal, *Iconography of the Saints in the Painting of North East Italy*, 707–08). Martha as Mary's admonitor appears also in the Passion of San Gallo of 1330 (Mosco, 155). Mina Gregori tells us that "the source of Caravaggio's painting was probably a work by Bernardino Luini in Cardinal del Monte's collection, then attributed to Leonardo," which has been identified with "the version in the Fine Arts Gallery of San Diego" (*Age of Caravaggio*, 250–51). The Luini painting, however, appears to juxtapose Mary and Martha as representatives of, respectively, the contemplative and the active life, and does not depict the Magdalene's conversion; see Cummings, 575–76. See Pamela Jones's essay in this catalogue in which she suggests that Caravaggio has simply conflated two episodes of Mary's life—her admonishment by Martha and her conversion—into one atemporal canvas.
- 23 The quotations are from Vernon Lee's introduction to Valentina Hawtrey's translation of the text (Hawtrey, vii).
- 24 Hawtrey, 24, 25–26.
- 25 "Della conversione, nella quale dialoga Marta con Maddalena del preſto convertirſi e dare il cuore a Dio," 2357–81. Girolamo's sermons were printed in Bologna in 1567 and again in Venice in 1570 (2346–47). The Capuchins, cited often in this essay, were one of the most active and influential religious orders in Post-Tridentine Catholicism; see Thomas Worcester's discussion in his essay in the present catalogue.

- 26 Finucci da Piſtoia, 2375.
- 27 Finucci da Piſtoia, 2377; in the anonymous Trecento *Vita*, after her soul-converting conversation with Martha, Mary goes looking for Jesus, eventually finding him at Simon's house (Hawtrey, 35–37).
- 28 Lapidè, 4:204. Pseudo-Rabanus says, instead, that Simon was “a good friend and a relative of the blessed Martha” (Pseudo-Rabanus, 32).
- 29 Spear, 176.
- 30 Vanni's altarpiece was destroyed in a fire in 1655. The Snite painting is believed to be a variant done by Vanni himself; the artist is known to have made smaller copies in oil of some of his works. The attribution of the Snite painting to Vanni was made by Susan Wegner in 1984 – the work had previously been attributed to Ventura Salimbeni (Fredericksen-Zeri, 614) – based upon drawings by Vanni for the lost altarpiece published by Riedl (q.v.). My thanks to Mary Frisk Coffman, Curator, Snite Museum of Art, for this information.
- 31 Ludolphus, 2:108; Lapidè, 4:204; see also Lapidè, 3:152–53 for his discussion of the alabaſter jar and the ointment in connection to Mary's second anointing of Jesus at Bethany in Matthew 26.
- 32 *Annales*, an. 32, c. 26, 90–91. Baronius is commenting on Mary's anointing of Jesus at Bethany (Matthew 26) but his remark is pertinent to the anointing of Luke 7 as well.
- 33 Lapidè 4:196.
- 34 See, for example, Ludolphus's discussion, 2:112–13. I have taken the English translation of Mary's Latin scroll (which begins “Ne desperetis vos qui peccare soletis”) from Dillenberger, 50.
- 35 Lapidè, 4:211.
- 36 *Annales*, an. 34, c. 75, 129.
- 37 Ludolphus, 4:53.
- 38 Ludolphus, 2:107; for Denis the Carthusian, see his *In Evangelium Lucae*, as cited by Haskins 399, n. 44.
- 39 Tanner, 2:703. For more on penance in the early modern Church, see the essay by Thomas Worcester in the present catalogue.
- 40 See, e.g., Ricci and Thompson.
- 41 See Gauvin Bailey's essay in this catalogue for the history and further discussion of the Pulzone altarpiece.
- 42 Bellarmine, 323–24.
- 43 Lapidè, 3:315–16.
- 44 Garrard, 46.
- 45 Garrard, 47.
- 46 Castiglione, Book 4, Chapter 72, 542–43.
- 47 Mosco, 92.
- 48 Kanaan-Kedar, 701.
- 49 Gilio and Paleotti in Barocchi, 2:32–33, 2:266, 2:367.
- 50 Battista da Varano, 17–18. For the history of this work, see the translator's Introduction, iv–v.
- 51 Ludolphus, 4:192, 193. Pseudo-Bonaventure's Magdalene tells Jesus “that so much grief from the harshness of your Passion and death filled my heart that everything was obliterated” (363).
- 52 Ludolphus, 4:195.
- 53 The quotations are respectively from Amann, 42; and *The Age of Correggio*, 150.
- 54 See Romani, 86; and Cadogan, 181–82. There is another version of the same scene by Orsi in the Galleria Estense, Modena; see Cadogan, 182, fig. 33.
- 55 The quotation is from Ludolphus, 4:194. For the same theme see Lapidè, 6:261; and Lawrence of Brindisi's sermon for the “Secondo giorno di Pasca,” 2691.
- 56 Lapidè, 6:262.
- 57 Marsh, 637.
- 58 Pseudo-Bonaventure, 363.
- 59 Ludolphus, 4:192.
- 60 Musso, “Dell'allegrezze che debbe haver il christiano per la Resurrectione di Christo Noſtro Signore,” 159, 160.
- 61 Lapidè, 6:264 for both quotations.
- 62 First, that is, after Jesus's mother, the Virgin Mary, who was visited by her son, according to a widely-believed pious legend. Confirmed by the revelations of Battista da Varano (18), the legend was accepted by Pseudo-Bonaventure (359), Ludolphus (4:193), and Baronius, who declares, “[N]o pious person, I think, would deny [this traditional belief]” (*Annales*, an. 34, c. 179, 158–59). For the Magdalene's love and perseverance as reason for her reward, see Lapidè, 6:257 and 266.
- 63 Haskins, 62.
- 64 Ludolphus, 4:200. Ludolphus also cites Ambrose, Augustine, and Bede to the same effect, while Lapidè cites Chrysostom (3:344–45). The *topos* of woman as temptress, especially sexual temptress, of devout men and, to use Ludolphus's image, as a “gate of death,” is ancient and recurrent in Christian literature and art; one such example of womanly evil is Potiphar's wife, the would-be corrupter of Joseph. See Guercino's rendition of that scene from Genesis 39 included in the present exhibition (Pl. 25).
- 65 Lapidè, 3:345. Ludolphus agrees: women cannot preach, he says, because of their inferior mental and physical capacities (4:200).
- 66 Lapidè, 6:266.
- 67 *Martyrologium*, July 22; and *Annales*, an. 35, c. 5, 208. Yet, Lapidè criticizes Baronius for accepting the “improbable” story that Joseph of Arimathea, after landing in France with Mary and Martha, ended up in England where he preached the Gospel (Lapidè, 3:319).
- 68 “By the end of the thirteenth century Mary Magdalen had, it seemed, left behind at least five corpses, in addition to many whole arms and smaller pieces which could not be accounted for”

- (Haskins, 99). Ironically, despite her status as a monument to the accomplishments of womanhood, no female was allowed to enter her tomb at Aix, as was announced by the medieval plaque placed at its entrance: "no lady whatsoever, no matter what holiness or wealth she may have or nobility" (Garth, 102).
- 69 See Haskins, 287–89.
- 70 Dillenberger, 43.
- 71 Haskins, 298, fig. 72. See Haskins's fig. 73, showing Orazio Gentileschi's variation on the same composition in the Richard Feigen collection.
- 72 The quotation in the previous sentence comes from *The Age of Correggio*, 373; for Badalocchio and Lanfranco, see Schleier, 25 and the biographical entry, "Badalocchio, Siſto" in *La pittura in Italia. Il Seicento*, 2:620. For this painting, see Spike, cat. 3, 20.
- 73 Haskins, 232.
- 74 "In short, 'to be naked is to be deprived of our clothes and the word implies some of the embarrassment which most of us feel in that condition.' The word 'nude,' on the other hand, connotes no such image of a 'huddled, defenseless body, but of a balanced, prosperous and confident body: the body re-formed'" (Miles, 13, quoting Kenneth Clark, *The Naked and the Nude: A Study in Ideal Art* [London, 1956], 1. A large number of scholarly works has been published in the recent past examining attitudes toward, and the significance of, the human body (especially the naked human body) in the European cultural tradition; see, e.g., Peter Brown's *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, 1988); Carolyn Walker Bynum's *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York, 1992); Leo Steinberg's *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and Modern Oblivion* (2nd ed., Chicago, 1996); and the just-cited Margaret Miles's *Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West*.
- 75 Haskins, 232, 234.
- 76 Paleotti's table of contents for the unwritten third book is extant; see Barocchi, 2:504–06; for discussions of nudity in art in contemporary treatises, see Marcora, 216–17 (re: Paleotti), 220 (re: Borghini), 226 (re: Lomazzo).
- 77 Petrocchi, 97. Petrocchi is not clear on the date; it seems to have been 1625.
- 78 See the *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, s.v., "Nudité;" Haskins, 224–27; Bernards; Châtillon; and Grégoire.
- 79 Jones, 74; Haskins, 237.
- 80 *Titan Prince of Painters*, 334.
- 81 Hart and Stevenson, 75–76.
- 82 Paleotti, in Barocchi, 2:267. The quotation about Borromeo is taken from Haskins, 244.
- 83 *De inspirationibus*, 259. The original Latin is: "Novi personam, quae dum contemplabatur humanitatem Christi pendentis in cruce (pudet dicere et horrendum est etiam cogitare) sensualiter et turpiter polluebatur et foedabatur."
- 84 Yet this detail is in neither Jacopo da Voragine nor Pseudo-Rabanus; we find it, however, in the *Aurea rosa* (see n. 86 below).
- 85 Haksins, 260; see also 258 and 300.
- 86 Prierias, 435–36. The prolific Dominican writer and Master of the Sacred Palace under Leo X, Sylveſter Prierias (1460–1523) whose real name is Mazzolini (Prierias derives from Priero, the place of his birth in Piedmont), was the first theologian to engage Martin Luther in public disputation over papal supremacy, indulgences, and ecclesiology. He is also author of the enormously popular theological handbook, the *Summa Silveſtrina*. His *Rosa aurea* was first published in Rome in 1510 (see *Enciclopedia cattolica*, 8:537–38, s.v. "Mazzolini, Silveſtro [Prierias];" and the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 9:524–25, s.v. "Mazzolini, Sylveſter"). Capuchin popular preacher and spiritual writer Criſtoforo da Verucchio (d.1630) also mentions this relic of Christ's blood collected by Mary—"according to the most authentic of her legends, found in Surius"—in his *Compendio di cento meditazioni sacre, sopra tutta la vita e la passione del Signore . . .*, dedicated to the Duke of Urbino, Francesco Maria II della Rovere, published in Venice, 1st ed., 1592, 2nd ed., 1602 (Criſtoforo da Verucchio, 1213; for his life and work, see 1085–87, 1190–91 and fig. 24, facing 1121).
- 87 Haskins, 273. On the subject of Magdalene-related relics, what was considered to be her hairshirt is in the Museo del Tesoro of the Church of St. John Lateran in Rome, according to Mosco, 192.
- 88 Not only was Mary literate, she was, according to Bernardino of Siena, "adorned with natural wisdom." Her name, Magdalene, in fact, means "illuminata," enlightened, "since she possessed a marvelous natural intelligence" ("De ardentissimo amore sanctissimae Magdalene," 421; "De peccatoris conversione," 285).
- 89 Lapide, 4:215.
- 90 Ochino, "Predica predicata in Vinegia il giorno della festa di S. Maria Maddalena. MDXXXIX," 2303. See my other essay in this catalogue for the significance of the scene of the betrayal and capture of Christ in Franciscan spirituality.
- 91 Pseudo-Bonaventure, chap. LXXIV–LXXXIII.
- 92 Battista da Faenza, 548.
- 93 Prierias, 438–39.
- 94 Alessio Segala da Salò, 1720. The already-cited Battista da Faenza reports the same story of Michael and the Magdalene and her meditation of the Passion (549).
- 95 Zafra, 68.
- 96 Lapide, 4:214.
- 97 Pseudo-Rabanus, 106–07.
- 98 "De ardentissimo amore sanctissimae Magdalene," 437.
- 99 Ochino, "Predica predicata in Vinegia il giorno della festa di S. Maria Maddalena. MDXXXIX," 2300–01. This is not to say that all artists depicting the penitent Mary agreed with Ochino's description of her emotional state. For an alternative reading of Reni's *Penitent Magdalene*, see Jones's essay in the present catalogue.

- 100 Mâle, chap. 4, 151–201.
- 101 Michelangelo da Venezia, 1406–07; the quotation is from his devotional treatise destined for a popular audience, the *Fascetto di Mirra, nel quale si contengono quaranta meditazioni sopra la passione di nostro Signore, che possono servire anco per l'oratione delle Quaranta Hore*, first published in Venice, 1611.
- 102 Lapide, 2:5.
- 103 The question of Peter's primacy comes up at least four times in vol. 1 of the *Annales*: an. 31, c. 23–28, 65–67; an. 33, c. 11–27, 96–101; an. 34, c. 198–206, 164–66; and an. 45, c. 1–9, 293–95.
- 104 Campanelli, 399.
- 105 *Annales*, an. 69, c. 14, 594. Paleotti cites Eusebius to the same effect: 2:243.
- 106 Regarding Peter's eyebrows, Baronius's original Latin reads "supercilia prope evulsa" but this is a misquote. Nicephorus, Baronius's source, tells us that the apostle's brows were, instead, "arched." His description may be found in the *Patrologia graeca*, vol. 145, col. 853. (My thanks to Dr. Kenneth Rothwell for his help with the Greek and Latin texts.)
- 107 *Annales*, an. 69, c. 31, 599. For the ancient Petrine prototypes, see Freedberg, 205–07; Ronca, 428; Toscano, 414; and Campanelli, 399.
- 108 Gilio, 2:31–32; Ludolphus, 4:233.
- 109 Jones, 195. For further discussion of the oldest extant images of the apostle, in addition to Ladner cited by Jones, see also the *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, 14/1, s.v. Pierre (Saint), ss. LIV and LV, cols. 941–45; *Catholic Encyclopedia* (1911), 11:752, s.v. "Peter, Saint, Prince of the Apostles"; and the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 11:205, s.v. "Peter, Apostle, St."
- 110 Maccoby, 29.
- 111 Ludolphus (4:45 and 48–49) and Lapide (3:240–41) both emphasize that it was a simple girl who was the occasion of Peter's great denial of Christ. As Augustine exclaims: "Behold this most firm pillar tumbled at one single breath of air!" (Lapide 3:241). In Ludolphus's analysis, the girl represents the sins of *cupiditas* and *voluptas*, covetousness and sensual pleasure (4:48–49).
- 112 The quotation from Ludolphus comes from 4:16. Benedetti (48) points out that Bassano's altarpiece of the *Assumption of the Virgin* hung over the high altar in San Luigi dei Francesi, "where it was probably admired by Caravaggio." For Bassano's possible influence on Caravaggio's *The Taking of Christ*, see Benedetti, 30–31.
- 113 Lapide, 3:210.
- 114 For the subject of martyrdom in early modern Catholicism, see the essays by Josephine von Henneberg and Gauvin Bailey in this catalogue.
- 115 For more on this painting and its attribution, see my other essay in this catalogue.
- 116 Ludolphus, 4:26; Lapide, 3:219; Baronius, *Annales*, an. 34, c. 67, 128; Pseudo-Chrysostom, 8:18 (more about this source below).
- 117 Pseudo-Bonaventure, 321.
- 118 Lapide, 3:220.
- 119 Ludolphus, 4:26–27.
- 120 Lapide, 3:221.
- 121 For this crisis and Baronius's role in it, see Pullapilly, 117–134.
- 122 According to Réau, 3/3:1081.
- 123 Pseudo-Chrysostom, 20.
- 124 Baronius read the sermon in question, as we know from his annotations to the *Martyrologium*; there he suggests, however, the names of Saints Germanus or Proclus as possible authors of the sermon since, in Chrysostom's time, the chains had not yet been found (*Martyrologium*, August 1).
- 125 Pseudo-Chrysostom, 18 (for the quotation in the previous sentence), 20.
- 126 The Smith College *Penitent Peter* has been attributed by Stephen Pepper to the Pesarese artist Simone Cantarini (1612–48), but is of otherwise unknown origins (communication from the Smith College Museum of Art, September 10, 1997). The painting is unpublished except for a listing (and reproduction) in *La Chronique des Arts*, the supplement to the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, March 1987 (entry 136). There is a similar *Penitent Peter* by Cantarini in the Doria-Pamphili Gallery in Rome (see Mancigotti, 135, fig. 73).
- 127 Ludolphus, 4:46–47; Lapide, 3:247–48; see also the already-cited Michelangelo da Venezia and Alessio Segala da Salò, 1346 and 1690–91, respectively. Lapide (3:247) credits "S. Clement, the disciple and successor of S. Peter" as the source of this information.
- 128 Alessio Segala da Salò, 1690–91.
- 129 Tansillo, canto 1, octave 51.
- 130 For Peter's fear, see Ludolphus, 4:45; for his mortal sin and "mental faith" see Lapide, 3:242, whence the quotation.
- 131 Bernardino Ochino, "Predica predicata in Vinigia il lunedì di Pasqua MDXXXIX," 2269.
- 132 Jones, 128–29.
- 133 Michelangelo da Venezia, 1346. Ludolphus (4:48) adds that the cock represents the preacher who awakens us to our sins.
- 134 Bellarmino, 325.
- 135 Ludolphus, 3:351–52 (whence the quotation); Lapide, 3: 242.
- 136 Ludolphus, 3:352; Lapide, 3:243 and 4:49.
- 137 *La pittura in Italia. Il Seicento*, 2: 781; see also *The Age of Correggio*, 483.
- 138 Information from the files of Richard Feigen, Inc.
- 139 Jacopo da Voragine, 403.
- 140 *Catholic Encyclopedia* (1911), 11:751–52. s.v. "Peter, Saint, Prince of the Apostles. VI. Representations." Baronius gives some of the history of the chains and their re-discovery in the *Martyrologium*, August 1st.

- 141 Hibbert, 334; *Catholic Encyclopedia* (1911), 11:751–52.
- 142 Metford, 196; and Réau, 3/3:1081. According to a footnote in the Turin 1877 edition of Surius, Cardinal Sfondrati, with the permission of Clement VIII, brought a portion of the chain to Santa Cecilia (Surius, 8:22n.)
- 143 Pseudo-Chrysoſtom, 16, 17.
- 144 *Annales*, an. 44, c. 6, 267.
- 145 *Annales*, an. 44, c. 6, 268. As Baronius points out, Augustine was actually speaking of the Mamertine chains, the Jerusalem chains not yet having been discovered.
- 146 *Martyrologium*, August 1. For Lapidè's discussion of the chains, which draws much from Baronius, see his gloss on Acts 12:6 (Lapide/Acts, 17:261–62). Lapidè reminds his readers that like the Church, so too does God honor these relics by causing miracles to be wrought through them.
- 147 *Annales*, an. 44, c. 3, 266, and c. 6, 267.
- 148 The liberation of Peter as visually analogous to the scene of Jesus's resurrection is Réau's suggestion, 3/3:1092.
- 149 Lapidè, 17:261; Pseudo-Chrysoſtom, 10.
- 150 Pseudo-Chrysoſtom, 11.
- 151 Fiamma, Sonnet 61, 187–88.
- 152 This is my translation of the *oratio* for the August 1st Petrine feast taken from the 1574 edition of the *Roman Missal*.
- 153 See also Kirwin; for a preparatory sketch relating to this altarpiece, see Pouncey. The altarpiece was done on slate and placed at the foot of the *pilone di Sant'Andrea* until 1726, at which time, having suffered humidity damage, it was replaced by a slightly different copy in mosaic. The original is in the Roman Church of Santa Maria degli Angeli (information from the files of Richard Feigen, Inc.; see also DiFederico, 76–77). Roncalli described his working method, from initial *idea* to final *istoria*, in a speech delivered to the Roman Accademia di San Luca on June 26, 1594; for the text of the speech, see Beltramme, Appendix I, 219–20.
- 154 Other artists involved in this project under Roncalli and represented in the present exhibition are Francesco Vanni and Giovanni Baglione. For the facts of Roncalli's career, in addition to Chandler-Kirwin, see also Kirwin and *La pittura in Italia. Il Seicento*, 2:824.
- 155 On the jubilees of the period, see Brezzi, 112–38.
- 156 Lapidè/Acts, 17:145.
- 157 Rodinò, 36.
- 158 Fermor, fig. 20.
- 159 Petrioli Tofani, 216.
- 160 Kirwin, 11.
- 161 Lapidè/Acts, 17:141–45.
- 162 *Annales*, an. 34, c. 265, 184–85; Lapidè/Acts, 17:147–48, addresses the question as well, drawing, however, from Baronius in large part.
- 163 Lapidè/Acts, 17:147; see *Annales*, an. 34, c. 264, 184.
- 164 Lapidè/Acts, 17:147; *Annales*, an. 34, c. 264, 184.
- 165 Lapidè/Acts, 17:147; *Annales*, an. 34, c. 264, 184.
- 166 *Annales*, an. 34, c. 264, 185, quoting Isidore.
- 167 Pullapilly, 118.

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