

ANTONIUS VERCELLENSIS (DA VERCELLI), *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti* [Sermons 41 to 61] [Quadragesimal Sermons, i.e. Sermons for Lent]
In Latin with a few notes in Italian, decorated manuscript on parchment and paper
Northern Italy, Milan (?), c. 1460-1475

519 ff., of which the last leaves (ff. 516-519) are ruled blanks, missing the first 4 leaves (medieval foliation begins at f. 5) [collation: i-xlii¹², xliii⁷ (of a quire of 12, with last 5 leaves canceled ruled blanks)], outer bifolia of each quire of parchment, inner leaves of paper (watermark close to Briquet, "Ciseaux et lettre Y" no. 3710, Gênes, 1463, see also no. 3714, Gênes, 1464/1466), written in a cursive bookhand in brown ink, text copied in two columns of 49 lines (justification: 152 x 95 mm), paper and parchment ruled in ink, catchwords, some contemporary quire signatures, rubrics in bright red, paragraph marks in red, some capitals stroked in red and yellow, manichulae pointing to passages of interest, some headings (not systematic) in darker red ink, some passages underlined in red, 2- to 5-line high initials in bright red (some with yellow infill), some quoted auctoritates, sources and exempla specified in red in the margin (e.g. Ricardus (f. 142v), Damascus, Ambrosius, Lactantius (f. 261) etc.), some rubrics and beginning of a given sermon added on separate strips of paper and pasted in the margin with a system of reference to the text in two columns, many marginal annotations, digressions, additions, and corrections. Bound in a later binding of tan sheepskin over pasteboard, smooth spine decorated with simple double gold filets, a small circular white paper label with "MS" at the foot of the spine, marbled endleaves and pastedowns, edges brushed in dark blue (Overall a solid binding, although some scuffing and damage to the leather of boards, a few leaves cut short with very small lack of text in the lower margins).
Dimensions 220 x 150 mm.

Amply annotated by contemporary hands and transcribed during the author's lifetime, this collection of Quadragesimal sermons (24 of the 61 known sermons) is by the understudied Italian preacher Antonius da Vercelli (d. 1483) of the Observant Franciscan movement. His sermons boast a strong didactic and catechetical character; they are enhanced by a plethora of *exempla* as well as plentiful quotes from scriptural, patristic, and lay authors. Known in only three manuscripts, only one of them complete, and unpublished, the collection merits a critical edition.

PROVENANCE

1. Manuscript copied in northern Italy as per script and watermark found in the paper (each quire is enforced with outer bifolia of parchment and inner bifoliae of paper). There are a few notes in the vernacular, such as: "Vale fra Giovanni vale. Non te increasca...si se frabrica [sic] el bel vassello responde Jacobonus" (f. 10v). There are proverbs in the vernacular and passages of *exempla* quoted in Italian (see for example f. 51: "Tu hai saputo iocare a scarica l'asino...") Beyond the fact that the author was a Franciscan, there are other elements that suggest a Franciscan origin and use for this collection of sermons. One finds many Franciscan references, for instance on f. 153v: "Visio S. Sebastiani. Visio stigmatum. Visio sancte Agnetis cum multitudine virginum. Visio de 39 coronis..." The manuscript was evidently copied contemporary with the author's lifetime and near the region where he served as vicar, although there is no reason to believe it is an autograph.
2. Manuscript deaccessioned, with stamp of the Redemptorists of France: "Cong. SS. Redemptoris. Prov. Gallica. Domus studiorum." The Redemptorists (Congregation of

the Most Holy Redeemer) were a missionary society, founded in 1732 by Saint Alphonsus Maria Liguori, near Amalfi, and which spread rapidly first around Naples, then in Italy and France. On all their missions, the Redemptorists were expected to preach a sermon on prayer and one on the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. The present sermon collection would thus fit well in a Redemptorist library.

3. Misattributed to Cherubino da Spoleto (da Negroponte), according to an added inscription found in the upper margin of the first leaf. Cherubino da Spoleto (1414-1484) was another prolific Observant preacher, contemporary of Antonius da Vercelli or Vercellensis, which might account for the misattribution. The mistake is rapidly sorted with a simple comparison of the text found in the present manuscript with that of Cherubino da Spoleto, *Sermones quadragesimales preclarissimi candido et ornatissimo style editi ab eximio divini verbi precome fratre Cherubino de Spoleto Ordinis Minorum*, Venice, 1502.

TEXT

This manuscript has been refoiliated. It was once part of a much larger manuscript (over 1000 ff.). It opens to f. 5, which is in fact originally f. 505. Perhaps the work was bound in two volumes. There are leaves where one still clearly reads the original foliation: e. g. f. 607 [in fact now f. 107], f. 702 [now f. 202] etc. We have adopted the current foliation from 5 to 515 [original foliation would have been ff. 505-1015].

There are partial thematic headings, unsystematic, but that allow the reader to position himself. Headings include: *De patientia*, *De pudicitia coniugali*, *De restitutione bonorum spiritualium*, *De fide*, *De divino amore*, *De dimissione peccati*, *De iustitia*, *De mercansia paradisi*, *De remissione injuriarum*, *De scutis preservatibus rem publicam*, et passim...

The collection of 61 sermons is found complete in Rome, Casanatense 157R (B.III.14) presented by O. Schäfer, "De fr. Antonio a Vercellis O.F.M., eiusque *Quadragesimali de aeternis fructibus Spiritus Sancti*." See Schäfer, 1943, pp. 260-272, for the complete rubrics of the 61 sermons, as well as the incipits and explicits.

ff. 5-12, Antonius Vercellensis, *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti*, Sermon 41, heading, *De patientia* (found on ff. 7, 8, 9, 10), incipit, "[...] deus iustissime vult et tollit quod suum est et tu non vis..." (begins incomplete, wanting ff. 1-4v); explicit, "[...] ad patienter sustinendum mundi adversitates quod dicitur purgatorio"; rubric also found in Rome, Casanatense 157R (B.III.14) and presented by Schäfer, "De fr. Antonio a Vercellis O.F.M., eiusque *Quadragesimali de aeternis fructibus Spiritus Sancti*": *Feria 6 post III dominicam Xlme. Iterum de triplici adversitate patienter propter Deum tolleranda. Et precipue de XII causis queinducunt unumquemque omnia adversa libenter ferre. Sermo 41* (ff. 417va-426va);

ff. 12-22, Antonius Vercellensis, *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti*, Sermon 42, heading, *De patientia* (found on f. 12), rubric, *Sabbato post 3am dominicam in Xlma. Iterum de reliquis sex inducentibus unumquemque ad patienter omnia adversa sustinendum et tolerandum. Sermo quadregesimus secundus*; rubric found in Rome, Casanatense 157R (B.III.14): *Sabbato post III dominicam in Xlma. Iterum de reliquis sex inducentibus unumquemque ad patienter omnia adversa sustinendum et tollerandum. Sermo 42* (ff. 426va-431ra).

ff. 22-45v, Antonius Vercellensis, *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti*, Sermon 42 [sic], heading, *De pudicitia conjugali* (found on f. 22), rubric, *Sabbato post 3am dominicam XLme. De mutua caritate coniunium ad invicem habenda et de dignitatibus mulierum. Sermo 42*;

ff. 45v-51v, Antoinius Vercellensis, *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti*, Sermon 43, rubric, *Dominica IV in quadragesima. De restitutione et satisfactione iniuste ablatorum. Sermo quadragesimus tertius*; rubric found in Rome, Casanatense 157R (B.III.14): *Dominica IV in XLma. De restitutione et satisfactione iniuste ablatorum. Sermo 43* (ff. 431ra–435va).

ff. 51v-60, Antonius Vercellensis, *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti*, Sermon 44, rubric, *Feria 2a post quartam dominicam in XLma. Iterum de restitutione male ablatorum. Sermo quadragesimus quartus*; rubric found in Rome, Casanatense 157R (B.III.14): *Feria 2 post dominicam IV in XLma. Iterum de restitutione male ablatorum. Sermo 44* (ff. 435va–440vb).

ff. 60-85, Antonius Vercellensis, *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti*, Sermon 45, rubric, *Feria 3a post quartam dominicam in XLa. Iterum de restitutione male ablatorum. Sermo 40 quintus*; rubric found in Rome, Casanatense 157R (B.III.14): *Feria 3 post dominicam IV in XLma. Iterum de restitutione male ablatorum. Sermo 45* (ff. 440vb–444ra).

ff. 85-110, Antonius Vercellensis, *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti*, Sermon 44 [bis], heading, *De detractone* (f. 87), rubric, *Feria 2a post dominicam quartum XLme. De pesima detractone et necessaria satisfactione fame proximorum. Sermo quadragesimus quartus*;

ff. 110-118, Antonius Vercellensis, *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti*, Sermon 46, rubric, *Feria 4 post quartam dominicam Quadragesime. De sanctissime fidei necessitate, unitate et veritate. Sermo quadragesimus sextus*; rubric found in Rome, Casanatense 157R (B.III.14): *Feria 4 post IV dominicam Quadragesime. De sanctissime fidei necessitate, unitate et veritate. Sermo 46* (ff. 444ra–447va).

ff. 118-127, Antonius Vercellensis, *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti*, Sermon 47, heading, *De fide*, rubric, *Feria 5 post quartam dominicam Quadragesime. Iterum de sanctissima fide. Sermo quadragesimus septimus*; rubric found in Rome, Casanatense 157R (B.III.14): *Feria 5 post IV dominicam Quadragesime. Iterum de sanctissima fide. Sermo 47* (ff. 447va–452ra).

ff. 127-153v, Antonius Vercellensis, *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti*, Sermon 48, rubric, *Feria sexta post quartam dominicam XLme. Iterum de sanctissima fide. Sermo quadragesimus octavus*; rubric found in Rome, Casanatense 157R (B.III.14): *Feria 6 post IV dominicam XLme. Iterum de sanctissima fide. Sermo 48* (ff. 452ra–465rb).

ff. 153v-174, Antonius Vercellensis, *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti*, Sermon 49, rubric, *Sabbato post quartam dominicam XLme. De obsequio ac servitute Creatori nostro ac Redemptori exhibendo. Sermo xlus nonus*; rubric found in Rome, Casanatense 157R (B.III.14): *Sabbato post IV dominicam XLme. De obsequio ac servitute Creatori nostro ac Redemptori exhibendo. Sermo 49* (ff. 465rb–475vb).

ff. 174-194, Antonius Vercellensis, *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti*, Sermon 50, rubric, *Dominica de passione. De obstinatione peccatorum et de penis eorum. Sermo quinquagesimus*; rubric found in Rome, Casanatense 157R (B.III.14): *Dominica de passione. De obstinatione peccatorum et de penis eorum. Sermo 50* (ff. 475vb–490ra).

ff. 194-213, Antonius Vercellensis, *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti*, Sermon 51, heading, *De divino amore*, rubric, *Feria 2a post dominicam quintam de Passione. De duodecim excellentiis divini amoris. Sermo quinquagesimus primus*; rubric found in Rome, Casanatense 157R (B.III.14): *Feria 2 post dominicam V de Passione. De 12 excellentiis divini amoris. Sermo 51* (ff. 490ra–501va).

ff. 213-231, Antonius Vercellensis, *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti*, Sermon 52, rubric, *Feria 3a post quintam dominicam XLme. De dilectione proximorum et conditionibus eius. Sermo quinquagesimus secundus*; rubric found in Rome, Casanatense 157R (B.III.14) : *Feria 3 post V dominicam XLme. De dilectione proximorum et conditionibus eius. Sermo 52* (ff. 501va–512ra).

ff. 231-258, Antonius Vercellensis, *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti*, Sermon 53, rubric, *Feria 4 post dominicam de Passione. Iterum de reliquis sex circumstantiis ad meritoriam omnium proximorum nostrorum dilectionem necessariis. Sermo quinquagesimus tertius*; rubric found in Rome, Casanatense 157R (B.III.14): *Feria 4 post dominicam de Passione. Iterum de reliquis sex circumstantiis ad meritoriam omnium proximorum nostrorum dilectionem necessariis. Sermo 53* (ff. 512ra–519ra).

ff. 258-268, Antonius Vercellensis, *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti*, Sermon 54, rubric, *Feria 5 post dominicam XLme, videlicet de Passione. De mutuo caritativo gratis proximis impendendo. Sermo L.us. quartus*; rubric found in Rome, Casanatense 157R (B.III.14): *Feria 5 post dominicam XLme, videlicet de Passione. De mutuo caritativo gratis proximis impendendo. Sermo 54* (ff. 519ra–529rb).

ff. 268-322v, Antonius Vercellensis, *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti*, Sermon 55 bis, heading, *De iusticia* (f. 317, 318, 319), rubric, *Feria 6a post quintam dominicam XLme seu de passione, de legali ac temporali iusticia tam a dominis quam rectoribus atque iudicibus necessario observanda. Sermo L.us V.us [quinquagesimus quintus]*.

ff. 322v-367, Antonius Vercellensis, *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti*, Sermon 56, heading, *De mercantia*, rubric, *Sabbato post quintam dominicam XLme seu de passione. De artibus mechanicis...mercantiis iusto modo exercentis. Sermo quinquagesimus sextus*.

ff. 367-408, Antonius Vercellensis, *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti*, Sermon 57, rubric, *Feria 5 post dominicam XLme, videlicet de Passione. De mutuo caritativo gratis proximis impendendo. Sermo L.us septimus*; rubric found in Rome, Casanatense 157R (B.III.14): *Dominica Olivarum seu in Palmis. De pia iniuriarum remissione et dilectione inimicorum. Sermo 57* (ff. 538rb–545vb).

ff. 408-432, Antonius Vercellensis, *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti*, Sermon 55, heading, *De scutis preservantibus rem publicam* (f. 425, 426, 427); rubric, *Feria 6a post dominicam Passionis. De 12 regulis seu scutis preservantibus omnem statum, rempublicam et civitatem a scandalis, ruinis et malis conspirationibus ac conservantibus in omni pace. Sermo L.us quintus*; rubric found in Rome, Casanatense 157R (B.III.14): *Feria 6 post dominicam Passionis. De 12 regulis seu scutis preservantibus omnem statum, rempublicam et civitatem a scandalis, ruinis et malis conspirationibus ac conservantibus in omni pace. Sermo 55* (ff. 529rb–532va).

ff. 432-451v, Antonius Vercellensis, *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti*, Sermon 58, rubric, *Feria 2a post dominicam Olivarum. De reprehensibili ornatu et damnabili vanitate mulierum. Sermo quinquagesimus octavus*; rubric found in Rome, Casanatense 157R (B.III.14): *Feria 2 post dominicam*

Olivarum. De reprehensibili ornatu et damnabili vanitate mulierum. Sermo 58 (ff 545vb–559ra).

ff. 451v-468v, Antonius Vercellensis, *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti*, Sermon 59, rubric, *Feria 3a post dominicam Olivarum. Iterum de reprehensibili ornatu et damnabili vanitate mulierum. Sermo 59us*, rubric found in Rome, Casanatense 157R (B.III.14): *Feria 3 post dominicam Olivarum. Iterum de reprehensibili ornatu et damnabili vanitate mulierum. Sermo 59* (ff 559ra–569ra).

ff. 468v-486v, Antonius Vercellensis, *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti*, Sermon 60, rubric, *Feria quarta post dominicam Olivarum. Iterum de reprehensibili ornatu et damnabili vanitate mulierum. Sermo sexagesimus*; rubric found in Rome, Casanatense 157R (B.III.14): *Feria 4 post dominicam Olivarum. Iterum de reprehensibili ornatu et damnabili vanitate mulierum. Sermo 60* (ff 569ra–579va).

ff. 486v-515v, Antonius Vercellensis, *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti*, Sermon 61, rubric, *Feria quinta in Cena Domini. De duodecim preparationibus ad sacram Communionem faciendam summe necessariis. Sermo sexagesimus primus*; explicit, "[...] clementia concedere vobis dignetur in presenti per gratiam et in futuro per eternam gloriam. Cui semper sit omnis laus, honor et gloria per infinita secula seculorum"; rubric found in Rome, Casanatense 157R (B.III.14): *Feria 5 in Cena Domini. De duodecim preparationibus ad sacram Communionem faciendam summe necessariis. Sermo 61* (ff 579va–595vb).

This manuscript contains 24 sermons for Lenten (41 to 61 and a few apparently unnumbered or numbered twice e.g. ff. 22, 85, 268, 322v) from the collection entitled *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti*, here for *Feria sexta* of the third Sunday after *Quadragesima* to *Feria quinta* of *Cena Domini*, by Antonius da Vercelli (Antonius Vercellensis or Antonius de Balocco, c. 1410/20-1483). Antonius da Vercelli was vicar of the Milan Franciscan Observants. He was a friend of Lorenzo de Medici and a very popular preacher who traveled extensively through Italy. On the sparse elements concerning Antonio's life and works, see Wadding, *Scriptores*, 24; Sbaralea, *Supplementum*, I, 74; O. Schäfer, 1943; B. Luigi, "Antonio da Vercelli," *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, I (Rome, 1949), 1558; R. Pratesi, "Antonio da Vercelli" *DBI*, III, Rome, 1961, 580–581.

Antonius da Vercelli is the author of two important sermon cycles, firstly his *Quadragesimale de XII Mirabilibus Christianae Fidei Excellentiss* and secondly his *Quadragesimale de Aeternis Fructibus Spiritus Sancti*. The present manuscript draws from the second collection of sermons, which (when complete) comprises 61 sermons for Sunday of *Septuagesima* to the *Feria quinta* in *Cena Domini*. Schäfer (1943) provides the rubrics, the incipits and explicits of the 61 sermons as found in MS Rome, Bibl. Casanatense 157R [595 ff]. There is another copy of this collection in Rome, Bibl. Coll. S. Isidori de Urbe, MS 1/17-1/57 [423 ff.]: "Prologus super Quadragesimale editum per...fratrem videlicet Antonius de Verzellis...cuius titulus est Quadragesimale de eternis fructibus Spiritus Sancti..." (see Schäfer, 1943, pp. 259-260). This second manuscript contains only part of the sermons (only 17 sermons from Sunday of *Septuagesima* to *Feria III* after *Quinquagesima*). Schäfer mentions a third codex, missing at the beginning and at the end, in the Archivio Conventus Observantiae O.F.M. near Siena (see Schäfer, 1943, p. 260, note 1). Hence there are apparently only three other known codices of this collection of sermons. There is no early sixteenth century or more recent critical edition of this collection. Antonius's sermons are listed in Hödl and Knoch, 2001, with this collection nos. 135-196, citing only Rome, Casanatense, MS 157.

These sermons demonstrate Antonius da Vercelli's wide readings in theology and law. The variety of sources is also noteworthy. Antonius de Vercelli quotes many Franciscan authors and authorities such as Alexander Halensis, S. Bonaventura, Richardus of Mediavilla, Nicolas of Lyra, Franciscus Maironis. Among the patristic sources, he quotes Ambrosius, Augustinus, Hieronymus, Leo, Gregorius, Cassiodorus, Chrysostomus, Basilius, Lactantius, Bernardus, "Ugo de claustro anime" [Hugh of Folieto, *De claustro animae*] (f. 168) as well as canonists. He equally quotes profane authors such as Aristotle, Plato, Seneca, Sallust, Cicero, and Avicenna (f. 113v). See for instance on f. 117v, lefthand column, where he quotes in a very short space Priscianus, Galen, Ptolomy, Aristotle and Cicero! But the sermons also have a strong catechistic character. The interesting developed rubrics in themselves already give a good idea of their subject matter, and many sermons seem to be addressed to specific members of society, women, youth, married people, city people (*sermones ad status*). In one of his sermons dedicated to Faith (ff. 127-153v), Antonius da Vercelli addresses members of the Jewish faith and discusses cases of conversion and recognition of Christ as Messiah: "An Judei cognoverint christum esse messiam"; "Testimonium Josephi"; "Rabi Moses"; "Judei conversi cum S. Helenam" (f. 151). Some exempla are added in the margins, for instance: "Aliud denique hic pono exemplum verissimum quod parisius in 1290 contigit..." [Here I will quote another most trustworthy exemplum about what happened to a Parisian in 1290...] (ff. 499v-500).

Also noteworthy, is the sheer number of *exempla* that are used and incorporated in the sermons. These alone merit closer study and identification. Some are certainly known, taken from the large body of *exempla* that members of the Mendicant orders quoted amply. Ad hoc, one can quote on f. 18 an exemplum indicated to the reader in the margin: "[rubric] *De proiciente in carcer*. Ego volo tibi dare unum pulchrum exemplum..." [On being thrown in jail. I would like to share with you here a very nice exemplum...]; another dedicated to Socrates's patience: "Exemplum de patientia Socrates...quod Socrates cum eum Alcipiades interrogaret..." (f. 34). Exempla are considered to be cognitive aids for the laity, imprinting themselves more firmly in people's hearts and minds and especially efficacious for simple folk. They were persuasive and memorable.

This collection is to be related with the success of the Franciscan Observance and the pastoral activities of its protagonists. Within the Franciscan order, the Observant "revival" of preaching had its beginnings in the pastoral activities of Bernardino da Siena (1380-1444) with his intensive preaching rallies, especially during Easter, Lent and Advent. Unpublished and understudied, the present sermons are a fine witness to the extremely rich homiletic output of the Franciscan Observants in Italy. Antonius da Vercelli was an important, yet still poorly studied, Franciscan preacher, renowned for his lengthy preaching tours. The present codex attests to his extensive production of written sermons. The number of *exempla* is also noteworthy and should be studied closely. To quote B. Roest: "Many sermon cycles by other leading figures of the regular Observance in Italy likewise await further editorial attention and analysis; most pressing so are the important sermon collections put together by ... Antonio da Vercelli (c. 1410-1483)" (B. Roest, 2004, chapter: "Franciscan Preaching as Religious Instruction," p. 66).

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

On Antonius da Verceil

http://users.bart.nl/~roestb/franciscan/franauta.htm#_Toc427590436

TM 683